

Let's pray.

We'll ask for the Lord's help.

We're working through Psalms this summer.

Not working through Psalms, just working through some Psalms, specifically regarding God's heart for the nations and how God feels and acts towards the nations.

So let's pray and ask for his help.

Heavenly Father, thank you again for your word that reveals your heart to us.

Lord, that shows us who you are, that also reveals who we are, Lord, and how we ought to be in light of you and in your presence.

Lord, would you show us both things today?

Would you give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts that are deeply in love with you?

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Kids sometimes don't have any boundaries.

My kids in particular like to lob out, you know, very deep philosophical probing questions at random times, usually when they have to go to bed and they're trying to put off, you know, going to bed.

But, you know, often it's just, you know, a random time that couldn't be worse.

Like this question, for instance, which seems to have come up a lot lately.

I don't know why, not sure why, but they're like, dad, what's your biggest fear?

And if I've got a little time, and it's kind of a sober moment, I'll answer seriously, and I'll be like, my biggest fear is that one of you would walk away from the Lord and not return.

And that, you know, we have a little discussion about that.

Or if I'm, you know, not feeling as spiritual and it's a bad time, I'll just be like heights, you know, or something like that, which is true.

I did get up on the ladder and I did not like it.

So if anybody is willing to come Friday and get up on the ladder for me,

I mean, I was just telling myself, October's coming, tree stands, I need to start dealing with this a little bit sooner.

But yeah, biggest fear, what's your biggest fear?

And there are times, and maybe you've experienced this in your life, when it seems like our biggest fears are coming true.

I think we've all at least experienced a time when we felt like,

the world was unstable, that the world was crashing down around us, as if something that we had previously thought was secure, was stable, that we took for granted as we're just going through life, had become quicksand or sinking sand, as we've sung earlier.

And if you haven't experienced that yet, or if you haven't lived long enough to experience that yet,

My encouraging news to you today is just wait.

It happens to all of us at one time or another.

Maybe it was a big event for you, like 9-11 or the COVID pandemic, or maybe you experienced some unexpected financial disaster.

You thought you were doing good, you were making by, but then all of a sudden you just got hit by wave after wave of

financial difficulty.

Or maybe it's your own life-altering diagnosis where you're just going along through life and then all of a sudden you're blindsided by significant health issues.

Each of us faces times when the future is uncertain.

Again, if you haven't, you will.

Everything, you know, where everything seems to be going wrong and the things that we leaned on for stability feel wobbly and like they're about to give way.

Well, we saw last week in Psalm 44 that the nation of Israel's fears were coming true, right?

The world's crashing down.

They're surrounded.

They've been attacked.

Many of them have been killed and imprisoned.

But now we see in Psalm 46 this assurance that the hope and the steadfast love of God

is here and present for the people, right?

So in Psalm 46, the psalmist assures us that the hope and steadfast love that the psalmist knows that the people need and that he's calling for at the end of 44 is actually found and given to them in God.

In other words, we'll see today that God is and will be exalted in all the earth as a strong refuge for his people.

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Well, this psalm is broken up into three sections, and they're broken up by the Selahs.

So we don't really know what Selah means.

It just seems like a good place to pause and think about what was just said.

So if you get to one while you're reading it, I would encourage you to just pause, reflect, meditate on what's going on.

Sometimes it's put in there for structural purposes, which I think is more the case in this psalm.

that the psalm is actually broken up into three separate parts by these selahs.

So our three points today are going to be the three sections of the psalms.

In the first section, verses 1 to 3, we see that God is a strong refuge.

In fact, the psalmist opens up right in verse 1, saying this very thing, right?

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

The key word in this verse is the verb is.

God doesn't sell us.

He's not hawking a refuge.

He doesn't sell us a refuge for our obedience or our money or our allegiance.

He doesn't give us strength.

He doesn't provide health.

or help, he is our refuge, right?

He is our strength.

He is our help.

There's no refuge greater than our God.

James Johnson puts it this way.

He says, God is omniscient.

He knows every hair that falls from our heads.

God is omnipotent.

He commands every atom in the universe.

God is omnipresent.

He is everywhere we go.

God is omnipotent.

He is all good and never does anything but good to us.

This God, this matchless, boundless, sovereign God,
is our refuge.

And there's all kinds of strength that we can cultivate or seek, isn't there?

There's physical strength, there's financial strength, there's social or political strength, but there's no strength that compares to the inner strength that comes from our union with Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

It's the kind of strength that moves mountains, Jesus said.

Strength to change hearts and overcome indwelling sin.

Strength to persevere under the weight of heavy trials and suffering.

God is our strength.

And also, if we just pause and we think and meditate for a minute, what this little verb is also means is that we don't find refuge, strength, and help by looking for and striving for refuge, strength, and help.

We find these things and we receive these things by seeking God because he is those things.

Which means that when we stop worrying and obsessing over the things themselves and we pursue God and make knowing and communing with him our priority, that's when we will find refuge, strength, and specifically a refuge in strength like no others.

Seek first his kingdom and all these things will be added to you as well.

You know, I hear all the time, far too often out of my own mouth, you know, I don't have time.

I don't have time for God's word.

I don't have time to pray.

I don't have time to spend with God's people.

I don't have time for God and his kingdom.

But trust me, according to this passage here, you can't afford not to.

If we don't seek first God, we miss the one who is our refuge, strength, and help.

So do you want to find whatever you've been spinning your wheels trying to get this week?

We've all got something that we're looking to, that we're looking forward to, trying to achieve as we go to work, as we spend time with our family, as we go throughout life.

Surrender it.

Seek God first.

and all these things will be added to you as well.

I'm not promising that you're going to get those specific things.

I am promising you, and the Lord is promising you, that you'll receive better.

God is an ever-present help in trouble.

Even when the world falls apart, we see in verses 2 and 3, it says, "...therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling."

The sea in ancient literature often signifies mysterious danger and peril.

Danger that is kind of unknown and dark and mysterious.

This is why we're told in Revelation 21.1 that there won't be a sea in heaven.

This kind of mystery that's often associated with death and peril and not being able to be tamed, that that won't be in heaven.

Right?

The image here that we get in these two verses is of the world falling apart, right?

The mountains disintegrating, falling into the sea.

And maybe that's you this morning.

Maybe your life is tottering and shaking and about to fall into the sea.

God can be your refuge and strength and an ever-present help in trouble.

Turn to him now, even before we get to the rest of the passage here this morning.

Turn to him now, and he will become not only a strong refuge, but we see in the second section that God is a sustaining stream.

Look at verses 4 and 5.

In this section, we see God's provision.

We also see God's protection in the image of the sustaining stream.

In verse 4, he says, There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

God is in the midst of her.

He shall not be moved.

God will help her when morning dawns.

The image here in this section is of a besieged city.

Cities had walls for protection and then gates, and their citizens, when they were attacked, would flee in the gates.

They'd shut them up, and the walls and the gates would help protect them from their attackers.

So in order to take the city, the attackers would have to surround it and then cut off all the supplies to the city.

So they would either try to force the people on the inside to open up the gates and surrender, or to die of thirst or starvation.

So besieged people stuck behind the walls kind of needed two things.

First, they need a provision, and a city with a stream or a river running through it was in pretty good shape, because they would have plenty to drink, unless they did something to the stream.

But a stream, especially an underground stream that was running through a city, usually meant that they were in good shape to wait out a siege.

And maybe you're feeling the squeeze this morning.

Maybe you're feeling like a besieged city and supplies are running low, that your needs aren't being provided for.

The psalmist is encouraging you to turn to the Lord.

There's a river that makes glad the city of God.

I think Paul puts it this way in Philippians 4.

He says, Besieged people need provision, but they also need help and protection.

Look at verses 5 to 7.

So God is in the midst of her.

She shall not be moved.

God will help her when morning dawns.

The nations rage, the kingdoms totter.

He utters his voice, the earth melts.

The Lord of hosts is with us.

The God of Jacob is our fortress.

I wonder if J.R.R.

Tolkien had this passage in mind when he wrote The End of the Battle of Helm's Deep.

You've got to let me get nerdy here for a second.

It just fits too perfectly.

The Uruk-hai, the bad guys, have broken through.

The women and children in this fortress that they had fled to are trapped, and the men are about to ride out in one last heroic but ultimately futile attempt to resist.

when suddenly, in the east, as the morning sun dawns, Gandalf the Great Wizard appears with all of the cavalry and rides in to save the day, and everybody's saved, and we all cheer, and it's just a wonderful relief at their darkest moments.

Well, that's exactly the image that we're getting here, that the Lord comes, right?

That he comes, that God will help her when the morning dawns.

That even though there's an end to the night, there's an end to the night and the Lord will come with help at the morning dawn.

In verse 6, the nations who oppose God and his people are raging, right?

They're collapsing and in a frenzy, but God's city will not be moved.

He speaks and saves the day.

God speaks, and not only do the nations shudder, right, and fall apart and totter, but the earth itself melts.

And we see that nothing can resist God's subduing voice, that when God speaks, not only do his opponents, but the earth itself gives way.

Look at verses 8 and 9.

We see God's voice working through, we see God's voice at work in his works, but also in what he says.

Verse eight says, come behold the works of the Lord.

Now he has brought desolations on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the end of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear.

He burns the chariots with fire.

The primary work that God's word or his subduing voice is accomplishing here is the utter eradication of war and conflict.

He has the ability, God has the ability, and God alone has the ability to bring worldwide peace right now.

And one day we're told that he will.

We often refer to Jesus as the Prince of Peace around Christmas time.

You know, we sing Silent Night and we ooh and ah over the baby in the manger.

And it's right to do that because when Jesus came the first time, he came gently and he offered peace on earth and goodwill to men, meaning peace between God and men.

and God's goodwill towards men.

And he did it, again, in a gentle and lowly and humble way.

But the kind of eschatological peace that God is bringing here in Psalm 46 is not coming gently like a babe in a manger.

Christ will come again riding a white horse.

and bring desolations and break bows and shatter spears and burn chariots.

This final peace will come as all of those who had not made peace with God and bent the knee to his son, Jesus, are put down and defeated and punished eternally.

Then the whole world...

but especially God's people, will hear the words of the Lord and know the words of the Lord.

These words specifically here in verse 10.

Be still and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations.

I will be exalted in the earth.

The Lord of hosts is with us.

The God of Jacob is our fortress.

I mean, you can picture the nations raging and shouting and the mountains collapsing and melting.

And then just like Christ calmed the sea, right, just with a word, God utters a word and just silence, right?

Peace and silence, everyone's quiet.

And often, you know, we're at our busiest.

We're like the raging nations.

We're like the tottering mountains when we're not living as if the Lord is this kind of God, right?

With this kind of authority and this kind of power.

To truly know God is to be in awe of his majesty and power, his beauty and his holiness and his wisdom and his sovereignty.

You know, when you're truly in awe of something or someone, you're not talking, you're not busy, you're silent and still just kind of taking it in.

I do think this is one thing among others, but one thing that good art helps us to experience, how we ought to be in front of God, right?

Just taking in his beauty and his majesty, silent, not saying a word.

You know, if you're looking for a refuge and strength this morning, you must start with quiet, unhurried, undistracted time with the Lord in his word and prayer and with his people.

God will be exalted in the nations.

He will be exalted in the earth.

And that exaltation is coming gloriously when the old heavens and the old earth are destroyed and when God's enemies are defeated and he creates a new heaven and a new earth.

God is and will be exalted in all of the earth as a strong refuge for his people, right?

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It's pretty clear, though, throughout the psalm that the psalmist wants us to see God as a present help in time of trouble.

I mean, he said it right in verse 1, that we ought to see God as a present help in time of trouble.

But it's also clear that he wants us to see God as the ultimate help on the final day of trouble.

Verses two and three describe the dissolution and destruction of the earth in apocalyptic terms, referring to that last day, right, when the old earth and the old heaven are destroyed.

And even in verses four and five, we know that Jerusalem is the city of God, that that's what he's referring to.

But Jerusalem didn't and doesn't have a river flowing through it.

They tunneled down to like kind of an underground stream at one point, but not in the terms that the psalmist is using here.

And God didn't always dwell in her midst, right?

They sinned and his glory left the temple because of their sin.

The psalmist here is giving us a glimpse of that final day when Christ will return and we will dwell secure and safe in that new Jerusalem.

John puts it this way in Revelation 21, verse 3.

He says, And Revelation 22 says,

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

Also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its 12 kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The psalmist gives an open invitation in verse 8 to this new Jerusalem.

He says, come, come behold the works of the Lord.

That's an invitation to the nations that the Lord is about to subdue and to bring low.

Find God to be your refuge and strength and a very present help in time of trouble.

Come behold the works of the Lord.

There's healing for the nations in the city of God.

But as we've been seeing this summer, right, the nations need to hear that invitation.

The Lord is slow to anger, but there's a day coming when he will wipe out and eternally punish the opposition.

And all of the earth will be still and know that he is God.

They'll know he is God and be still to the joy of his people, but to the dismay of his opponents.

There's still a job to do in bringing that invitation.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, you are our refuge and strength and ever-present help in time of trouble.

Lord, I know many of us need to know that at the core of our being.

Lord, you are not only our refuge and strength and help,

when circumstances and other people seem to be against us.

But Lord, you have provided a refuge through your son, even from your own wrath that you've described here in this passage, or that we can be safe from the coming judgment because you provided your son to take our place and to cover us in his righteousness.

And Lord, you did that at great cost to yourself.

You didn't spare your own son.

How will you also not with him graciously give us all things?

So Lord, we come to you as a refuge, as our help, as our strength.

And Lord, I ask that you would move us to bring that refuge and to invite others to come and see the works of the Lord.

to come and see your majesty, not only in your strength that will one day make all things new, but also, Lord, your majesty and meekness in seeing the great price that your son paid to show us grace and mercy and to give us the ability to extend that invitation to take refuge under your wing.

Lord, we're thankful for the hope and the beauty that we find in your arms and in the gospel.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.