

Taking Refuge in God – Psalm 46

Psalm 46 is another psalm that instructs us on how to “take refuge in God.” First, though, the author extols God as our refuge:

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

*2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change
And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;*

*3 Though its waters roar and foam,
Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.*

Selah.

*4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.*

*5 God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.*

*6 The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;
He raised His voice, the earth melted.*

*7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.*

Selah.



The sufficiency of God as our refuge

The author uses many images to emphasize how utterly adequate God is as our refuge:

- God’s protection is more than sufficient for all dangers (“refuge;” “stronghold”). As the Creator, He rules over even the most terrifying natural disasters like earthquakes and tsunamis (vss. 2,3). Likewise, He rules over hostile nations even when they make war (vs. 6). One word from Him is sufficient to completely defeat them (see Isaiah 36,37). If God can protect us from such overwhelming dangers, He can certainly protect us in the midst of our daily troubles.
- God also promises to give us whatever help we may need during our troubles (“a very present help in trouble”). He who is the Commander of a vast multitude of mighty angels (“the Lord of hosts”) is *with us*. He who graciously stood by Jacob despite his many flaws is likewise *our Fortress* – the One who is committed to us on the basis of His grace rather than our goodness. Like the river that provided a consistent source of water for those who lived in arid Jerusalem, so God’s presence provides a consistent source of spiritual life and gladness to all who belong to Him.

How to take refuge in God

⁸ *Come, behold the works of the LORD,
Who has wrought desolations in the earth.*

⁹ *He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariots with fire.*

¹⁰ *“Cease striving and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”*

¹¹ *The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold.
Selah.*



In the last part of this psalm, the author reminds us of God’s refuge and exhorts us to appropriate it in two ways:

- “*Come, behold the works of the Lord.*” “Come, behold” is a command to attend and reflect on something (instead of a superficial and forgetful glance). This “something” is how God has delivered His people in the past.

Through the Bible, each of us has access to God’s track-record of deliverance. In the Old Testament, God delivered Israel from bondage to the Egyptians. Many other psalms call Israelites to “remember” this deliverance – not only as a literal historical event, but also as assurance that this same God is still for them and with them in the present (e.g., Psalm 78). In the New Testament, God delivered us from our sins through Jesus’ death and resurrection (Romans. 4:25). By reflecting on this deliverance, Paul concludes that “*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*” (Romans 8:32) If God has paid the great price to deliver us, He will certainly give us whatever we need to grow in Him. Likewise, as we remember and reflect on God’s past deliverances, our present trust in Him is strengthened.

Each of us also has a personal track-record of God’s deliverances. He has delivered us from specific temptations. He has sustained us through specific trials. He has overcome specific sin-habits. Remember these deliverances. Treasure these displays of God’s protective power. And consider your present troubles in light of these proofs of God’s claim to be your Refuge and Fortress!

- “*Cease striving and know that I am God.*” “Cease striving” can also be translated “let go; relax.” This is not a command to be lazy or passive. Rather, it is a command to desist from anxious attempts to deliver yourself from trouble, and to instead surrender



yourself to God's care. The primary way to "cease striving" is to "know that I am God." "Know" refers to relational acquaintance with God and His ways. By remembering God's character and His past record of deliverance (see above), we affirm that He will deliver us in the present, and so we entrust ourselves to Him and to His care. Paul appropriated God's refuge in this way even as he faced imminent execution:

2 Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. (See also 2 Timothy 4:16-18.)

To all who draw near to God in this way, He is indeed "a refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble!"

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