



Hope, Because He Promises to Help
Psalm 46

Lake Arrowhead Church, Waleska, Georgia
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Have you ever had one of those days when everything went wrong? Sure you have.

- If you've ever left the kids playing in the family room for just a few minutes and come back to find this ... **[Photo]** you know you're having a bad day.
- If you've ever parked your truck and come back to find this ... **[Photo]** you know you're having a bad day.
- If you've ever headed to a potluck and this happened ... **[Photo]** you know you're having a bad day.
- If you've ever gone in the attic to get a suitcase, and this happened ... **[Photo]** you know you're having a bad day.
- And, if this has ever happened to you ... **[Photo]** you're really having a bad day.



All of us have bad days, and I'm not talking about having a flat tire or being stuck in traffic. My guess is that today, all of us are worried or burdened or praying about something. That's why we're here. We hope God will help.

Hope is more than wishful thinking, optimism, or good luck. True hope, biblical hope, is based on the promises of God. If God promised, it's guaranteed.

The hymn we often sing asks the question, "What is our hope in life and death?"¹ The resounding answer is "Christ alone!" ***Our hope in life and death is Christ alone! Hope is trusting that He will help us in this life and trusting that He will get us to the next life. That's why, as the Bible says, we "rejoice in hope!"*** (Romans 12:12).

That sounds good, but you may be feeling pretty hopeless right now. Prayers have yet to be answered. Miracles have yet to come. Circumstances are getting worse. And your faith is weak. You may be dealing with health issues, some annoying and some serious. You may be dealing with financial worries. You may be praying for a prodigal who is far from God. You may be dealing with disappointment or depression, loneliness or fear, grief or loss. You may be confused and wonder, “Where is God?”

So, in times like these, does being a Christian make any difference? The answer is yes!

We have hope because, as David Jeremiah has said, “Hope is a Person.”² The Bible calls Him “the God of hope.”³ Again, hope is not wishful thinking. Hope is a person. And because our hope is in God – a God who is great, a God who is good, and a God who loves us – we can rejoice in advance, acting as if we have already received His promises. Therefore, we “rejoice” now, “in hope” of what is to come.

Psalm 46 is a psalm of hope. It promises God’s help. “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Whatever we’re going through, we can know that God promises to be there when we need Him most.

Psalm 46 is a worship hymn. Notice the sub-title. “For the choir director. A Psalm of the sons of Korah, set to Alamo. A Song.” “Alamo” referred to female voices. So, this was a song written by the musical family of Korah and led by a female choir. It has three sections, like three verses to a song, and each section ends with the word “Selah.”⁴ “Selah” was a musical term, a technical instruction for the singers and musicians. It referred to a break in the music, to an interlude. The root word means to weigh or appraise.⁵ “Selah” was a moment inserted in a Hebrew hymn allowing people to think about what they were singing. “Selah” is a time to pause and ponder. Psalm 46 is a song calling Israel, and calling us, to pause and ponder the presence of God, and remember that *He promises to be there when we need Him most.*

HELP

Psalm 46 is a psalm of hope because *His presence means His help.* “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. SELAH” (Psalm 46:1-3, NIV). What a tender truth. What a comforting truth. His presence means His help. And that’s what many of us desperately need.

We know, by experience, that life is filled with problems. Life is filled with stress and distress. That’s exactly what the Hebrew word “trouble” means.⁶ It’s feeling squeezed. It’s feeling threatened. The word literally means to be trapped in a narrow space. We would say being stuck between a rock and a hard place.

David knew that feeling. He had problems too, and he wrote about them in his many psalms.⁷ “Do not be far from me,” he cried out to God, “for trouble is near and there is no one to help” (Psalm 22:11, NIV). “The troubles of my heart have multiplied” – it’s bad and it’s getting worse – “free me from my anguish” (Psalm 25:17, NIV). David believed with all his heart, “You

are my hiding place. You will protect me from trouble” (Psalm 32:7, NIV). David was saying, “Lord, I’m counting on You to get me out of this!”

Psalm 46 continues, “Though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea” ... if the ground crumbles under your feet, if your world falls apart. “Though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake” ... if circumstances are intimidating and overwhelming ... David knew what that felt like, and so do we. We know, by experience, that life is filled with problems.

Yet, we believe, by faith, that God cares about us. We believe that because of verses like Psalm 46:1. “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.” Psalm 46 was the inspiration for Martin Luther’s great hymn “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” Luther was inspired because of three words in Psalm 46:1 which describe God’s help.

The first word is *refuge*. “God is our refuge.”⁸ Refuge refers to a safe place. When we run to God, we run to a safe place. The Bible also describes God as a “shelter from a storm.”⁹ The Bible refers to Him as a “rock” and a “shield.”¹⁰ We believe that God cares about us and that He will provide a safe place, a shelter, when trouble is breathing down our neck.

The second word is *strength*. “God is our ... strength.”¹¹ Elsewhere, the Bible calls Him “a tower of strength.”¹² Like a tower standing tall in the center of a city, so God stands tall in the center of our lives. Interestingly, this word also described the emotion that comes with singing and dancing, like citizens celebrating their blessings by dancing around the tower in the center of their city. It’s you and me celebrating liberty and security on the Fourth of July. It’s feeling safe and secure. It’s knowing that God is there to strengthen us when we are weak and overwhelmed.

The third word is *help*.¹³ “God is ... an ever-present help.”¹⁴ No matter what we’re facing, our Father is ever present, very present, abundantly present, always present. David believed that with all his heart when he said, “God is my helper, the Lord is the sustainer of my soul” (Psalm 54:4, NAS). He sustains us when life is overwhelming. David said, “From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, the one who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1-2, ESV). Jesus also referred to the Holy Spirit as “the Helper” (John 14:26, NAS).

This hymn is not merely poetic. It promises real help for real life. So what does “trouble” look like for you these days? What is overwhelming you? A financial problem? A health problem? A family problem? Whatever it is, He promises to be there when we need Him most. “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1, NIV). His presence means His help.

HOPE

Psalm 46 praises God for His help in the past and trusts God for His help in the future. That’s why Psalm 46 is psalm of hope. ***His presence means there is hope.*** Knowing that God is there gives us reason to hope, reason to keep going, and reason to expect something good. When we’re overwhelmed by life, Psalm 46 promises hope, real hope.

Listen to how hope is described in verses 4-7. “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall. God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall. He lifts his voice, and the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress. SELAH” (Psalm 46:4-7, NIV).

Again, “Selah” means to pause and ponder. So let’s pause and ponder what these verses mean.

The psalm describes hope as a refreshing river. It describes hope as a city in which God dwells. “God is within her” (Psalm 46:5, NIV). “The Lord Almighty is with us” (Psalm 46:7, NIV). The hymn was a promise to the nation. If a nation can rely on God, then so can we. If God is strong enough to help a nation, then He is strong enough to help us.¹⁵ Who is with us? “The Most High ... The Lord Almighty is with us” (Psalm 46:4, 7, NIV).

Psalm 46 promises that “God will help at break of day” (Psalm 46:5, NIV). Every morning begins with hope, because every morning God is still God and He is with us. Jeremiah, the suffering prophet, experienced the lowest levels of despair, and yet by faith said, “The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23, NAS). God was faithful when you went to bed last night and God was faithful when you got up this morning. He will never leave you and He will never let you down. Therefore, there’s hope.

Your troubles may be overwhelming, you may feel like everything is hopeless, but that’s not true. With God, life is never hopeless. David experienced worry and stress and fear and despair just like we do. Yet time and again, he expressed his hope. “I wait for you, O Lord; you will answer, O Lord my God” (Psalm 38:15, NIV). “For what do I wait? My hope is in You” (Psalm 39:7, NAS). “O Lord, you alone are my hope. I’ve trusted you, O Lord, from childhood” (Psalm 71:5, NLT). David was saying, “I’ve been trusting You since I was a child, I’ve been trusting You my whole life, and I’m not going to stop now.”

Like David, when we pause and ponder the presence of God, we find hope.

HIM

His presence means help. His presence means hope. ***His presence means Him!!*** God promises to be there when we need Him most!

“Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations (the victories) he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth, he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire.”¹⁶ Then in the middle of hymn God speaks. “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth.”¹⁷ To which the choir responds, “The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress. SELAH” (Psalm 46:8-11, NIV).

God commands the nations of the world to be still. To stop their fighting and stop their boasting. “Be still, and know that I am God.” He is God. Only He is exalted. He reminds the nations that He is sovereign and rules over the world. And if that’s true in a global sense, it’s true in a personal sense. He is our God too. He is sovereign over our problems as well. Which means, we can trust Him and put our hope in Him.

The hymn reminded Israel of all the times the Lord led them to victory, and it was a promise that He would do it again. And the hymn assures us that if God can overcome the mightiest army, then He can overcome the worst of our problems.¹⁸

“Selah.” Pause and ponder. Tenderly, He says, “Be still, and know that I am God.” His presence means Him.

When a person is drowning, fear escalates, and a person starts thrashing in the water, and makes it harder to rescue. We do the same thing when we’re worried, stressed, or overwhelmed. We thrash about, and that’s when God says, “Be still.”¹⁹ Or as the best translation says, “Cease striving.”²⁰

That sounds good, but prayers have yet to be answered. Miracles have yet to come. Circumstances are getting worse. You’re dealing with health issues, financial worries, and family problems that break your heart. You may be dealing with disappointment or depression, loneliness or fear, grief or loss. You may be confused and wonder, “Where is God?”

But listen. Whatever you feel and whatever you’re going through, God invites you to rest in Him. That’s exactly what Jesus said. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28, NIV).

“Be still, and know that I am God.” Know that He rules and watches. Know that He is all-powerful and all-present. Know that He is great and He is good. Know that He hears and cares and loves.

His presence means help. His presence means hope. His presence means Him, all of Him. God is inviting us to come to Him, to pour our hearts out to Him, and to rely on Him when we need Him most.

CONCLUSION

Whatever we’re facing, we can count on His promises because we can count on Him. As Joshua said, “Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to the house of Israel failed, every one was fulfilled” (Joshua 21:45, NIV).

Max Lucado is right when he says, “For every problem in life God has given us a promise.”²¹ When we’re in trouble, when we’re lonely, when we’re weary, there’s a promise. When we’re worried, when we’re afraid, when we’re grieving, there’s a promise.

“Selah.” For the next few moments, I encourage you to pause and ponder the promises on the screen. These are not just words from a book. These are not just Bible verses to cheer us up. These are promises from Him to you! *We have hope because God promises to be there when we need Him most.*

- When you’re in trouble, remember Psalm 46:1. “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”
- When you’re lonely, remember Psalm 145:18. “The Lord is near to all who call upon Him.”²²
- When you’re weary, remember what Jesus said in Matthew 11:28. “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
- When you’re worried, remember Philippians 4:6. “Be anxious for nothing, instead pray about everything.”²³
- When you’re afraid, remember Isaiah 41:10. The Lord promised, “Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you.”
- When you’re hurting, remember Psalm 34:18. “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted.”
- When you’re grieving, remember Revelation 21:4. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain.”
- “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear ... ‘Be still, and know that I am God’ ... The Lord Almighty is with us” (Psalm 46).

NOTES

¹ “Christ Our Hope in Life and Death,” word and music written by Keith Getty, Matt Boswell, Jordan Kauflin, Matt Merker, Matt Papa, Getty Music Publishing, 2020.

² David Jeremiah, *Hope – An Anchor for Life* (San Diego, CA: Turning Point for God, 2016), page 4.

³ Romans 15:13.

⁴ “Selah” occurs 74 times in the Old Testament; 71 times in Psalms and 3 times in Habakkuk. The Amplified Version translates “Selah” as an instruction to “pause and calmly think about this.”

⁵ See Job 28:19.

⁶ For the Hebrew word see TWOT #1973c.

⁷ When David was hiding in a cave from his enemies, he prayed, “I cry out to the Lord; I pray to the Lord for mercy. I pour out my problems to him; I tell him my troubles” (Psalm 142:1-2, NCV).

⁸ For the Hebrew word see TWOT #700b.

⁹ See Isaiah 32:2.

¹⁰ See Psalm 62:7 and 94:22.

¹¹ For the Hebrew word see TWOT #1596b.

¹² See Psalm 61:3.

¹³ Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as our “Helper.” God describes Himself as our Helper.

¹⁴ For the Hebrew word see TWOT #1598.

¹⁵ Joshua and Caleb spied out the Promised Land and the only two of the twelve spies who believed God was bigger than their enemies. They urged the people, “The Lord is with us, do not fear them” (Numbers 14:9). But in the eyes and hearts of the Hebrew people, their problem was bigger than their God. As Paul said, “If God is for us, does it matter who is against us?” (Romans 8:31, paraphrased).

¹⁶ Most version translate the word as “chariots,” such as the NASB, ESV, KJV, HCSB. While others translate the word as “shields,” such as the NIV, NLT, NRS, CJB. This departure is based on the root word not only referring to wagons but sometimes meaning round. Both wagon wheels and shields were round.

¹⁷ God addresses the nations of the world to be still. To stop and shut up. He is God. Only He is exalted. He reminds the nations that He is sovereign and rules over the world. And if that’s true in a global sense, it’s true in a personal sense. He is our God too. He is sovereign over our problems as well. We can trust Him and put our hope in Him.

¹⁸ The heart of the hymn is Him!

¹⁹ For the Hebrew word see TWOT #2198.

²⁰ NASB translation.

²¹ Max Lucado, *Unshakable Hope – Building Our Lives on the Promises of God* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2018), page 11.

²² See also James 4:8.

²³ See also 1 Peter 5:7.