

Selah – Psalm 46:1-11

I. Introduction:

- A. Three times in this *Psalm*, God's penman uses the word "*selah*."
 1. That word is found 77 times in the Bible, with all of them in the *Psalms* except for twice in *Habakkuk*.
 2. Only once is it ever used other than at the end of a verse, and most of the time it marks the end of a thought or a paragraph.
 3. Its meaning and origin are hidden in antiquity, but most scholars suggest that it means "*pause*."
 4. It is similar to "*amen*," but rather than a boisterous – "*so be it*," or "*yes, I agree*," it seems to say, "*stop and consider this thought*," or "*let's pause to meditate on this*."
 5. "*Selah*" tells us to close our mouths and worship the God about whom we have just heard.
 6. Here we read, "*God is our refuge... therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed. Selah*."
 7. And then twice the psalmist says, "*The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah*."
 8. Think about that: The almighty God is with us, and therefore we do not need to be afraid.
- B. I have no other purpose this evening other than to remind us to pause and worship the Lord.
 1. In all our bustle, in all our problems, even in our hopes and dreams we need to stop and consider the Lord.
 2. I have no other agenda but to remind us to set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
- C. As always when we come to Biblical poetry, or any part of the Bible for that matter, we have two choices.
 1. We can read the Word, understanding it literally, or we can look for allegorical and mystical messages.
 2. I will always try to take the literal road first, as you will see in our consideration of this *Psalm*.
 3. And along with that, many so-called scholars take statements and promises which God made to Israel omn the Old Testament, and say that they have always been meant for the New Testament church.
 4. I will try to never misapply God's Word that way.
 5. But I will from time to time try only to take Israel's blessings and point to parallels which might apply to us.
 6. For example, Jehovah was Israel's refuge and strength, a very present help in time of their need.
 7. And He is the same to twenty-first century Christians.

II. Consider what Psalm 46 says about God.

- A. In the chorus of the song – in the refrain – we have the name or title: "*the LORD of hosts*."
 1. The hero of this hymn is "*Jehovah, the God who has armies*."
 2. Our Saviour, the God of love, the covenant-making God, has troops to carry out His will on our behalf.
 3. He has ten thousand times then thousand holy and powerful angels, which no man, or sin, can defeat.
 4. He also commands legions of more earthly things like locusts and ants, frogs, lice and flies.
 5. The Lord of hosts has hail stones and lightning bolts, even snow flakes at His command.
 6. With those and a thousand more divisions to defend us, and to bring down His enemies, we have nothing to fear but the Lord Himself.
- B. The first word of this *Psalm* is "*Elohim*" which is translated, "*God*."
 1. This refers to the *Almighty* God. The almighty God is our refuge.
 2. Don't think for a moment that He *needs* armies to defend us.
 3. He doesn't need an angel any more than you need a fork to cut through soup.
 4. Jehovah God is sovereign; He is absolutely supreme, without equal, and without anyone to defeat Him.
- C. And, *verse 7*, reminds us, He is "*the God of Jacob*" – the God of Israel.
 1. By way of application, the Lord has been God from day #1; He is the God of all our forefathers.
 2. Look at what He did in the days of Noah, destroying the people of the earth because of sin.
 3. And listen to Him call Abraham out of Ur, and Israel out of Egypt.
 4. Look at His sovereign leadership, and the power with which He devastated Pharaoh and his people.
 5. Do you have any question about the authority and ability of God? Check the records; look at the history.

D. This all-powerful, holy God is our **refuge, strength** and **help**.

1. In **verse 1** the psalmist speaks of God as our **refuge**, in the sense a **place** of **comfort** and **shelter**.
 - a. When God is showering His plagues down on Egypt, we can be sheltered in Christ.
 - b. *“Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed.”*
 - c. When the death angel passes over, we have our refuge and shelter under the divine blood.
 - d. When the predator comes by, we can find shelter under the wings of the Lord.
2. In **verses 7** and **11** there is a different Hebrew word, meaning **impregnable castle** or **bunker**.
 - a. Not only are we protected by God’s love, providence and will, but also by His cold, hard omnipotence.
 - b. *“The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.”*
3. *“Strength”* and *“very present help,”* suggest everything we might need, just when we need it.
 - a. Do you need an emergency room doctor? The Lord is there twenty-four hours a day.
 - b. Do you need a shoulder to cry on? His ear is always ready to hear.
 - c. Have you fallen into a pit and need help getting up?
 - d. The Lord is always close by, and He has the strength necessary to lift you up.

III. We need the Lord’s help because we live in a world with problems; WE have problems.

A. At times the earth may move under our feet.

1. Sometimes earthquakes rob us of what we depend on for stability.
 - a. We rely on a steady ladder, on stairs that aren’t rotting, on a solid earthly planet on which to walk.
 - b. Once the ground proves to be unstable, we have nothing tangible on which to rest, except the Lord.
2. And at other times, it is our legs that seem to shake while standing on the stable earth.
 - a. And still in those cases we need not fear, because God is greater than our legs, our backs or our knees
3. When mountains pour out their lava into the sea, causing death and destruction, God is still in control.
4. When rains bring their floods, & mountains are washed down into our lives, we **need** not fear – **will** not fear

B. Beyond the acts of dear *“mother nature,”* there is the raging of the heathen – the unbelieving world – **verse 6**.

1. In the days of Noah, the heathen were on the rampage; violence filled the earth.
2. But God uttered his voice, and the earth melted. The fountains of the deep opened up, and *“all in whose nostrils was the breath of life... died,”* except for God’s elect family.

C. *“Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.”*

1. Usually, when men create something – some product, a company, just about anything...
2. When men create something they go to great lengths to protect and preserve it.
3. But the God of this **Psalm** is greater than men and greater than what He has created.
4. God’s natural holiness requires that He deal with the wickedness that reigns in this now fallen Creation.
5. The world in the days of Noah, experienced indescribable desolations, but that was just the foretaste of desolations yet to come.

IV. And yet God has a solution for the effects of sin – that is – for the problems of life.

A. *“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.”*

1. Since there never has been an actual river flowing through the city of Jerusalem, as there is here in our community, then we have a right to look at this as a metaphor.
2. This is saying to me that our God is a fountain so large that His blessings cannot be soaked up by the thirsty, barren wilderness around us.
3. Just as the Spokane River has not stopped flowing for a single moment during the years that I have lived here, the blessings of the Lord have never ceased.
 - a. **Psalm 36** – *“How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.*
 - b. *For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light.”*

4. And just as canals used to take water from the Spokane river and channel it throughout our valley, God has created gentle streams out of His river to refresh our bodies and souls.
5. *“Whereof (they) shall make glad the city of God”* – whereof they brighten the people of the Lord.

B. But should I stress the Lord’s caveat?

1. *“Whereof (they) shall make glad... the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.”*
2. Even the residents of the Lord’s holy city, the people of God, may not fully enjoy the blessing of the Lord.
3. We may not enjoy the joy of Lord, because we are not dwelling by faith in the holy place.
4. *“God is in the midst of her,”* and where does the Lord dwell? In the holy place.
5. Despite enjoying the Lord’s protection and the foretaste of His blessings, there may be much, much more. There undoubtedly is more.
6. **Verse 5** – *“God shall help her, and that right early”* – at dawn; at the dawning of the problem.

C. And this is just the beginning, because there is another day coming with unimaginable blessings.

1. Including, *“He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.”*
2. A few men have tried from time to time to put an end to war, but every cease-fire has been short-lived.
3. The problem is not guns, or food, or water rights, or events and animosities of the ancient past.
4. The problem is in the universal wicked heart of man.
5. There will be no peace in this world until one king subdues every other king, down to the tiniest baby in the neo-natal ward at the hospital.
6. War will come to an end when the King of kings and Lord of lords, rules over every man and every heart.
7. **Verse 9** must be speaking of the Millennial reign of the Son of God.

D. God has a solution for everything.

1. It begins with His grace in salvation, conquering hearts for His glory.
2. But then it will move on to His sovereign reign over every other aspect of His creation.

V. And what does the psalmist suggest should be our response?

A. He exhorts us to **stop**.

1. *“Be still & know that Jehovah is God; He will be exalted among the heathen, He will be exalted in the earth”*
2. I don’t think, at this point, the Lord was telling the unbeliever and heathen to stop what they are doing.
3. No, He is telling us all, including His saints, to stand still; to *“selah.”*
4. It is imperative that we understand that Jehovah is God, and that He will be exalted – guaranteed.
5. He will be exalted, honored and elevated in the salvation of a few of us unworthy wretches.
6. And he will be exalted in the just condemnation of the unrepenting non-believer.

B. Christian, realize by faith that the Lord of hosts is with us.

1. Walk in the assurance that everything in this world is under the Lord’s control.
2. There is no reason to fear, *“though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”*
3. Our Saviour is the Almighty God, and all things will be done according to His eternal will.
4. Rest in Him. Trust Him.

VI. Conclusion:

A. Three hundred years ago, many Baptist churches sang only the **Psalms** in their church services.

1. Some of those churches would have no fellowship with our church because of our hymnal.
2. Probably in many cases those churches chanted the **Psalms** just as we find them in our Bibles.
3. But then along came talented musicians and poets who gave the scriptures rhythm and made them rhyme.

- B. I have here a book called a *"Psalter,"* which is the Latin word for *Psalms*.
1. This particular Psalter was first published more than a hundred years ago.
 2. It contains three hymns related to *Psalm 46*, one of which was written by Martin Luther who died 450 years ago, so these hymns have been around for a long time.
 3. The hymn which I have given you was written about 150 years ago, and it's words were applied to a tune you might know.
- C. As I read these words, see if you don't agree that this hymn agrees with *Psalm 46*.
1. *God will our strength and refuge prove, In all distress a present aid,*
a. *And, though the trembling earth remove, We will not fear nor be dismayed.*
 2. *Our trust in God shall still abide tho' hills be shaken from their seat,*
a. *And though the ocean's swelling tide Against the trembling mountains beat.*
 3. *A river flows, whose living streams Make glad the city of our God,*
a. *The holy place where glory beams Where God Most High has His abode.*
 4. *God has in her His dwelling made, And she shall nevermore be moved;*
a. *Her God shall early give her aide, Her constant helper He has proved.*
 5. *The kings and nations raged in pride; He spake, the earth did melt away;*
a. *The Lord of Hosts is on her side, Our fathers' God, our strength and stay.*
 6. *Come, see the works of God displayed, The wonders of His mighty hand,*
a. *What desolations He has made, What ruin spread through all the land.*
 7. *Through all the peopled earth He makes The dreadful scourge of war to cease,*
a. *The implements of battle breaks, And makes the nations dwell in peace.*
 8. *Be still, ye nations, bow in fear, And know that I alone am God;*
a. *To us the Lord of Hosts is near, Our fathers' God is our abode."*
- D. Now in closing let's try to sing it as our Baptist forefathers might have sung it.