

OUR ALL-SUFFICIENT GOD

Psalm 46

Intro: Today I am bringing my thirty-fifth message in this present series on the Psalms. This does not mean that we have considered thirty-five Psalms because with some Psalms I have brought more than one message. Nor have I spoken on the Psalms we have studied in the order that they appear in the Bible. Instead, starting with Psalm 1 at the beginning of the year as I usually do, I have made random choices of the Psalms we have considered, many of them from my daily reading of the Psalms.

But I have decided to turn to a New Testament epistle on the first Sunday morning of October, the First Epistle of John. Next Sunday morning it will be our privilege to have Pastor Benjamin Pent with us, and I have asked him to speak to us next Sunday morning. He has ministered to us before with great blessing, and we can all look forward to hearing him next Sunday morning. The Sunday after that will be October 3 when we will begin the exposition of 1 John. I am mentioning it now so you all can be reading it as many times as you can between now and then. And I hope that after we start you will continue to read it at least once each week. If you get the message of the epistle in your heart, then you will get that much more as we go through it verse by verse.

So much for the future. But to all of these words and plans I must add, *the Lord willing*. Pastor Will is going to be reminding us in his messages on the epistle of James that we always ought to say about our future plans, that this is what we will do “if the Lord wills, we shall live, and do this, or that” (James 4:15). So all of this is subject to the will of God.

I am a little surprised that I have not chosen Psalm 46 before in this series. I say that because it fits so well into the days in which we are living. We really don’t know who wrote it, or when it was written. But we know from reading it that it was written for the Lord’s people in days of trouble. In fact, we have the word “trouble” in verse 1, and it is repeated in verse 3. And there is a lot in the Psalm which speaks of great trouble in many ways.

Now I don’t know exactly why we are not told what generation it was written for, but I have a suggestion to make about that question. I think that those facts are omitted so that when we, for example, possibly as

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much as three thousand years later, can read it like it was written especially for *us*, and to *us*! That is the way we ought to read our Bibles all of the time. Our troubles may be different from the troubles that prompted the Psalmist in this case to write this Psalm, but troubles are troubles regardless of the form they take. And the primary solution in all of our troubles is that we learn to keep our eyes on the Lord, and trust in Him whatever the troubles might be.

How can you improve upon verse 1 of Psalm 46? Regardless of whether you are in Israel or the United States, or in Jerusalem or Portland, Oregon, this is the truth we need to know *and to remember!*

Now this is truth that applies to the Lord's people – whether in Israel long ago or today, or in America two hundred years ago, or today. And however long time shall last, this will always be true for those of us who know the Lord. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” This is what we need to remember first, and this is what we must never forget! Say it over and over until the truth of it really gets into your heart. Don't say this in the past tense, or in the future tense, but in the present tense. It was true in the past, and it will be true also in the future, but when trouble strikes, we need to know that it is true right now!

We need to be thinking of the Lord all of the time, and we will be if we really love Him. We are not to look to others first, but to God first – and when I say God, I not only mean the Father, but also the Lord Jesus, and even the Holy Spirit.

What is a refuge? It is a hiding place. It is a place where we are safe. Do you remember the hymn which has the words, “Hiding in Thee, hiding in Thee; Thou blest Rock of ages I'm hiding in Thee.” It is not just that He has a place of refuge for us, but it is that HE is our Refuge – and there is a big difference!

But He is also our strength. The world looks upon a child of God and marvels as to how we can endure trials. We know that the answer is not in us, but it is in the Lord Who is our Strength! And His strength is always made perfect in our weakness. When we are weak, then we are strong, but only in the Lord.

But that is not all that is in verse 1. The Lord is always “a very present help in trouble.” This is a statement of God's omnipresent. We know

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that He is always with us, but we learn that it is especially true when we need Him. We don't need to start looking for Him when trouble comes because He is always with us. What an amazing God we have! And it takes time for these great truths to sink into our needy brains and hearts. Do you know, or have you ever memorized Isaiah 41:10:

10 Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Now what will be the result of believing Psalm 46:1? Your answer is given in connection with the most catastrophic incident that could take place in this world in which we live. **(Read verses 2 and 3.)** Now if such things should take place in creation, we would see world-wide terrorization the likes of which has never been witnessed in the world from the days of creation until now. But we can see how strong faith can be when it is founded upon the character and living presence of the God of heaven and earth. Matthew 27:45 tells us that when our Lord was hanging on the Cross that there was darkness all over the land of Israel from the sixth hour to the ninth hour – from noon until three o'clock there was darkness. I wish the Gospel writers had told us what the people were doing for those three hours. It doesn't take much for people to panic, but look at verses 2 and 3 of Psalm 46 again.

And then notice the word "Selah." It appears three times in this Psalm and over 70 times in the Psalms. What does it mean? We really do not know. But it seems that it was a musical marking of some kind. The ISBE suggests that it could have been like *forte* in our music today, or it may have indicated a musical interlude, possibly for the sake of emphasis. In some way it seems to emphasize what had just been sung.

The emphasis upon creation continues in verse 4-6. I think that Andrew Bonar in his book on the Psalms has grasped the proper meaning. He pointed out that it was characteristic of nations to boast about their rivers. Babylon had the Euphrates, and Assyria had the Tigris. But according to Isaiah 8:6-8 Jerusalem had only the "waters of Shiloah" which flowed from her Temple. While this would have been despised by the larger nations, that which made the "waters of Shiloah" important to the Jews was that it flowed from the Temple, and the Temple was where God dwelt among His people – a fact which set Jerusalem above all other cities and the nation Israel above all other nations. **(Now read Psa. 46:4-5.)**

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In verse 6 we see the opposition of the world toward Israel (as the people of God) and their desire to do away with the Lord's people. This involves the nations of the earth, but who created the earth by the words of His mouth, will some day utter His voice toward the nations again, and He will melt the earth.

Today world attention is focused upon "little Israel." There is one nation which had taken the lead in wiping Israel off of the face of the earth. But they do not realize that they are dealing, not just with Israel, but with the one true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, Who some day in defense of His purposes involving Israel and her Messiah, will Himself move to defend and bless this little, despised nation, which He Himself has brought into being for His own eternal glory.

And so in verse 7 we read the refrain of this great Psalm. Israel among the nations amounts to nothing. But the difference is that which is said in verse 7. And here we come to another "Selah."

This is characteristic of God's dealing in the Church as well. The Church is nothing by itself, but it is glorious, and exists for God's glory, because the Lord is with the Church. Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote about our calling in 1 Corinthians 1:17-31. **Please follow in your Bibles as I read this important passage.**

All of this should remind us of what Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 9:23-24:
23 Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:
24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

Now as we come to the last section of this great Psalm, we see more of how all of our troubles will finally come to an end, and the emphasis upon the Lord, as strong as it has been up through verse 7, is even stronger in verses 8 through verse 11 (the end of the Psalm).

We can't see all of this now, but with the eye of faith we can look ahead with all of the Lord's people to see how God will glorify Himself and His Son in what He is yet to do.

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Verse 8 asks us to “behold the works of the Lord” by faith. What God will eventually do to this earth (they are called “desolations,” a word by which the Psalmist pictures total desolation. This has not yet taken place, but because it is the word of the Lord, it is just as certain to take place as it is that it was created in the first place.

In verse 9 we see that God is eventually going to do. It seems utterly impossible now, but it is going to take place. The mightiest of the nations are going to be humbled into the dust of the earth. The great ones will no longer be great.

Verse 9 has to do with the future; verse 10 has to do with the present. This is for us now, today, and all of the days ahead: “Be still, and know that I am God.” Let us make sure that we understand what these words mean. What do the words, “Be still,” mean?

It seems that this is a rebuke to, as Kidner describes the world, as restless and turbulent (see I, p. 176). Man’s ways and God’s ways are not only always different, but God’s ways are infinitely higher and better. God will succeed; man will not. All men, unsaved and saved, need to stop what they are doing, and not focus on trying something else, but to focus on God, and what it means that He is God. Even our country is headed in the wrong direction as far as God is concerned. There are many who would like to do away with everything that has to do with God and Christ and the Bible. But in spite of all that people are doing today, all humanity is going to learn, saved and unsaved, what it means that God is God, and that He is going to be exalted “among the heathen” and “in all the earth.”

And the Psalm closes with the refrain that we had in verse 7. And here we have the third, “Selah.” Be quiet. Give this your best thoughts. The purposes of God are going to prevail, and we had better be sure that we are on the Lord’s side. That is the right side.

Concl: Note that the emphasis in the refrain in verses 7 and 11 is not that we are with the Lord, but that the Lord is with us. Thus means that even the possibility that we will understand the message of this Psalm, and line up our lives with God, rests we God Himself. As the Apostle Paul expressed it many years later, “For it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Even the fact that we know God, and believe in Christ, is not to our credit. But all of the glory belongs to God alone.