

There are many things in life that box us in and leave us feeling trapped. Relationships can do that, finances, sickness, strain at work, bills, and children can cause us to worry. Our own flesh can cause us to worry. Worry causes ulcers, tooth decay (restricts flow of saliva) and even death. But in moments of worry, there is always one option available to us and that option is to turn to the Lord and to trust God.

The Reformer Martin Luther and those connected to him lived a bold life in the face of great danger, including in the face of death, because of their stand for truth. There were times, however, when Luther and his friends would start to get a little low.

One of Luther's close associates, a true friend and theologian was Philip Melanchthon. Sometimes when Philip would start to get worried, the great Reformer Martin Luther would say to him, "Come Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm" and they would sing it. In fact, Martin Luther's famous hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" is based on this very Psalm.

Psalm 46 is a great Psalm that communicates this point:

NO MATTER WHAT GOD'S PEOPLE FACE, THEY SHOULD ALWAYS TRUST GOD AND EXALT GOD FOR HE IS ALWAYS WITH HIS PEOPLE AND ALWAYS CARES FOR HIS PEOPLE.

Now from the superscription there are certain facts we may observe:

- 1) This Psalm was written for the "choir director" – it was to be publicly taught and communicated. It is a shame that more choir directors don't realize they have a responsibility to see to it that the choir sings about the greatness of God.
- 2) This is a Psalm "of the sons of Korah" – priestly Psalm of a non-perfect family.
- 3) This Psalm is "set to Alamoth" – The Hebrew word "alamoth" is plural and comes from the word "almah" which means virgin or young girl of marriageable age (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 634). Now this may mean a couple of things:
 - A. Psalm 46 follows Psalm 45 and this may be a song that is to be sung shortly after God's people are wedded to the King.
 - B. Psalm 46 may have been written to be sung by young girls who have soprano voices.

Now before we begin our journey through the Psalm, there are three observations we want to make:

Observation #1 - Three times in this Psalm we read "God is our..." (**46:1, 7, 11**). This literally reads in Hebrew "Elohim Laynu" which means God is to us or God is for us.

Observation #2 - Twice in this Psalm the Hebrew reads "LORD Sabaoth" which means "Lord of Hosts" (**46:7, 11**). Luther used this phrase in his famous hymn. In both cases, the title comes with a prepositional phrase that states "the LORD of hosts is **with us**."

Observation #3 - Three times we read “selah” which means stop and think about it.
(46:3, 7, 11)

We will break the Psalm down into three “Selah” sections:

SELAH SECTION #1 – God’s people should not fear anything because God is always present. **46:1-3**

Now the word “trouble” that appears at the end of **verse 1** is a word that refers to specific things that restrict and cramp and tie up God’s people. This refers to things that box us in or pressure us.

It is interesting that the cosmological things described in **verses 2-3** are the actual cosmological events that will precede the second coming of Jesus Christ, when He comes to carry out God’s final judgments. These are the very types of events that will occur throughout the Great Tribulation (Rev. 6:12-14; 11:13; 16:20-21).

The point here is that even when God is pouring out His terrible wrath on the earth, God’s people need not fear because God is our refuge and strength and help.

Now the specific description of things in these verses is of extreme cosmological disaster that is hitting the whole world. During the specific time of this, God’s people will feel boxed in and pressured as never before in history. **So contextually speaking, even in the worst times of disaster, God’s people need not fear because God is the refuge, strength and help for His people in times of trouble.**

Now the phrase that makes this Psalm so applicable to all of God’s people is the phrase from **verse 1** that says, “a very present help.” The idea is that when God’s people find themselves in adverse or distressful troubles and afflictions, they need not fear because God’s presence has arrived at that scene (*Ibid.*, p. 718 & p. 499) and God is Personally the asylum for rest, strength and help for His people in times of trouble. **So when God’s people feel cramped and pressured, they can know God is with them.**

This is exactly what Martin Luther saw in this Psalm. He saw that our rest, our security, our strength and our help are found in God. We may expect God to work in the present, right here and right now. When we find ourselves in difficult situations or troubles, we may know that our God will protect, preserve and assist His own.

Martin Luther saw this and wrote about this in his hymn. He said, “And tho this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.” We need not fear any trouble in the present when we belong to God for He is our refuge, our strength and our help.

“Selah”—stop and think about it.

SELAH SECTION #2 – God’s people should not fear anything because God will always help. **46:4-7**

It seems to me that the primary point here is that God is sovereignly controlling all things from His throne and is continually with His people even when nations and kingdoms are against Israel (Jacob) (v. 7).

There is no question that this does have Tribulation ramifications because during the Tribulation the entire world will turn against Israel.

God has a prophetic plan which includes a New Jerusalem, which will be the actual dwelling place of the Most High God. It will be a literal city and it will be called the “city of God.” A river of life will flow from this city and the establishment of it will occur when the nations made uproar. God will cause the earth to melt and create a new heaven, new earth and New Jerusalem.

The word “move” in **verse 5** is a word that means to move in the sense of shake. Nothing shakes God. Nothing stops His sovereign plan. God has a prophetic plan that includes Israel and a city and nothing is going to thwart it.

Now the point of the Psalm is that God will help His people. Even though it may appear as though there are powerful forces waging war with His people, one word from God will stop those forces and His people will be victorious.

The fact is nations have always been in an uproar against Jacob or Israel. But their uproar doesn’t faze God or change anything. Israel is God’s nation and she will one day be in a glorious city of God, the New Jerusalem, and all nations of the world will honor her.

Martin Luther said, “The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him, his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure: One little word shall fell him.”

Selah–Stop and think about it.

SELAH SECTION #3 – God’s people should exalt God because God is our strong defense. **46:8-11**

The tendency for God’s people, when surrounded by trouble, is to “strive” with God. The idea from the Hebrew is to get tense and to doubt and not trust God. God says in **verse 10**, “Cease striving.”

God says to His people let the worry go; let the anxiety go. Relax and trust Me because you will see Me work. Stop running around and quiet down and trust God.

God's people are connected to a Sovereign God. He is the One who causes desolations to hit the earth (46:8). He is the One who makes wars stop (46:9). He is the One who takes the weapons away from the warriors (46:9).

God's people can rest in the fact that they have a relationship with this sovereign, powerful God.

The Tribulation will be a time when God will literally do every one of these things and so God says to His people, quit striving with Me and know that "I am God."

Spurgeon said let the worst come to the worst, the child of God should never give way to mistrust since God remains faithful, there can be no danger to His cause or to His people.

There are two things we can do nothing about:

- 1) What has happened in the past.
- 2) What will happen in the future.

We would be very wise to quit worrying and trust God.

No bird tries to build a bigger nest than his neighbor bird.

No fox ever worried because he only had one hole in the ground to live in.

No dog ever lost sleep over whether or not he would have enough bones to eat in the future.

This Psalm should cause us to stop worrying, start trusting and enjoy today.

We need to remember God says I am a "very present help in trouble." So if you are troubled or pressured, "cease striving" and "start trusting."

PRACTICAL LESSONS:

- 1) Present trouble is a great time to look to God for present help.**
- 2) No matter what terrible thing is happening, God is our refuge and strength for His people.**
- 3) When God's people find themselves squeezed in by trouble or pressure, it is time to run to God in prayer and praise.**
- 4) Israel is God's special nation and she has some glorious future promises and we need to publicly communicate that.**