

THE ONE SURE REFUGE
Psalm 46

Intro: We all know it to be a fact of life that no one is without trouble. Troubles come to all of us in various forms. And this applies just as much to the people of God as to anyone else! Christians have their troubles, and they are often very severe.

The Scriptures are full of illustrations of the troubles that the people of God have. Just mention any Bible character and you will be able to associate certain troubles with his or her name. Think of Adam, or Noah, or Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, or Joseph, or Moses, or Joshua, or the judges, or David, or the prophets, or John the Baptist (a prophet), or our Lord, or any of the Apostles -- all had their troubles!

Or take any of us. We have our trials and troubles -- and they are not all of the same kind. There is nothing in the Word to tell us that we will not have our share of problems. They might be physical. They might be emotional. They might be financial. They might be social--problems with people. They might be (and often are) because we are Christians who stand for the truth). But we all have problems.

No one really knows the background of Psalm 46.

Some think it goes back to David's troubles.

Others think that it had to do with the marvelous deliverance that the Lord gave to Jehoshaphat.

Still others think that it had to do with the threat that Sennacherib posed for the nation Israel.

And there probably are other guesses. But they all seem to be just that: GUESSES! But actually it could fit into any one of those circumstances, or into many others as well. The Psalm is actually timeless because the Lord's people have come to it time and time again to find comfort and encouragement.

So--whatever may be your particular trouble, or troubles, this morning, I trust that you will find comfort and help and blessing as we consider this Psalm together.

Let me divide into three parts:

- 1) First, there is what we can call the teaching of the Psalm.
- 2) Second, we have the exhortations; there are two of them.
- 3) Finally, I want to call your attention to the refrain. It is like the chorus of a hymn, and it appears twice in this Psalm.

First, then, . . .

I. THE TEACHING (Psa. 46:1-7).

Actually, all of the Psalm teaches us, but I am using this word teaching as opposed to the exhortations and the refrain to which I want to give special emphasis.

When you are in trouble, it is always good to have some place where you can go for help.

The situation which led to the writing of this Psalm seems to have been physical danger which was brought on by the approach of heathen armies. And these armies, whoever they were posed a threat to the very life of the nation Israel. It was very, very serious!

The situation was so desperate that the people were forced recognize that "God" was the only One Who could help them. And so they begin to rehearse in song what they had learned before.

Will you notice another way we could divide the Psalm?

In vv. 1-9 the people of God spoke. NOTE ALSO THE SELAHs

In v. 10 God spoke.

In v. 11 the people of God spoke again, saying what they had said before.

You will notice the word "refuge" occurs three times in the Psalm--in v. 1, and in vv. 7 and 11.

But they are not the same words. The word in v. 1 is one word; the word in vv. 7 and 11 are the same, but different from the one in v. 1.

But all three describe what the people had in the God:

- 1) The word used in verse 1 means a refuge or a shelter, a place which the people can trust in with absolute confidence. In fact, this word is translated trust in over 30 OT passages, 24 of which are found in the Psalms.

Let me give you two illustrations:

- 1) Psa. 2:12, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."
- 2) Psa. 34:8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."
- 2) The word in verses 7 and 11 means a high tower or a high place that is completely inaccessible to one's enemies.

The idea conveyed by both words is that "God" is One Who will keep you absolutely safe, and that He has been, in the words of one commentator, "thoroughly proved" (Delitzsch, II, p. 90). Cf. Prov. 18:10.

And He is called "a very present help" because He is easily

found. As Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17:27, ". . . though he be not far from any one of us."

THIS IS WHAT GOD IS!

And the teaching goes on to show that God is this refuge in three of the most extreme situations that you can imagine:

- 1) In the disturbances of nature--and notice how terrifying these can be. See vv. 2, 3.
- 2) In the roaring of the nations. See v. 6.
- 3) In the wars which have ravaged the earth. See v. 9.

If God is sufficient for these, the greatest of troubles, then He is surely sufficient for any trial that can invade the lives of the Lord's people.

This is the reason it is wonderful to be able to say,
 God is OUR refuge and strength, a very present
 help in trouble.

It is not enough to know that He is A refuge; He is OUR refuge. Is He yours.

Compare this with the "my" in Psa. 23:1. You cannot go on with the rest of that Psalm unless you can say, The Lord is MY shepherd."

I haven't said anything yet about verses 4, 5.

"The city of God" is Jerusalem. It was the place where "the most High" dwelt. And, although there was no river in Jerusalem, the river to which the Psalmist was referring was God Himself Who was in the city, dwelling there, and Who possessed all of the resources necessary for His people.

Because God is there, the city shall not be "moved," which means that she will neither be ruined--nor even injured!

Is is not what Rom. 8:28 assures us?

So there is tremendous encouragement here--truth which had been learned before, but at that time it was being taught again! How important it is for us to know the truth so, when troubles come, we have something to stand on!

But now let us go to our second point:

II. THE EXHORTATIONS (Psa. 46:8, 10).

And both exhortations are followed with promises--v. 8 with v. 9, and the command at the beginning of v. 10 followed by promises in the latter part of the verse.

A. The first exhortation (v. 8).

This is a command to review what God has done, and to know (from v. 9) that He still does these things!

B. The second exhortation (v. 10).

This command means to relax, let go, cease striving. "Be still" is a good translation. It speaks of the turmoil that was going on in the hearts of the people. That needed to stop! It was an indication that they were not trusting the Lord.

But the greatest comfort to be found in the Psalm is in . . .

III. THE REFRAIN (Psa. 46:7,11).

The repetition shows that this is the main point in the Psalm. There is meaning in every word.

Have you noticed that "God" is referred to 5 different ways in this Psalm?

- 1) As God.
- 2) As the Lord.
- 3) As the most High.
- 4) As the Lord of hosts.
- 5) As the God of Jacob.

In the words of the hymn, we bear "needless pain" because we do not know what kind of a God our God is, or because we forget what we know.

What can we learn about God from this refrain?

He is "the Lord of hosts" -- unchanging and eternal in His nature, with all of the resources needed to meet our needs.

"With us" -- meaning ever-present, and on our side. He is always "for us" (Rom. 8:31), never against us.

As "God" he is mighty, omnipotent. Thus we have omnipresence and omnipotence. "Jacob" is the name which Israel originally had. It speaks of his weakness, of what he had in himself. But in "the God of Jacob" we have weakness linked with omnipotence--"God" with "Jacob."

And again, He is "our refuge."

Concl: What more needs to be said? What more can be said?

With God we are never defeated. With Him our enemies never really prevail. Notice in closing v. 5b, "God shall help her, and that right early." The Hebrew here means, "when the morning appeareth." Cf. Psa. 30:5, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."