

## GOD – OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH

**Speaker:** Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

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**Scripture:** Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.  
Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change  
And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;  
Though its waters roar and foam,  
Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah.  
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.  
God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;  
God will help her when morning dawns.  
The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;  
He raised His voice, the earth melted.  
The Lord of hosts is with us;  
The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.  
Come, behold the works of the Lord,  
Who has wrought desolations in the earth.  
He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;  
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;  
He burns the chariots with fire.  
“Cease striving 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 stronghold. Selah.

Father, through Your Holy Spirit, touch our hearts and our minds. Help us to understand this psalm and what it means for each one of us today, as we embrace each day that we face. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Some of you probably know this psalm by heart. Some of you probably know the first couple of verses, and of course, that tenth verse. Today, as we have read this psalm in its completeness, let us see how it’s put together structurally.

vv. 1-3 pen for us a situation of uncertainty, of instability.

vv. 4-7 talks of Jerusalem: “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy dwelling places of the Most High.”

vv. 8-9 talks about war.

vv. 1, 7, 11 – three affirmations that are given to us.

v.10 God speaks.

After vv. 3, 7 and 11, we find the word “Selah” that is added on at the end of each of these verses.

Let's look at those three affirmations. Actually, there are two, the third one being the same as the second, coming in verses 7 and 11.

## THE AFFIRMATIONS.

1. In v. 1, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*

I don't know about you, but for most Mumbaitees, when we think about the word 'refuge', it's often a refuge area. Bombay is full of high-rise buildings, and in every one, certain floors (8<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and so on) are designated as the refuge area, a place where, God forbid, if there's a fire or any kind of emergency, residents can evacuate to that particular floor. It is an open area without glass windows, an open floor, that first responders can get to them. It's a place of refuge; a place to be while the emergency goes on around us; a place that we can be safe.

The psalmist is saying that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. When you and I are in trouble, we can go to God who will protect us during these times. He will take care of us for He is a very present help. Not a help that will come, but He is there. We go to Him. He is there with His help to help us to go through whatever situation or circumstance or trouble we are in.

That's the first affirmation, that God is our refuge, your refuge and my refuge. Maybe, as you are listening to this message, you are saying, "My goodness, that's me! I'm going through trouble like I've never been through before." Well, the good news for you and for anybody else who is listening is, that in times of trouble, God is a safe place to go to. We turn and we go to Him, and He gives us support and strength. The Bible tells us.

2. In vv. 7 & 11, *"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold."*

Beloved, whatever you are going through, and maybe in times like this you feel alone. You feel that you don't have anybody with you, that you are going through this very difficult place all by yourself.

The psalmist assures us that we are not alone. He says that the Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our stronghold. And whichever way you need strength today, he is saying that God will provide it for you. He is the one who can hold you in His strength. He is right there with you. He's never left you, beloved; He will not forsake you at a time like this.

One of the most vivid pictures I have is when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were in the fiery furnace, and then Nebuchadnezzar says, "Did we not put three men into that fire? But now I see four men there." One of them was God in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The psalmist is saying to you, beloved, even though you may think you are alone during this time, you're not. For our God is such a loving God, a caring God. He will not allow you to be alone in whatever situation you are in. He is a very present help and He is with us.

The same affirmation is repeated at the end of the psalm, lest we forget it. He reiterates this. Don't forget the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our stronghold. So, those are the three affirmations that we find in this psalm.

### **GOD SPEAKS.**

God speaks very directly in one place in the psalm and He says, *"Stop striving and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted over all the earth."* Stop striving, or be still and know that I am God.

I wonder today, whether in the situation or circumstance that you are facing, that you are at your wit's end, trying to think of what else you can do. Running here and there, calling this person or that person saying, "Listen, I'm in this situation. I need this kind of help. Listen this is what I'm facing. I need you to help me, I need you to make a call, I need you for some finance. I need you to call me. I need something." And you're striving and running this way and that. I wonder whether this morning, God is saying to you, "Be still, and just know this, that I am God. And if I am God, and if I am your God, I can take care of you. I can look after you. I can give you what you need. I can chart your course. I can even quell the storm. I can keep you safe. I can take care of you and I've got you. Be still, stop striving and just concentrate on this fact that I am God, your God." Beloved, our God. Be still and know that I am God.

### **SELAH.**

There are three places where we see the word 'Selah'. What does it mean? Selah just means pause, reflect, take a deep breath and allow what you have read to soak in, sink into your mind. Just take that moment to allow the words to make sense to you. Pause!

And the pause comes after we are told, *"Therefore, we will not fear. Though whatever happens in our lives, whatever is going through, the waters roar and foam, we're being overwhelmed. Selah."* Don't fear. Just breath deep and recognize who we're talking about here. Who is our refuge, who is our strength? Breathe in the reassuring thought that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in what I'm going through.

Then we find it repeated: *"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah."* In this situation that I face, God Almighty is right here with me. I don't need to fear. I don't need to worry. I can trust Him. He is right here in the midst of everything that I am going through. Oh, let me breathe in that truth. let me think that through – that God, the creator of the ends of the earth is right here with me. Oh what a reassuring thought.

Then at the end, after being told, *"Be still and know that I am God."* Again we are reminded that God is a stronghold and He is in the midst of everything that we are going through. Selah, take a pause, stop what you're doing and just reflect on God and who He is and what He is doing right now in your midst, in your life, in your situation and in your circumstance. Selah.

Beloved, I don't know what your uncertainty is, or what it is that may be causing instability in your life. It could be just the COVID virus; it could be that you are infected with it, it could be that a loved one is. It could be that a loved one is alone in a hospital. Or it could be that you are going through a difficult time at the office for you are doing the work of many people, and there doesn't seem to be any help that is coming. Or it could be that you've been without a job for a couple of weeks or months, maybe. Or maybe you're just tired of stretching limited resources to the end of the month, trying to see what you don't need to get so that you can make it. Just uncertain days! God's word, beloved, for you: Don't fear for He is right there with you and He's got you.

### **3 THINGS WE ARE TOLD.**

- Don't fear.
- Don't be moved.
- Be still and cease striving.

Maybe you're thinking, "Oh my gosh! I've got to make a whole lot of changes." Maybe God is saying to you, "No! Just stay the course. Hang on to those dreams, those aspirations. This is not the time to throw them out. I've still got plans and purposes that involve them. I am the one who can still the storm, and I'll hold you while you go through it. But don't be moved. Don't change anything."

Then maybe, He is saying to you, "Be still." Most of us find that so difficult. We want to do everything because that's the way we're wired. I wonder whether today God is just speaking to you, beloved. Yes, speaking to you and saying, "Stop! Maybe just for today, He is saying, "Selah." Pause, take a deep breath and let Me be God in your life. stop striving. I've got you." Beloved, storms are par for the course in our lives and there are times when we just need to wait in a place of refuge till it's over.

I was looking at this psalm and just the number of things about God that come up from it:

- God is our refuge,
- God is our strength,
- God is in the midst of us,
- God will help,
- God raises His voice and quells things,
- He is with us,
- He is our stronghold,
- See the works of God,
- Cease striving and know that He is God,
- God is with us,
- God will be exalted.

This is your God and mine, who says to you and to me, "Be still, do not fear, do not be moved for I am in the midst of whatever you are going through, and I will take you through it. Selah.

Do you want to take that deep breath and say, "Lord, I'm going to quit my striving." Maybe just today I'm not going to do anything Lord. Maybe, He's going to say even tomorrow. But that's tomorrow. But today I'm going to be still. I'm going to just trust that you are God. You are My God. You are my Refuge and Strength, a very present help in trouble. And I pause in Your presence and wait for this storm, this situation to resolve. So help me, God, I pray. Amen.

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