

Psalm 46: 1-7; “What about September 11th, 2001?”, A Sermon delivered on the 10th Anniversary of the Attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by Muslim Terrorists, delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 11th, 2011, In the Morning Worship Service.

Come behold the works of the Lord; His power over the nations, His goodness toward His people. The God who is our refuge, the God who is our strength. He is described for us here as being “a very present help in time of trouble”. This was a truth that people either learned or they did not learn on September 11th, 2001, when our country was attacked. It is a truth that either a person finds in the middle of their most difficult experiences; to accept it, and to believe it, and to know the reality of it; or they do not. It is a truth that every Christian must believe and learn. If they do not, they will be a timid person who will lack the moral courage necessary to face the greatest of their difficulties, and to fight spiritual battles for the Lord. Because of what happened on September 11th, 2001; we now realize, if we did not know it before; that there are many forces of evil at work around us. When we look at our own strength in comparison to those forces, we may question whether we have the courage necessary to stand and to declare the truth in the midst of the increasing moral decay of people in our society. “If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?”, it says in Psalm 11: 3. Where, then, does the strength and moral courage come from; to take our stand for truth and right, when evil men come against us? Our text tells us that they come from God Himself. I want to take you on a tour today; to gaze with wonder upon the foundation of our strength, our protection, and our courage; as the Church of Jesus Christ, and as a Nation. I want you to see for yourself that it is God’s own presence with us which is the basis of true courage in regard to the outcome of our labors and actions which are taken to promote His kingdom and His glory. The question of today is this: In what ways is our God a very present help to His Church in the time of trouble? There are 4 ways. We will look at 2 of them this morning, and 2 of them this afternoon. Let me list them all so that you can get the overview: 1st – He (God) is very present as our Refuge and our Strength. 2nd - He is very present as the source of our joy and gladness. 3rd – He is very present as the One who brings desolation and also peace. And 4th – He is very present in that He gives us the assurance that He will be exalted in the earth.

1st of all - He (God) is very present as our Refuge and our Strength.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” “Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” There are some things in this life which seem fixed and immovable; things which never seem to change. They are solid and substantial and they have been this way for a very long time.” “The earth and the

mountains give this impression, and they are listed for us here as things which represent, more than any, the stability and the dependability of the physical world which God created and in which we live.” In Psalm 104, verse 5, it says “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth so that it should not be moved forever.” The foundations of the earth were laid long ago in the creation of the world, and the mountains set in place. We like this constant stability of terra firma. We like the idea that things around us do not change. They cannot be moved unless God wants them moved, but you and I can be moved. God drastically altered the landscape of the world; in the flood that he brought upon the Antedeluvian world, in Noah’s day. All flesh died in that day except Noah and his family. The mountains were still there; the foundations of the earth were still there; but multitudes of people perished physically and eternally. Some of our greatest fears are related to great cataclysmic changes such as earthquakes, or hurricanes or tidal waves. These things, when they come, are dismaying because they lie outside our control, and we cannot do anything much to prevent them, or to change the lasting consequences that they bring. But what we should do, when they come, is to declare to ourselves, and to declare with other believers in Christ; the absolute truth that God is our refuge and our strength. He is a very present help in time of trouble. And because that is so, we will not fear.

Now, the Bible has been written in such a way that God can apply it, and we should apply it to ourselves, on multiple levels in our lives. It is our duty to exercise good discernment and to apply it according to the context. We see here physical mountains and a physical earth and waters roaring and mountains shaking. These are not merely given to us to encourage our faith when we pass through physical earthquakes or hurricanes. They are given to us as pictures of the spiritual realities which we face as the Church of the Living God. I would like you to turn over to Psalm 65, verse 5, so that I can show you this truth. “By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation, You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of the far-off seas; Who established the mountains by His strength, being clothed with power; You who still the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples.” We see here mention being made of physical mountains and a physical earth, and waters roaring and mountains shaking. These are not mentioned merely to encourage our faith when we pass through physical earthquakes or hurricanes. They are given to us as pictures of the spiritual realities which we face as the Church of the Living God. Many Puritan writers concur with this. Listen to what Thomas Brooks says – “Now mark, by the change of the earth and the removing of the mountains are often meant the greatest alterations and concussions of states and politics.”

Let’s look at how the Bible sometimes portrays political kingdoms. Haggai 2: 21-23. “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying: ‘I will shake heaven and earth.’ “I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the

Gentile kingdoms, I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.” It is evident that the shaking of “heaven and earth” that are being spoken of here are the overthrow of the Gentile kingdoms; their leadership, their power, and the strength of their might. Now turn with me also over to Jeremiah 51: 24 and 25. “And I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all the evil they have done in Zion in your sight, says the Lord.” “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, who destroys all the earth,” says the Lord.” The destroying mountain is referring to Babylon. God would repay them for the evil that they had done. God had ordained that King Nebuchadnezzar would come up against Israel and destroy the city of Jerusalem with its temple, and take the people away captive to Babylon. What an awful thing it was when it happened. The children of Israel had departed from God and following Him according to His Word to them, so He permitted and ordained these tragic consequences. The reason that we need to hear this is because there are many people today in our country who are putting their highest hopes upon the government and its institutions to be their refuge and their strength. They are trusting in our military might and our vast financial resources rather than God. They are not trusting in God as their refuge and their strength. They have departed from His Word and His ways of righteousness. Many are not keeping His commandments; neither do they have their faith in Jesus. Here in the U.S. it is particularly true that there were many good institutions and laws which formed the historic basis of our society and where God by revival and the godly living of many people, established this country in righteousness in a general sense. Buildings were built which honored our strength as a nation. The World Trade center was the visible symbol of our economic prosperity. The Pentagon was, and is, the symbol of our military strength. The Islamic terrorists struck at these. But it was God who permitted them to execute their plans. The reason for this; I believe, was because the trust of many of our citizens in these United States, was not in our God.

Let me build a case for this. We have seen quite a change in this country in the last 50 years, and the Lord does not, in a general sense, receive the attention and the worship that He deserves from us. His Word is not heeded, and there seems to be a famine for the hearing of the Word of God which is taking place. Worldliness seems to occupy God’s people to a great degree, and the enemies of truth are attempting to make advances against the church which hold fast to the Bible. False teachers and wolves have begun to come among the sheep, and spiritual immaturity rules the day. The good things which godly men thought firmly established have begun to come tumbling down, and foolishness and apathy toward Christ and His kingdom prevail. Many walk as enemies to the cross of Christ, whose god is their belly and whose glory is their shame; many people who set their minds on worldly things. (Philippians 3: 18) Why should God protect us from the evils of Islam? Many of us in this country do not worship God or His

Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is why the Sovereign God brought the judgment of 9/11 against our nation. It was to wake up those who are careless of their ways. Is our trust in the Lord, or is it in our wealth, and our own strength of military might? When we see these things happening; what are we, as the Church of Jesus Christ, to do? We are to trust in God. We are to repent of our sins and take steps to forsake them. We are to forsake being sensual and proud and foolish. We are to forsake the lifestyle of living for the pleasures of this world. We are to learn to pay more attention to the eternal concerns of our soul, rather than the temporary concerns of the body. We are to seek God in all of our trials and difficulties. We are to pray and lay hold of Christ's righteousness and strength. We are to remember these words: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." When we do this; God is not only present with us; but He is very present. He is vitally, intimately, and intensely interest in helping His people; His Church, in her troubles. It is His presence with us that is our strength and refuge. The Lord of Hosts is with us. We must learn this and not trust in man. We must learn the lessons of repentance and faith.

Look at Psalm 118, verse 5: "I called on the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place." "the Lord is on my side; I will not fear." "What can man do to me?" "The Lord is for me among those who help me; therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me." "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. You see how the presence of the Lord comes – upon our seeking God in our distress. He really does answer us mightily and graciously. There is something in fallen sinful human nature that wants its distresses relieved by turning to other men for answers or for protection. But with believers it should not be so. They should know that men can only help if God wills to use them as means. Sometimes God does this; but the believer's trust should be fixed upon God first and foremostly. The order here in Psalm 118 is – I call, the Lord answers and brings to me, and others, the providential circumstances conducive to His blessing me. (He sets me in a broad place) He raises up helpers (vs. 7) The Lord is for me among those who help me. And then the courage to fight the real spiritual battles comes. Holy courage is based upon God being with us, believing that He will bring the good and necessary things in the midst of all of our trials.

2ndly – God is a very present help in that He gives gladness of heart to God's people, even though the heathen nations rage against them.

(verses 4-7)

"There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High." "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn." The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted." I believe that

these acts of terror perpetrated by Muslim extremists on 9/11/2001; acts which resulted in the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Centers in New York, and did great damage to the Pentagon; were acts of boldness, but they were not acts of godly moral courage. They were actually acts of cowardice and shame. Those terrorists succeeded in killing 2,975 people that day besides themselves. Certainly, true moral courage will not be bold to murder any person created in the image and likeness of God. It is against the injunction of the 6th commandment of the 10 commandments of God's holy law. Those commandments were given by the only true and living God to Moses, and they are righteous altogether. But these men believed that they were being morally courageous because they believed false doctrine. They held to the Qur'an's teaching; thinking it to be true. Surah 3: 85 - "Whoever seeks other than Islam as his religion, it will not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he will be with the losers". "Slay the idolaters (the non-Muslims) wherever ye find them, and take them captive, and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush. Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah nor the last Day.... Go forth, light-armed and heavy-armed, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the way of Allah! (Surah 9: 5, 29, 41). This is holy jihad for those who believe it.

But to follow teaching such as this proves that their holy book is not holy at all. Did their god Allah so love the world that he gave His only begotten son? No this false god Allah's favorite son is Mohammed. And Mohammed, it is obvious from history, wanted to conquer other nations and peoples with the sword. Christ conquers the nations with His gospel of grace and peace. He died for the ungodly. No; according to the verses which I just read to you, the teaching of the Qur'an portrays for us, a god who commands that it is good for his worshipers to have a perverse and unreasonable hatred of all people who will not submit to him. It is a very reasonable conclusion, therefore, Allah must therefore be a false god. But in contrast to this; on that day of 9/11 there were indeed some acts of moral courage of the highest sort which took place. There were acts of moral courage, which took place, which were related to faith in the only true and living God; the God of the Bible. He alone is a God of pure and perfect love. He alone is the God of perfect Justice; who will not pass by the sins of men, but has sent His Son into the world that sinners like you and I might be saved. Those acts of true courage which took place that day, were the attempts of Christians, or those who were working according to the good and right principles of the Bible, to prevent the evil deeds which those terrorists who commandeered the planes, that day, were trying to do. What a radical difference between true and false courage was seen that day. On the part of the perpetrators; boldness to do evil. On the part of those who were their victims; the courage to take what actions they could to prevent the evil.

Let's think of one good example. Todd Beamer, who resided in Cranbury, New Jersey, was an account manager for the Oracle Corporation. He died at age of 32 in the September 11, 2001 attacks on board United Airlines Flight 93. He is survived

by his wife, Lisa Beamer, two sons, David and Drew, and a daughter, Morgan Kay, who was born on January 9, 2002, nearly four months after her father's death. Todd and other passengers had been in communication with people via in-plane and cell phones, and they learned that the World Trade Center had been attacked using hijacked airplanes. Todd tried to place a credit card call through a phone located on the back of a plane seat but was routed to a customer-service representative instead, who passed him on to supervisor Lisa Jefferson. He reported that one passenger was killed and, later, that a flight attendant had told him the pilot and co-pilot had been forced from the cockpit and may have been wounded. He was also on the phone when the plane made its turn in a southeasterly direction, a move that had him briefly panicking. Later, he told the operator that some of the plane's passengers were planning "jump on" the hijackers. According to Jefferson, Beamer's last audible words were "Are you guys ready? Let's roll." This term would later become the war cry for those fighting Al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

I would say to you this morning that it is evident that this is great moral courage. Let's think about the acts of courage here for a few more moments. Todd's call connected at 9:45 a.m. He told Lisa Jefferson there were three hijackers, armed with knives. One of the men had what appeared to be a bomb tied to his midsection with a red belt. Todd said that he could account for 37 of the plane's 38 passengers. The hijackers had forced 27 of them into the first-class compartment near the front. Todd and nine other passengers and five flight attendants were ordered to sit on the floor in the rear of the plane. He said a flight attendant had told him the pilot and copilot had been forced from the cockpit and may have been wounded. Two of the hijackers were in the cockpit with the door locked behind them. The man with the bomb stayed in the back of the plane, near Todd's group. He said that the plane appeared to have changed directions a few times. Later, it would be determined that it had flown west from Newark to near Cleveland, then turned back to the southeast toward Pittsburgh. Todd became concerned at this point and said, "Oh! We're going down!". "Then he paused, then said in a calmer voice, "No, we're OK." "I think we're turning around." He then told Lisa Jefferson that he and the others had decided to "jump on" the hijacker wearing the bomb." "Lisa Jefferson could hear shouts and a commotion and then Todd asked her to pray with him." "They recited the 23rd Psalm." "He asked Lisa Jefferson to promise that she would call his family." "Then he dropped the phone, leaving the line open." "That's when Lisa Jefferson heard what Lisa Beamer believes were her husband's last words: "Let's roll." "Then there was silence." "Jefferson hung up at 10 a.m. EST, realizing that the plane had gone down." "The officials said it crashed at 9:58 a.m."

Lisa Beamer said reports of her husband's heroic role had "made her life worth living again." Lisa Jefferson kept her promise and called Lisa Beamer at 8 p.m. Friday. "It was the best news that I could've gotten [Friday]. It totally changed the

mood around here," Lisa Beamer said. She said that the call she received from Lisa Jefferson had lifted her family's spirits. "We all knew what kind of person Todd was." "We know he's in heaven." "He was saved," Lisa Beamer said. "Just knowing that when the crisis came up he maintained the same character we all knew, it's a testament to what real faith means." "It's been a real uplift." "It's put a spring in my step that I didn't have since Monday." "He's a great guy in a crisis." "He would have had his family in the forefront of his thoughts." "And he would not let other people overpower him." This, I insist to you, is what true moral courage is all about. It is seeing the Lord as your refuge and strength. It is trusting the Lord Jesus to help you to think of how you can help and protect yourself and others from the evil deeds of wicked people in the midst of the most difficult and dangerous situations. Todd's actions, and others with him, were very Christ-like. There was a river of God's grace flowing through his heart in those final hours of his life; it makes us glad this morning. There are people in this country who know God and keep His commandments. There are people who have found the reality of God's strength and Christ's grace sustaining them when the heathen nations are raging against them. They are called Christians.

This ought to encourage the hearts of all believers, everywhere, to understand that since God was with them that day that they died; that He shall also be with us in our time of greatest trial. We shall not be moved if we are trusting in Him. God will indeed give us grace to help us to do the right things in the middle of all the awful events which we may yet be faced with, as Christians and as a country. There is a river of the grace of God which flows through the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. This should make us exceedingly glad 10 years after the events of 9/11/ 2001. There is, indeed, a great future coming for those who believe in Jesus Christ. God, our God, is greater than all of our enemies; even if they take our life. Christ our Savior and Lord, is also our King. He is our real life. The World Trade Center is being re-built. May the Lord establish our works. May we remember to worship Him as the Only True and Living God. May we keep His commandments and our faith in Jesus. Let us remember the words of Jeremiah 10: 6 in closing. "Inasmuch as there is none like You, O Lord (You are great, and Your name is great in might), who would not fear You, O King of the nations?" "For this is Your due." "For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You."