

God Is in Trouble

Introduction:

- I. A little boy once prayed, **“God please take care of yourself because if anything happens to you we're in a world of trouble!”** I want you to know that God is in trouble! “What do you mean by that?” I mean that whenever we are in trouble, God is there to help us endure and overcome. Listen to the Psalmist:

Ps 46:1

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

This is tremendously comforting because one thing we all know is that we live in a world of trouble. We live in a world that is troubled by crime and corruption. We live in a world that is troubled by falling finances and rising rates of unemployment. We live in a world that is troubled by the brutality of war and terrorism and the chaos caused by societal discontent. We live in a world that is troubled by the influence of Satan and sin that results in the sadness and sorrow of broken lives. Lives troubled by the betrayal of adultery. Lives troubled by the debauchery of drunkenness and the downfall of immoral living. Lives troubled by marriages that are in a mess due to unloving husbands and defiant wives that turn the home into a place of captivity instead of haven of happiness. We live in a world that is troubled by life. You see, life is full of family tragedy, natural disasters and the shock of death. Yes we live in a world of trouble, but as God's people through it all we have the scriptures. Listen to Paul:

Rom 15:4

4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

The scriptures encourage us in times of trouble because they tell us about the God of heaven Who is in trouble, that is, He is in our trouble and He is there to help. Let's read the rest of Psalms 46 together (**Psa. 46:1-11**).

- II. The emphasis of this Psalm is that God is our help in times of trouble. There are three things we need to do in view of this Psalm. Let's consider them.

Lesson:

- I. **First, We Need to Recognize!**

What do we need to recognize?

- A. **Our Hope Is in God, Not the World.**

Ps 46:2-3

2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

The Psalmist is describing an earthquake in which the foundation under one's feet is shaking. There is probably no better way to figuratively describe the disturbances and upheavals of life than by mountains trembling and being cast into the sea. The point of it is this: even when the world around us begins to lose its stability and earthly foundations begin to shake and shift, as Christians we don't have to worry about it because our hope doesn't rest on the world and what's going on in it, but instead our hope is firmly situated on the shoulders and sovereignty of the living God. We don't have to worry about Wall Street or fret about the falling value of a dollar because we serve a God Who said, "...every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills" (**Psalm 50:10**). In fact, He said, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof" (**Psalm 50:12**).

Listen to me Christians: don't let the shifting sand of the world dictate your life. The world is changing and the fact of the matter is it has always been so. There has never been an extended period of time when the world hasn't been changing. Neighborhoods change. People change. Values change. Opinions change. Everything is always changing. What is in today will be out tomorrow. What's up this week will be down next week. What people like this month, will be dislike next month. What will make you a villain this year, might make you a hero next year. The world is always changing. We have been a great country for over 200 years but over the course of the next 200 years, if Jesus doesn't come back first, we might just be turned into a third-world country. You say, "No that could never happen to us. We are the United States of America!" Really? Egypt used to be a world power. Iraq at one time was the strongest nation on earth. She was known as the Babylonian Empire back then. And before that Assyria dominated the world. Try to find Assyria on a world map today. Italy used to be a part of a world power, that is, the Roman Empire. Oh how the world changes through the years, but there is one constant that doesn't change and that is God and so our hope is in Him.

Psalm 18:2 (ESV)

2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalm 94:22 (ESV)

22 But the LORD has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge.

A stronghold is a fortified place, that is, a place of safety and security where we don't have to worry about the dangers without and that place for us is God.

B. Our Hope Comes from Our Faith, Not Our Circumstances.

No matter what happens in life, our faith in God and His power to deliver us should remain intact. Listen: it is not unusual for the circumstances of life to turn dreary. That's life. In the average life of the everyday person there are more difficult times than easy times. There are more valleys than there are peaks. That's why we love the peaks so much. They aren't upon us every day. In everyday living there are bills to pay. In everyday living there are misbehaving children that try our patience. In everyday living there are layoffs and cutbacks on the job. In everyday living there are pipes that break, air-conditioning units that stop working and lights that go out. In everyday living there are family problems, health problems and financial problems. That's everyday life experienced by the everyday person. And every once in a while we get some relief in some form or another but we know by experience that soon the everyday struggles will be back upon us because that's life. That's just life, but through it all there is something that shouldn't change—we know that God is not going to change, but there is something on our part that shouldn't change—I'm talking about our hope. Why because our hope is not based on circumstances, good or bad, it is based on our faith in God, and we know no matter what that things will be okay because we serve a God Who can work things out. Paul said, "*...all things work together for good for those that love the Lord,*" and in the context of that statement, he was talking about suffering for Christ. So circumstances shouldn't change our outlook one bit.

The circumstances behind Psalms 46 weren't good. The powerful Assyria army under the control of Sennacherib the king was bearing down on Jerusalem. Assyria had already taken 46 cities located in regions that belonged to Hezekiah, the king of Judah and, according to his own words, Sennacherib had Hezekiah shut up in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage. His envoy was pressing Hezekiah to surrender the city and give up (**2 Ki. 18:17-22, 29-35**).

These were the dire circumstances faced by the people of God at that time. And this army that now had them pinned in was not known for their compassion when it came to those who they captured. Notice this inscription that was found on an ancient monument found in the ruins of Assyria.

"Their men, young and old, I took as prisoners. Of some I cut off the feet and hands; of others I cut off the noses, ears, and lips; of the young men's ears I made a heap; of the old men's heads I built a minaret."

Hawlinson's "Five Great Monarchies" vol. 2, p85, note.

Now how did Hezekiah and the Jews react to this serious and frightening threat. That's where our Psalm comes in. Listen to it once again (**Psa. 46:1-2**). Listen: it didn't matter what the reputation of the Assyrians was. The Jews didn't have to fear. Why? Because God was their refuge and their strength. It didn't matter how many other nations the Assyrians conquered. Why? Because while they were in trouble, God was in it with them and He was their help and that was their hope. And we don't have to fear either, regardless of the circumstances in life because the same God that was with the Jews when they were under the attack of the Assyrians is with us too. This is the great encouragement of the Psalm before us—God is with His people (**vers. 5, 7**). It is this faith and trust that God is with us that gives us hope in life regardless of the circumstances. So then, no matter what the circumstance are, we must continue to put of trust in God. The Bible says, *"Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever"* (**Psalm 125:1**).

Now someone says, *"I have put my trust in God to protect me and keep me safe and still my life has been full of trouble."* Well first, let me remind you of what I said a few moments ago. Life is full of trouble for everyone (**Job 14:1**). But let's recognized one more thing.

C. Our Hope is in Eternity, Not in the Present.

The present can be scary, full of obstacles in our path and disappointments in our plans. The present can be frustrating, frightening, and sometimes unforgiving. But perhaps the biggest fear of the present is that it is so unpredictable. That is why it is hard to have a lot of hope in the present. However, as Christians our lives have an eternal dimension to them. We know that nothing that happens here in the present can harm or change the things that matter to us the most, that is, our relationship with God and our home in heaven. As long as we remain faithful to our Creator, our eternity is set and everlasting life is secure. That's the hope that we have. That's what we know is secure. That's what we know is unchangeable, immoveable and fixed. I'm not talking about a once saved, always saved doctrine. I know we can lose our salvation, but as long as we are faithful to God (not perfect but striving for perfection; not sinless but always saintly) we know that later on we will see God face to face. That's what we are hoping for and our hope is secure (**2 Cor. 5:1-10**).

II. Second, We Need to Rejoice!

Psalms 46 is a psalm of joy. To know that God is a present help in times of trouble will surely bring joy to the faithful. To know that God is within His holy habitation, which today is the church, should cause the hearts of all saints to be full of gladness (**Psa. 46:4**).

Again the background of this Psalm seems related to the words written. You see, before Sennacherib shut in the Jews inside Jerusalem, Hezekiah built an underground conduit from the spring of Gihon, located on the west bank of the Kidron Valley, down into reservoir inside the city. Then he covered the spring so that the enemy wouldn't know it was there. The result was that the enemy didn't have access to the water while the Jews had "*a river whose streams make glad the city of God.*" The Psalmist realized that God, through His anointed king, providentially provided for His people during their time of trouble. And let me tell you brethren, God continues to provide for us too. He gave them physical water for their bodies, but today He gives us living water for the soul (**Jn. 4:10, 13-14**). The water that Jesus gives us is His precious Word and all of the benefits that come as a result of receiving Him and that word, including the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit (**Jn. 7:38**). The passage here is probably referring to a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit which we don't have today, but we have the Spirit nevertheless, don't we? The Spirit dwells in each and every one of us through the medium of that word that Jesus was referring to back in John 4. But the point of it is this. These things are immovable and unchangeable. No matter what trouble surrounds us. No matter what's going on with the nations of the world, we still have access to living water. God is still with us and He continues to be our refuge and our strength. He continues to be a very present help in trouble. Listen: God is in trouble. He is in our trouble and He is there to help see us through, and that, brethren, should cause us to rejoice.

As I said a moment ago, this Psalm is a psalm of joy, and while this was true with regard to the Israelites who first received it, it is just as true with regard for us, in fact, perhaps even more so. Why do I say that?

A. We Have a Clearer View of God.

The joy of this Psalm rests in the fact that it is a psalm about God, not us. Yes, we have a refuge. Yes, we have strength in times of trouble. But what is so exciting about the Psalm is Who that strength is and where the refuge can be found, and of course God is the answer. So the Psalm is about God and truth be told we have a clearer view of God than the Old Testament saints ever did.

Hebrews 1:1-2 (ESV)

*1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

This Son, of course, is Jesus and He gives us a picture of the Father that the people of God of old never had. You see, in the Son dwells the fullness of the godhead bodily. To the saints of old God was revealed in words, but to us God is revealed through and by the Living Word. Look at the very next verse found in Hebrews 1.

Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)

3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power...

This reminds us of the words of Jesus Himself when He spoke to Philip and the other apostles (**Jn. 14:8-9**). Another passage that comes to mind is found in the book of Colossians (**Col. 1:15**).

Notice that Jesus is not “*in the image*” of God; Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Why does Paul refer to God as invisible here? Isn't that just stating the obvious? Yes, but the emphasis of Paul is on the fact that Christ, is a visible manifestation of the invisible God so that in Christ we see God. The Greek word is εἰκών (eikōn) and means, not only a resemblance, but a replica of the prototype. The point of it is this—the God of Psalms 46, the God who is our refuge and our strength and a very present help in times of trouble, is a God that we know fully because He has been revealed more fully by Christ.

B. We Have a Greater Deliverance.

As we have pointed out, the background of this Psalm is a deliverance from the fierce army of Assyria, and while that was a great deliverance, we have been delivered from a more fierce enemy, that is, Satan. They were delivered physically, we have been delivered spiritually. They were delivered from the spears and arrows of the army of Sennacherib, we have been delivered from the fiery arrow of the devil. Their deliverance was temporal, while our deliverance is eternal in the heavens. Their deliverance was from physical death, our deliverance is from being spiritually dead and potentially from the second death. I ask you, which is a greater deliverance? And if their deliverance made them glad, what should our deliverance do but cause us to shout with joy (**Phil. 4:4**).

C. We Have a Better Covenant.

One of the emphasis of the Psalm is the presence of God. That's what gave Israel hope and joy and a sense of security. Now, the presence of God was assured because of the covenant that God made with them (**Ex. 19:5-6**). Well, God has made a covenant with us too, but according to scripture, our covenant is far better (**Heb. 7:17-19, 22; 8:6**). Why is the new covenant better? Why does it contain better promises and a better hope? It is better because it offers a better way of obtaining salvation.

The old covenant offered salvation by perfect works, that is, sinless perfection. The new covenant offers salvation by mercy and grace appropriated, applied and assumed by our response to the gospel of Christ. The first covenant offered forgiveness of sins that was temporary based upon the shed blood of bulls and goats; the second covenant offers forgiveness of sins that is permanent based upon the shed blood of the Lamb of God, that is, Jesus and so with regard to the covenant that we are now under, God says, "I will remember their sins and iniquities no more" (**Heb. 10:17**). So then, when we read Psalms 46, we ought to first recognize and then rejoice. But there is one more thing.

III. Third, We Need to Reflect!

Maybe this should have been our first point, but since it comes at the end of the Psalm itself, we have made it our final point. The truth is, however, whenever we find ourselves in a difficult situation; whenever trouble invades our life, the first thing we ought to do is stop and reflect. Someone said, "We need to wait before we work, sit before we serve and know before we teach." The point of it is—there is a time for reflection. Listen to the Psalm.

Psalm 46:8 (ESV)

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth.

The word "behold" means to contemplate and to contemplate means "to consider with continued attention, that is, to meditate" (Webster). In other words, the psalmist is taking about reflecting. Reflecting on what? The psalmist is calling on us to reflect upon the greatness and glory of God (**vers. 9-10**). To be still means to be quiet and sit tight. I'm not saying that is the lexical meaning of the words; I'm saying that is what the Psalmist is telling us to do. Stop and reflect upon the God that you are serving. Verse 10 says, "...know that I am God." The word God is from the Hebrew Elohim and is the name of God that points to His omnipotence, sovereignty, and creative power. In other words it brings to mind God's greatness and might. And so in times of trouble, God says, be still and reflect, not only on the fact that I am with you, but that I am all powerful and so you don't have to be afraid. The Psalmist is concluding this Psalm by saying to us, because of what we know, that is, that God is our refuge and strength in times of trouble; that God is with us and that God has all power, we don't have to be stressed out. Here is the practical value of the Psalm before us. We live in a world that is stressed out, but we can avoid being overly stressed when we behold the works of God and realize that our Father is in control.

A few years ago Thomas Hobbs of the University of Washington & some fellow sociologists published their research on Human Stress. They listed many of the common experiences of life, evaluated their impact on our mental & emotional well-being, & rated them according to the stress they produced in our lives. This stress rating was expressed in what they called "Life-Change Units, or LCUs." The worse the stress rating, the higher the LCUs.

For instance, getting a divorce is 73 LCUs. Being pregnant is 40 LCUs. Remodeling a home is 25 LCUs. On & on went their list of life's stresses, each one rated in LCUs.

When we learn of a friend, maybe our own age, who is dying of cancer; or when we go to a doctor & he tells us there is something questionable in our Xray; or when our children grow up & move away; or when our children grow up and stay home. These are all LCUs! We are constantly being bombarded by LCUs, & their conclusion was that, if within a year's time, we experience a cumulative total of more than 300 Life Change Units, most people will have either a physical or mental or emotional breakdown because, humanly speaking, we just can't cope with that much stress. But notice that I said "humanly speaking," & I emphasize the word "humanly," because our trust in God can make all the difference. The same things that happen to people in the world, happen to those of us who are Christians. We get bad reports from the doctor just like others. We get laid off of jobs just like others. We have stress causing children just like others. What's the difference? We approach the changes of life, whether they are good or bad, with God in view, at least that is what we should do and that is what the Psalm before us encourages us to do. Be still and behold God. He is great enough to overcome any obstacle or solve any problem in our lives.

Whatever happened to Hezekiah and the Israelites when the Assyrians were bearing down on them? Behold the works of the Lord (**2 Ki. 18:20, 32-35**).

Yes, Hezekiah was in trouble. The Israelites were in what looked like a no-win situation. But God was with them so what looked like a no-win situation was in reality a no-lose situation. What looked like an advantage for Sennacherib was actually an advantage for Hezekiah and the Jews. Why? Because God was their refuge and their strength. God was for them a very present help in trouble so Sennacherib had to flee back to Nineveh where a short time later he was murdered by his own son. Now, that same God who took down 185,000 Assyrians in one night, is the same God we are serving right now. We need to listen to what God said through the Psalmist. "know that I am God." What God is under consideration? The God who created the heavens and the earth in an instant by simply speaking the word. The God who cares for every sparrow that flies in the sky and sees every grasshopper that jumps on the ground. The God who was able to bring forth a great nation from the loins of man who was 100 years old and whose wife was barren. A God with Whom nothing is impossible. Let's stop and reflect upon God from time to time and all that He does for us and all that He is.

Conclusion:

God is in trouble! He is in our trouble and He is there to help us overcome. Let's put our trust and confidence in Him always.