

Be Still and Know

Psalms 46:1-11 HCSB For the choir director. A song of the sons of Korah. According to Alamo. God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble. 2 Therefore we will not be afraid, though the earth trembles and the mountains topple into the depths of the seas, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with its turmoil. Selah 4 *There is a river--its streams delight the city of God, the holy dwelling place of the Most High.* 5 God is within her; she will not be toppled. God will help her when the morning dawns. 6 Nations rage, kingdoms topple; the earth melts when He lifts His voice. 7 The LORD of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah 8 Come, see the works of the LORD, who brings devastation on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease throughout the earth. He shatters bows and cuts spears to pieces; He burns up the chariots. 10 "Stop your fighting--and know that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth." 11 The LORD of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah

Introduction: This psalm was a continual comfort to the Reformer Martin Luther, who used it as the basis of his great hymn: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." It can be just as precious to us today if we'll learn its secrets. The author speaks of three things.

1. A Tight Space. The psalmist calls God "a helper who is always found in times of trouble." The Hebrew word translated "trouble" literally means "a tight space". Have you ever been in a tight space, where you're pressed on every side, where your options are limited, your freedom is restricted, or your progress is arrested? The psalmist specifies two such places.

A. Uncontrollable circumstances. Verse 2 says: "We will not be afraid, though the earth trembles and the mountains topple into the depths of the seas," describing a natural disaster involving storms, seas, and earthquakes. Because God is my help, I will not fear when the foundations are shaken. When we face circumstances over which we have no control, God is our refuge.

B. Insurmountable opposition. In verses 8-9, the psalmist speaks of war, bows, spears, and chariots. He is saying, "When I face an army against which I have no ability to fight, I am still not afraid. " Why? Because God, my refuge and strength, fights for me.

2. A Mighty Fortress. God uses these troubles to help us say, "I don't know what to do." We are determined people who want to come up with answers ourselves. Faced with a career choice, we get a legal pad, make a pro/con list, then methodically and logically work through choices and arrive at a reasonably good decision. When things go wrong, we know where to go, what books to read, who to consult, and what techniques to employ. When it comes to the church, we think we know what to do in difficulty. We form a task force, start a committee, do research, set goals, recruit people, and fund the program. We sometimes act as though we don't need God. However, we will never really know Him until we humbly acknowledge, "We don't know what to do, but our eyes are fixed on you."

3. A Divine Strategy. How do I get help from God? The answer is shocking: We must be still (v. 10). This word means to cease striving, to stop working at it, to relax. God's strategy is counter-cultural. Think about the pace of family life, especially with kids. Running to gymnastics, running to school, dropping them off at church, picking them up, going here, going there. Think about the pace of work. Many of you will open your briefcases and work on stuff for tomorrow morning. Then tomorrow it will be activity after activity, appointment after appointment, phone call after phone call in an endless blur till next Sunday. Then, there's the

church schedule. You may think we sit around dreaming up stuff for you to do, dreaming up programs for you to be involved in, dreaming up meetings for you to attend. When you put it all together, it mitigates against Psalm 46:10. How, then, do we be still?

A. We do it in our schedules. We must simplify. Downsize. Find time for our devotions. Find time to rest. Find time for devotional literature and prayer. When our calendars are under the Spirit's control. He always reserves time to be with Christ.

B. We do it in our spirits. Release our cares into God's hands. Only He can solve the insolvable, storm the impregnable, and change the unmerciful. Only He can bring sunshine out of storms and flowers from mud. He can protect you on the outside (God is our refuge) and strengthen you on the inside (God is our strength).

Conclusion: Two old songs come to mind: "A Mighty Fortress is our God, a Bulwark never failing! Our helper, He, amid the flood of mortal ills, prevailing." The other one says: "Be still my soul, the Lord is on thy side." He *is* your mighty fortress and He *is* on your side. And He *does* say: "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen. I will be exalted in the earth. For the Lord of Hosts is with us, and the God of Jacob is our refuge."