

SEEKING REFUGE Sunday School- October 17, 2010

Unifying Topic: GOD'S PROVIDES REFUGE

Lesson Text

I. Our Refuge (Psalm 46:1-3)

II. Our Fortress (Psalm 46:4-7)

The Main Thought: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1 KJV)

Unifying Principle: Troubles that sometimes beset us demand abilities and resources beyond what we possess. Where can we turn for deliverance? The psalmist tells us that God is our Refuge and Strength, a tested Help in times of trouble.

Lesson Aim: To help students know that God is always our Refuge and Protection.

Life aim: To teach how we can know and trust that God is always present with us through the Holy Spirit, providing us peace, comfort, safety, and protection in every situation we face in life.

46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

46:2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

46:3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

46:4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

46:5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

46:6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

46:7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

HISTORY:

The author of this Psalm is not ascribed to David, but to "*the Sons of Korah*," and there are no indications in the Psalm that David was the author, or that it refers to his times. There is reason to believe that most of the Psalms attributed to the "*Sons of Korah*" were composed subsequent to the time of David. It was composed in response to a terrifying event in the life of Good King Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20).

¹ *To the chief musician for the sons of Korah. A song upon Alamoth* – He who could sing other Psalms so well was fitly entrusted with this noble ode. The most skilful musician in Israel must be charged with the due performance of this song, with the most harmonious voices and choicest music—*For the Sons of Korah*. One alone cannot fulfill the praise, there must be picked choristers under him, whose joyful privilege it shall be to celebrate the service of song in the house of the Lord. As to why the sons of Korah were selected; Korah had three sons, Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph and of their descendants David only selected a number to preside over the music of the sanctuary, and they continued in this service until the time of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:19,... It may be well to add that they were a division of the Levites who took their turn in serving at the temple. All the works of the holy service ought not to be monopolized by one order of talent, each company of believers should in due course enjoy the privilege. None ought to be without a share in the service of God

A Song upon Alamoth: Which may denote that the music was to be pitched high for the treble or soprano voices of the Hebrew virgins. They went forth in their dances to sing the praises of David when he smote the Philistines. It was meet that they should make merry and be glad when the victories of Jehovah became their theme. We need to praise God upon virgin hearts, with souls chaste towards his fear, with lively and exalted expressions, and happy strains. Or the word Alamoth may refer to shrill sounding instruments, as in 1 Chronicles 15:20, where we read that Zechariah, and Eliab, and Benaiah were to praise the Lord "*with psalteries on Alamoth*." We are not always, in a slovenly manner, to fall into one key, but with intelligence are to modulate our praises and make them fittingly expressive of the occasion and the joy it creates in our souls. These old musical terms cannot be interpreted with certainty, but they are still useful because they show that care and skill should be used in our sacred music. The Psalm is divided into three parts or strophes or scenes, the close of each of which is indicated by the word "*Selah*," in Psalm 46:3, Psalm 46:7, and Psalm 46:11.

The Psalm's background may be the crisis of 701 B.C., when God miraculously delivered the city of Jerusalem from the armies of Sennacherib, king of Assyria (2Kgs.18:19).

Centuries later, this psalm inspired Martin Luther to pen a stirring ode to faith. In his hymn, Luther employed military imagery amid starkly contrasting images of good and evil, evoking a fearsome world filled with enemies so daunting that there would be no hope of conquering them without God. So powerful is the Lord that the only weapon needed to strike down "our ancient foe" is one little word. And while we may lose everything for our faith, including our life and our loved ones, "God's truth abideth

¹ <http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/tod/view.cgi?book=ps&chapter=046&verse=001>

still." This hymn has remained as well, being one of the greatest to come out of the Reformation. Its words strikingly remind us where our strength lies—(A Mighty Fortress Is Our God!)

LESSON:

Psalm 46:1-3 Our Refuge

GOD CAN BE TRUSTED WHEN THE WHOLE WORLD GOES CRAZY

46:1a "God" or the Hebrew name "Elohim". First of all "Elohim" was used "In the beginning God created." We are created for His will and He will take care of us. "El" means "mighty" or "strong." The name of *Elohim* is your strong tower and unshakable refuge. The word for "God" in the singular sense is "El" which is used most often in describing God's characteristics or attributes.

46:1b "God is our refuge...One translation of "refuge" – "machaceh" – A place you flee to for safety, like finding shelter from a rainstorm. Its meaning is from a verb to "flee" and then "to flee to" or "to take shelter in" - denotes a place to which one would flee in time of danger - "as a lofty wall; a high tower; a fort; a fortress." While other nations boasted in their impregnable castles perched high on inaccessible cliffs secured with iron gates and protected by fierce warriors, Israel was in a safer position than them all.—God is for us as a place to which we may flee for safety; a source of strength to us in danger.

The first half of this verse is quite simple. God is our refuge, our shelter, the person to whom we flee. Changing the metaphor, God is like a mother bird protecting her young. Thus we find shelter beneath 'His' wings (Ruth 2:12). Using yet another image, when the heat of life becomes unbearable, we are invited to 'dwell in the secret place of the Most High', abiding 'under the shadow of the Almighty' (Ps. 91:1). We therefore may seek protection 'beneath' Him when trouble comes (Ps. 46:1).

1. REFUGE when running into the strong tower of the Name of the Lord to be safe – Pro.18:10
2. REFUGE when underneath His everlasting arms – Deut.33:27
3. REFUGE when in the day of my trouble – Ps.59:16
4. REFUGE when strong confidence shall have a place in Him – Prov.14:26
5. REFUGE from the storm – Is.25:4
6. REFUGE when He is a shelter and a strong tower from the enemy – Ps.61:3
7. REFUGE as He bare you on 'eagles wings', and bring you unto Himself – Exo.19:4

People constantly get confused when it comes to dependence upon God. This does not mean that we abandon all common sense. When we are on the roof of our home, and the water is rising, and we are praying for deliverance, and someone with a boat comes by and offers us a ride, we don't refuse and say, "I am waiting on God to deliver me." That boat is God providing you the deliverance. When there are tornados in your area or high force winds and devastating rain showers, and there is a recommended safe place in your house where you can go, then it is reasonable to go to that place. God is a refuge to run to.

"Strength" – "oz" – means might, strength – This word is used in the sense of one person being able to prevail over another. God is our strength because He is able to prevail over our troubles. The word "strength" implies that God is the source of strength to those who are weak and defenseless; or that we may rely on His strength "as if" it were our own; or that we may feel as safe in His strength as though we had that strength ourselves. We may make it the basis of our confidence as really as though the strength resided in our own arm.

We can have fearless trust in Him no matter what upheavals are occurring in our lives or no matter what catastrophic events are happening all around us! ²Gaining the strength of God, however, is not an automatic occurrence. According to Scripture, we tap into God's strength by seeking Him (1 Chronicles 16:11), observing His commandments (Deuteronomy 11:8), loving Him (Psalm 18:1-2), and praising Him (Exodus 15:2). These are the secrets to gaining God's strength. But, if we are willing to do these things, we also gain strength in the following ways:

1. STRENGTH for all our days – Deut.33:25
2. STRENGTH for our heart – Ps.73:26
3. STRENGTH to overcome fear – Is.41:10
4. STRENGTH to overcome grief – Neh.8:10
5. STRENGTH for battle – Ps.18:29
6. STRENGTH to cross over and possess – Deut.11:8
7. STRENGTH to stay the course – Is.40:31
8. STRENGTH to accomplish – Phili.4:13

God is our strength, but we need to let Him win over our hearts first.

² http://www.childrenofdestiny.org/article_gainingthestrengthofthelord.asp
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

46:1c "A very present help in trouble" – The word "very," or "exceedingly," is added to qualify the whole proposition, as if this were "emphatically true." It was true in the most eminent sense that God had always been found to be such a helper, and, therefore, there was nothing to fear in the present distress of V2. The word "present" means as if He were near to us, or close by us. He has always "proved" Himself to be such a help, therefore, we may now confide in Him. God is presently helping us to bear trouble, to improve in it, and to survive in it. He's present through gracious communications and sweet manifestations; present most when He seems absent, restraining, overruling, and sanctifying us from trouble. Trust and wait (*James Smith*). The word "help" here *ezrah* – means aid, assistance. This word often speaks of military assistance, help with an enemy. A help found to be very powerful and effectual in strict and rigid; difficult situations. The word "trouble" – *tsarah* – literally a "tight spot" would cover all that can come upon us which would give us anxiety or sorrow. Sometimes the Lord allows trials in our lives to get our attention and to help us to grow spiritually. Sometimes trials are given to us to help us grow more dependent on the Lord and to help us to grow in our love for Him. Therefore, He is:

- ³Our REFUGE: Our only, impregnable, accessible, delightful place of retreat.
- Our STRENGTH: Our all sufficient, unconquerable, honourable, and emboldening strength.
- Our HELP: Ever near, sympathizing, faithful, real, and potent **is our God**.

46:2a "Therefore will not we fear" – Our confidence in God shall be unshaken and abiding. Having Him for our refuge and strength Psalm 46:1, we can have nothing to fear. Israel will proceed in a reasonable manner, regardless of the situation around her, because she knows God is in her midst. We need not fear even if "the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging."

46:2b This may either mean, though the earth should change its place or its very structure in these convulsions; or, though it should perish altogether. Look at the mountains, the most fixed and firm things of earth, should be uprooted and sunk in the ocean - implying that nothing earthly was stable; or, the mountains here may be referred to as emblems of that which seemed to be most settled and established on earth - the kingdoms of the world. Israel will remain calm because God is "Refuge & Strength." The idea is, that in any convulsion, any change, any threatened danger, they would place confidence in God, who ruled over all, and who could not change.

46:3 "Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof" The word rendered "be troubled" means to boil; to ferment; to foam; and here it refers to the ocean as agitated and lashed into foam. ⁴Evil may ferment, wrath may boil, and pride may foam, but the brave heart of holy confidence trembles not. Great men who are like mountains may quake for fear in times of great calamity, but the man whose trust is in God needs never to be dismayed. We will not fear, for God cannot be shaken.

"*Selah*"— As the Psalm of the sons of Korah pauses in the midst of such a hurly burly, the music gives the singers time to breathe, and ourselves time for meditation. The pause is not an exclamation of dismay, but merely a rest in music; we do not suspend our song in alarm, but tune our harps again with deliberation amidst the tumult of the storm.

Psalm 46:4-7 Our Fortress

WHEN WE ARE SURROUNDED BY OUR ENEMIES WE ARE AS SECURE.

46:4a "There is a river, the streams whereof..." – Many great cities have rivers flowing through them, sustaining lives and becoming the center of trade. What river is this? Jerusalem had no river, but it had God who, like a river, sustained the people's lives and was the center of their attention. The great fear of an Eastern city in time of war was for fear that the water supply should be cut off during a siege; if that were secured, the city could hold out against attacks for an indefinite period. There is no allusion here to any particular stream or river, but the image is designed to represent a state of peace and calm security in contrast with the rough and troubled ocean. While the ocean rages, and foams, and dashes against the mountains as if it would overturn them. The state of Jerusalem, the city of God, was well represented by a calm and gently-flowing river; a river of full banks, scattering widely joy and fertility and beauty wherever it flowed. The "idea" here is simply that Jerusalem would be calm and serene amidst all the external agitations in the world.

46:4b "shall make glad the city of God"– In the psalm, the city of God is Jerusalem. The city of God was threatened by neighboring nations, but the inhabitants of Jerusalem were calmly trusting in God for protection. How could this be? The answer is that ever since the Garden of Eden, God has always had a river to bring peace to His own. It is the river of God's grace. There are four ways in which the streams of a river would gladden the citizens.

1. The first as regards to prospect (*hope; view; vision*).
2. The second as regards to traffic (*passage; transfer*).
3. The third as regards to fertility (*fruitfulness; productiveness*).

³ <http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/tod/view.cgi?book=ps&chapter=046&verse=001>

⁴ <http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/tod/view.cgi?book=ps&chapter=046&verse=003>

4. The fourth as regards to supply (*provide; make available*). (W. Jay).

46:4c "...the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High" – In speaking of Jerusalem as the sanctuary of the tabernacles of the Most High, the Psalmist makes a beautiful allusion to the circumstances or condition of that time: for although God exercised authority over all the tribes of the people, yet He made choice of that city as the seat of royalty, from which He might govern the whole nation of Israel. The tabernacle and the temple were alike, divided into two parts - the holy and the most holy place - and hence the "plural" term is sometimes applied to them. The word "*tabernacles*" – *mishkan* – means temporary dwelling place. Here's a city that is the dwelling place of the Most High, the place in which He makes His visible presence known amongst the nations. It's a picture of security, but verse 5 enters with a reality check because this city is under siege. But the city is going to hold; she's not going to be moved. Why?

1. "God is in the midst of her" – He's right in the midst of her.
2. "God shall help her" – God is her aid; God is her help.
3. "That right early" – God will help her soon; "He'll help her at the dawn of day."

46:5 "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved" – God was understood to dwell in a special way in the temple at Jerusalem. Since God is the only deity, there would never be a way to defeat Jerusalem unless God abandoned the temple and city. This central article of Judean theology was modified by a vision of the prophet Ezekiel: when God could no longer tolerate the evil of Jerusalem's population. He moved out of the city. It ceased to be God's city and was destroyed by mere humans with ease (Eze.10). The people commonly believed that so long as they obeyed God, God would save their city from any human invasion because Jerusalem was God's capital in Judah. The theology of the Psalmist however, is clear: if the people were righteous, God would not allow the city to be taken from them, no matter the size or power of the enemy attacking. The holy city shall not be moved or shaken, because God dwells there, and is always ready to help her.

46:5b "God shall help her, and that right early" – The expression, "*the dawn of the morning*" denotes daily, as soon as the sun rises upon the earth; literally, "*at the turn of day*", "*when morning dawns.*" Possibly, there may be an allusion here to what occurred in the camp of the Assyrians, when the discovery that the angel of the Lord had smitten them, was made early in the morning, or when men arose in the morning: "*The angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose in the morning (that is, when men arose in the morning), behold, they were all dead corpses*" *Isaiah 37:36*. Help is there at early rising; help is stationed at attention; help is already in protection mode; help is already there; help is in God. And He dwells amongst us for no other purpose than to preserve us uninjured. "*Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep*" *Psalm 121:4*.

46:6 "The heathen raged", – *Psalm 2:1* asks: "Why do the heathen rage...?" What is it that ail the heathen (Heb *gōy*), and what causes the masses to plan that which is destined to come to naught? *Ps.21:2* say: "*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed.*" Now, what causes the kings of the earth and the rulers to band together in mutual purpose against the Lord and His Anointed? Why would they rise up in fury against God's people? The reason is in Verse 21:3 – "*Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.*" So, the heathen rage and constantly devise ways to thwart the purpose of God because they do not like the constraints of God's law, bible morality, or Christian conduct. They prefer to be a law unto themselves, to establish their own conduct by what feels right to them. However,

"*The kingdoms were moved*" – They raged, but all to no avail. That is, those who were invaded, as well as those that made the invasion. There was a general convulsion or shaking among the nations of the earth. ⁵Crowns fell from royal heads, ancient thrones rocked like trees driven of the tempest, powerful empires fell like pines up-rooted by the blast: everything was in disorder, and dismay seized on all who knew not the Lord.

"*He uttered his voice*" - God spoke; He gave command; He expressed His Will. With no other instrumentality than a Word, the Lord ruled the storm. He gave forth a voice and stout solid hearts were dissolved; proud armies were annihilated; and conquering powers were enfeebled.

"*The earth melted*" - The very earth seemed to melt or dissolve before him. Everything became still. The danger passed away at His command, and the raging world became calm. The Bible abounds in language of this kind, showing the absolute power of God, or His power to control all the raging elements on land and ocean by a Word. The very earth seemed turned to wax, the most solid and substantial of human things melted like the fat of rams upon the altar. But immediately peace followed; the rage of man subsided; hearts capable of repentance relented; and the implacable were silenced. How mighty is a Word from God! How mighty the Incarnate Word from God! O that such a Word would come from the excellent glory even now to melt all hearts in love to Jesus, and to end for ever all the

⁵ <http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/tod/view.cgi?book=ps&chapter=046&verse=006>

persecutions, wars, and rebellions of men! So far we have seen what man did and what God did!

46:7 "*The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah*" – He's the God who made promises to us. He's the God of the Covenant. He's the God who has pledged to be faithful to His people. "*He's the God of Jacob*", another name for "*God of the Jews*". Because Jerusalem did not fall to Assyria, the Psalmist wrote, "*The Lord of hosts (of everything) is with us*". He meant that God was fighting for Jerusalem. Christians believe that God still fights for His people. He is the same God that the Psalmist called "*the God of Jacob*" and "*the Lord of hosts; the Lord of everything*".

There's a different word translated for "*refuge*" in verses 7,11— "*refuge*" – "*misgab*" – high place, refuge, secure height, retreat; stronghold; The main idea is that of height – things up high are more secure and safe. It's like the ancient Israeli fortress of Masada - the huge mountain fort that was the last to fall to the Romans in A.D.70. It was impenetrable because there was no way to attack such a high, steep, mountain (Masada used in Ps.18:2; "fortress"). Nobody can get to God's people. They're secure because of Who He says He is and because of what He does! And that same Word that spoke the worlds into being protects you from all your enemies. REFUGE trusting Him to be a shield, and horn of salvation, high tower, to save from violence – 2Sam.22:3

SUMMARY:

Psalm 46 may have been a worshipful response to God's deliverance of Jerusalem from King Sennacherib's armies. We find a statement of confidence in the first scene, Psalm 46:1-3: God is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in trouble. So don't fear!

1. Though the earth be moved - God is not moved.
2. Though the mountains be shaken - God is never shaken.
3. Though all may fall - God stands.

God is still our refuge and strength, and a very present help in trouble.

The reason for this statement of confidence is found in the second scene, Psalm 46:4-7: There is a river, stream that shall make the city of God glad. Like an ever-flowing river, God being an unfailing source of consolation for Jerusalem. God Himself was in that city as its Protector. Though the heathens raged, and the kingdoms were moved, God had only to utter His voice and even the earth would be dissolved. They had nothing to fear while the God of hosts - the God of mightier armies than those which had invaded the land - was with them. He being the God Jacob, their refuge was with them!

⁶There is this picture in verses 4 and 5 of a serene city, the city of God; but then, when you look at verses 5 through 7, you realize that this city is under siege. The armies of the enemies of God are surrounding this city, and yet the Psalmist has given us a picture of God's power to protect against anything by showing how serene the city of God is even when she's surrounded by her enemies. It's another picture of the challenges facing the people of God in this fallen world, a city engulfed by an innumerable hoard of its enemies. And we learn here in verses 4 through 7 that when we are surrounded by our enemies, we are as secure as if we were singing the praises of the Lord Jesus Christ around the celestial throne in glory.

Not apart of the Lesson:

There is vindication for this statement of confidence is found in the third scene, **Psalm 46:8-11**: we have a reference to the mighty power of God as actually put forth in the desolations, which "*He*" had made in the earth. He had shown that power by making wars to cease; by breaking the bow, and cutting the spear in sunder; and by causing the war chariot to be burned in the fire. They had, therefore, nothing to fear while such a God was their Protector, and it was their duty calmly to confide in Him, and leave the whole issue with Him, for it was His purpose to exalt Himself among the nations of the earth. That's why He can say "*BE STILL and KNOW that I AM GOD!*"

⁷There were three stages of future vindication.

1. Judgment - Great Tribulation "What desolations he hath made in the earth." Vs 8
2. Establishing His Kingdom in peace. vs. 9
3. His exaltation throughout the earth. vs. 10

Jehovah of Hosts who is bringing this to pass, who is moving all things toward this culmination is with us. "He dwells in the midst of His people seek refuge in Him.

APPLICATION:

There is only 'One' refuge and strengthener to count on in time of trouble. God's presence has proved He can help. Seek means to look for that presence!

⁶ <http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Psalms/Psalms%2042-72/24apslm46.htm>

⁷ http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/Chuck_Smith/sn/sermon.cfm?contentID=5051

<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>