

Psalm 46: The Lord, My Refuge and Strength

In last month's issue, we set the stage for Psalm 46. You'll remember that this psalm was written by Hezekiah after the Lord delivered his city of Jerusalem out of the hand of the Assyrian army. We studied Isaiah 36 as the setting of this psalm, and we saw that Rabshakeh, a chief commander of the Assyrian army, had brought his troops to besiege Jerusalem. Our study closed with the last few verses in Isaiah 37 as we read about the angel of the Lord who smote 185,000 soldiers in one night to set Jerusalem free.

Now let's take up a verse-by-verse study of Psalm 46.

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 Though he waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. 4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. 6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. 7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. 8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. 9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. 10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heath, I will be exalted in the earth. 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

You'll notice in verse one that the Hebrews put their trust in God. They declared him to be their refuge and strength. What was the strength of their adversary, the Assyrian army? It was their training, their equipment, their leaders. Since you know the outcome of this particular confrontation, you can easily see whose refuge and strength was *dependable*.

It says also in that first verse that God is a present help "in trouble". This is important to understand. When you get born-again, you are not magically removed from all of life's challenges and difficulties. Rather, you're given the equipment to face those problems and be victorious - through God who is your help ***IN*** trouble.

Your strength is perfected in the trouble when you pullout the sword of the Spirit, when you use the shield of faith, when you practice to become adept with all the weapons of your warfare. Would God have given us weapons if there were no battles to fight? Not only did he give us the supernaturally powerful weapons, he "himself promised to be our present help in the midst of the trouble. Glory!

Verse two goes on to say, "Therefore will not we fear." With odds like that, why be afraid? Fear only opens the way for defeat; fear cannot help you succeed at all.

Here is a perfect opportunity for the inhabitants of Jerusalem to become *afraid-really* afraid. They're sitting on the walls of the city, looking out over the vast Assyrian army, listening to the threats of Rabshakeh. But they didn't say a word. That's a powerful action to disarm fear. Simply refuse to speak it out with your mouth.

"Therefore will not we fear, THOUGH the earth be removed, and THOUGH the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ..." Literally, the Hebrew says, "Though the land be destroyed." My friend, if you listen to the reports in the world today, you'll hear destruction on every hand. Wars, bombings, enemies on every hand. But is your faith in natural military strength, or is it in the assurance that God is always our present help in trouble? Jesus said in the midst of war and rumors of wars, see that you be not troubled.

Now "mountains being carried into the sea" is a reference to the size of the Assyrian army. Jerusalem is located in a plain, ringed by mountain ranges on all sides. But the army was so vast, it engulfed the mountains like the tide of the ocean had come in, filling all the land so just the peaks of the mountains rose above the vast ocean of soldiers.

This parallel between the Assyrian army and the sea is mentioned in Isaiah 8:7, "Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks." This army is so powerful, it is so large, that it cannot be contained in its own country, but has overflowed into the countries around it. It looks like a flood, like a dam bursting with water tumbling out everywhere, as we read in verse 3 of our text. There were so many horses that the land literally shook with the force of their movement across the mountains into Jerusalem's valley.

But in the midst of this trouble, God is present, and Hezekiah tells himself and his people not to fear. You think you have problems and deserve to wallow in self-pity? How would you like to be looking over the wall and see armies coming at you like a flash flood, like a dam bursting open and allowing water to come swirling out to cover everything in its path!

At the end of verse 3 of Psalm 46 we have the word "selah". Remember that this is a song Hezekiah wrote, but only the words are preserved for us today. When singers came to "selah", it meant they should be silent while the musicians continued to play. This gave the singers and the congregation time to stop and reflect over the passage that was just completed. Then a new thought would be introduced.

So let's do that. Let's stop and summarize the first portion of Psalm 46 (verses 1-3). It can be summed up like this: No matter what difficulty you are facing, put your trust in the Lord. Keep your mouth from speaking doubt, fear, and unbelief. Recognize that the Lord is present and able to help.

Now in verse four, we begin to discuss the answer to the problems. This verse talks about a river. Did you ever stop to compare an ocean with a river? The devil tries to convince us that our problems are as a mighty ocean, and all we have are "rivers of living water" that well up from our inner beings. Put trust in that river.

No ocean can withstand the power of that river. Turn to the Holy Spirit who dwells in you depend on that river of wisdom and strength to overcome the oceans of enemy attack. By praying in tongues, allowing the Holy Spirit to control your tongue,

you can speak out the answer to your problems. You can activate that river of life to turn back the tide of the enemy's ocean.

In verse five we see the result of God coming on the scene. The Hebrew literally says she shall not be taken captive. Don't give in to the taunts of the enemy who would tempt you to walk out and give up without a fight. Depend on the strength of the rivers of life within you. Learn to pray in the spirit, activate that river, and you will not be taken captive by the lies of the enemy.

When does God rescue you? The end of verse five says, "... right early..." That means very soon. It doesn't mean immediately. God is always on time, but many believers are tempted to give up because they don't see the situation improve *immediately* when they swing into action against the enemy.

Now in verse six we have a reference to all the other cities that trusted in false gods yet fell to the armies of Rabshakeh. We talked about that briefly in the previous lesson. There is only one true living God, and putting your trust in him is not a futile effort. "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved." Literally, they were taken captive. But the Lord fought back. And he didn't use natural weapons.

You realize that it would take a supernatural weapon to slay 185,000 soldiers in one night. Verse 6 tells us what that weapon was: "... he uttered his voice, the earth melted ..." In Revelation 19:15 we read about this weapon being used at the battle of Armageddon, "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations ..." Isn't it good to have a weapon like that on *your* side of the battle!

Hezekiah continues in Psalm 46 by referring to God as "the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob." In the Hebrew, it reads *Jehovah of armies*. He's the one who is the head of all the hosts of the angels. He's the same one who defended Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As faithful as he was to them, he is to us right now.

The next verse, verse 8, can seem to contradict the character of God when it refers to the desolation he made in the earth. But God so highly prizes his people, he'll

go to any length to defend and save them. After all, he sent his only Son. He will make the earth desolate if that is what it takes to protect his people.

In verse 9 we read what he did - he made this war cease; he stopped the Assyrian army in its tracks so the city of Jerusalem could be spared. The weapons and chariots of this army were like toys in the hands of a protective God. He smashed them, broke them in two to defend his precious possession.

That phrase here in verse 9, "... unto the end of the earth ...", shows just how important God's people are to him. It doesn't matter where you live - God knows your address and is watching over you to protect you against the flood of enemy attack.

Verse ten tells us to rest in the Lord. "Be still" is the Hebrew word *rapha*. Do you remember one of God's redemptive names is Jehovah Rapha? He's the Lord that heals you. So what this verse literally means is "be healed and know that I am God."

Did you know there is healing in being still? Enter into rest, put your trust in God, take the victory that he has already provided. There is a healing in this rest, this freedom from self-effort. Just stand still and see the deliverance of the Lord (2 Chronicles 20:17).

The second part of verse ten tells us the more people try to come against God, the more God gets exalted. He's exalted among the heathen when his miracles are reported, and his fame spreads to all the earth.

The final verse in Psalm 46, verse eleven, repeats a previous verse. Hezekiah is emphasizing the character of the mighty one who defends us. God is the *Jehovah of armies*, or the captain of all the soldiers. He commands them into perfect array against the enemy. And he's never lost a single battle!

The "God of Jacob" refers to the first member of the Godhead, which is God the Father. Notice we've got Jesus on our side, the commander-in-chief. And we've got God the Father on our side also. But they're not just "on our side". Colossians 3:3 tells us that we are "... hid with Christ in God."

Not only are we in Christ, but Christ then is in God. My friend, with that as our refuge, who can possibly overcome you? You put your trust in him and he fights for you. Paul told us in Romans 8:39 that *nothing* could separate us from the love of Christ. If God be for us, who can successfully come against us and overtake us?

Say this confession aloud:

The Lord is my refuge and my strength. He is good and his mercy endures forever. The Lord is my protector. He fights for me. I'll be still and rest in him. I'll be healed. The Lord of hosts stills all the enemies. I am not affected by what I see. I'm not affected by how massive the armies of the enemy appear. I am not concerned if all the land around me is destroyed and the mountains are swallowed by the sea. Underneath me are the everlasting arms. I can't be moved. So I refuse to fear. I refuse to speak out words of doubt and fear. God hasn't given me a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sound mind. My thoughts are centered on Jesus. He keeps me in perfect peace. I cast down imaginations, reasonings, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. I stay in perfect peace. My mind is fixed on my deliverer. Nothing can defeat me!

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