

When Trouble Comes

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[0 : 0 0] But this morning, I believe that I can say without fear of contradiction that we are facing one of the most difficult and uncertain periods in our lifetime.! And humanly speaking, it's because of two words.

And those words are coronavirus and COVID-19. Over the past three months, we in the Bahamas have watched the rest of the world grapple with the new coronavirus, some with mounting reported cases of COVID-19, and with deaths, staggering numbers of deaths.

We've seen stock markets plummet, businesses fail, and countless millions of people have been left unemployed, and many more will be unemployed.

Here in the Bahamas, we have seen cruise ships pause sailing and airlines reduce flying, leaving our tourism-based economy. With parked taxis, shuttered stores, and many empty hotel and Airbnb rooms.

Our nation's economy is poised to face, perhaps, its most difficult days in the Borden Bahamas. In a very real sense, trouble has come to us internationally and nationally.

[1 : 3 5] Indeed, trouble has come to us personally, some of us. And my question this morning is, what do you do when trouble comes?

And I'm not asking this question exclusively to those who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Not exclusively to them. I'm also asking it as a personal question to all of us, myself included.

What do you do when trouble comes? And this question is relevant to all of us who live in a fallen world. Because one of the realities of living in a fallen world is that from time to time, we all walk through difficult and trying circumstances and seasons of life.

From time to time, trouble comes to us in a very real and a very personal way. And without knowing all the persons who are watching and the details of their lives, I know that some of you are walking through personal troubles.

And these personal troubles are separate and apart from the coronavirus pandemic. And I really commend you for watching because I know how easy it is when we are walking through difficulties to resort to all manner of other things.

[3 : 0 7] And for those of us who are not currently walking through any trouble that we are aware of, I'm sure that you have experienced trouble.

And if you live long enough, you will continue to experience trouble in this life. And so I'm able to make these statements without fear of contradiction because we are part of the human condition.

And part of it is, in a fallen world, we have troubles. Job makes this point in Job 14 verse 1 when he says, Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble.

And although the trouble comes to us in different ways and at different times and to different degrees, we are people of trouble. And so I ask again, what do you do when trouble comes?

How do you typically respond? This morning, I want to offer to you that when trouble comes, first and foremost, our response should be to look to the true and the living God who is sovereign over us and sovereign over our troubles.

[4 : 25] And that's the message of Psalm 46. Psalm 46 is the scripture that I want to consider for this morning's sermon.

So if you have a Bible nearby, would you get it? And I'm going to ask you to turn to Psalm 46. But if you don't have a Bible nearby, hopefully you've memorized it.

And you can just rehearse it in your mind as we go through it. That's supposed to be funny, but I won't even know if you're laughing in the audience. And before I read Psalm 46, I want to say as well that what I will be doing is allowing for questions and answers at the end of the sermon.

So if as the sermon proceeds, you have a question, you can WhatsApp that question to me at 357-8611. And then at the end of the service, after I conclude in prayer, I will take some time and I will read the questions and I will answer them.

You don't have to be concerned about your name being called for the questions. We will read all the questions anonymously. So if you do have a question from the sermon, please send it in by WhatsApp to 357-8611.

[5 : 38] And I will do my very best to answer it at the end of the service. Psalm 46, beginning in verse 1.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear.

Though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. The holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her.

She shall not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage.

[6 : 44] The kingdoms totter. He utters his voice. The earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us. And the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear.

He burns the chariots with fire. Be still 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 fortress.

Would you bow in prayer with me? Father, we are grateful this morning that we are able in this moment to look to you and your word that we might hear your voice.

[7 : 53] Lord, we together are facing perplexing times. And we ask that you would speak to us as a people, but also that you would speak to us individually, based on our individual circumstances and the way that we need to hear your voice.

Father, I pray that you would help all of us to posture our hearts, to hear your voice mediated through my voice. And then, Lord, would you enable us all to live out what you are calling us to do.

We pray and ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Over the ages, Psalm 46 has been one of the primary portions of Scripture that God's people have resorted to and been pointed to in times of trouble.

And this morning, I want to point us there. Whether you need to hear this word now because you're walking through trouble, or whether you need to put this word on the shelf of your life, because as I said before, you live in a fallen world, and part of the condition of living in a fallen world is we face trouble.

And so what I will be sharing this morning is relevant to us now, or it will be relevant to us in the days to come. And so here's the question that I want to answer from Psalm 46.

[9 : 27] How should we respond when trouble comes? How should we respond?

Well, Psalm 46 calls us to remember three truths about God when trouble comes. And in our remaining time, I want to consider those three truths.

And for those of you who are following along and taking notes, the three truths that I will be addressing from Psalm 46 are, number one, the presence of God, the power of God, and the glory of God.

Those are the three truths that I believe that Psalm 46 calls us to remember in the time of trouble. Yet they are so easy to forget when trouble comes.

And so my prayer this morning for all of us is that God will help us to remember these truths about us in the midst of trouble that we may be walking through right now or in the midst of trouble in the days ahead.

[10 : 34] So the first truth is the presence of God. God is near to us in the midst of our troubles. But more than that, what Psalm 46 tells us in verse 1 is that He is present with us in the midst of our troubles.

Now, although this might seem very obvious to us this morning, in the midst of trouble, it's not so obvious. But the way that Psalm 46 begins, the way it is written, it helps us to remember this truth because it begins with the word God.

As if to say, in the midst of trouble, God is the one to whom we must look. God is the one to whom we must turn. He must be our first thought in the midst of trouble.

Verse 1 goes on to tell us who God is and what He does for us in trouble. He is our refuge and He is our present help in the time of trouble.

Now, I know this can sound strange to us, especially this morning if you're walking through trouble. Perhaps your experience is you don't feel the nearness of God. You don't see the presence of God.

[11 : 54] God can feel very removed at times when we walk through trouble. And sometimes we're tempted to believe that He has removed Himself, thinking that perhaps He's angry at us.

He's punishing us for some sin that we may have committed. But this very first verse of Psalm 46 tells us otherwise.

It tells us that God, who is our refuge and strength, is present with us in the midst of trouble. One of the teachings of Scripture is that God is omnipresent.

He is everywhere at the same time. Because He is infinite, He has the capacity to be everywhere at the same time. There is no place where He is not.

And then He's also promised to be with His people. And so clearly, what the psalmist is telling us is something a bit different than that.

[13 : 01] Because that is true no matter what. It seems like what the psalmist is saying to us is that God is with us in a special way. He is present with us in a special way.

He is near to us in a special way, especially in the midst of troubles. Not just in omnipresence, but in personal presence. times. And in the times of trouble, we need to remember this.

God draws near to us and is present with us in a personal and a special way. When we think of a refuge or a shelter, something like a hurricane shelter to protect people in the midst of storms, we think of a place that we go to.

And depending on where we live, it may take us longer or a shorter time to get there. Sometimes a hard time to get there depending on where we live.

But not so with God. God is our refuge and strength and he is near to us. He is ever present, very present with us in the midst of our troubles.

- [14 : 13] But we need to turn to him. One of the primary ways that we turn to him is we turn to him in prayer. We turn to him through reading his word, asking for wisdom, seeking for guidance, receiving his help and his strength.

Yes, it's wonderful to talk to people, to get encouragement from them, but ultimately, in the midst of trouble, we need to be turning first and foremost to God.

Notice what it says in verse 2. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way. In other words, because God is our refuge and strength and is present with us, we need not fear life's troubles.

And to the extent that we can remember that God is our refuge and strength who is present with us in our troubles is the extent to which we will not fear in the face of earth-shaking and daunting troubles.

Instead of fearing our troubles, we turn to God in the midst of our troubles, praying to him, reading his word, and gaining his perspective. Here in verses 2 and 3, the psalmist is figuratively using natural disasters and upheavals to talk about how circumstances and events that seem arbitrary can drive us to fear.

- [15 : 42] He's using figurative language to describe how our lives can become upside down in the midst of life's troubles. Look at his descriptions beginning in the latter part of verse 2.

Though the earth gives way, referring to that which seemed unshakable and steady but no longer is, we can't stand on it. though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, referring to that which seemed unmovable and fixed but no longer is.

In verse 3, though its waters roar and foam, meaning that which was formerly calm is now chaotic. Though the mountains tremble at the swelling of the waters, what seemed impossible, waters causing mountains to tremble has taken place.

And I think for many of us in the past few days, we have seen events like this. We have seen nations closing their borders. We have seen cruise ships not sailing, losing billions of dollars, airline companies on the brink of bankruptcy because they aren't flying.

And we have seen things that we have taken for granted just removed. And the implications are real for many of us. Our livelihoods are at stake.

- [17 : 18] Our futures, financially speaking, are at stake. These are life-altering events. And what the psalmist says to us is because God is with us, we don't have to fear.

I believe most of us have lived away from the circumstances that we now face. We've lived long enough to personally experience some of life's altering events that Psalm 46 figuratively speaks about.

In a meeting with your boss, you're handed a letter of termination, and your supposedly secure job is no more. In a conversation with your spouse, you hear the piercing words, I've been unfaithful or worse, I want a divorce.

And confident love and trust are shattered. For some, the trouble comes in the form of an adverse medical report, a life that seems so predictable, all of a sudden becomes very unpredictable.

For some of us, it has come in the form of the death of a loved one. I can go on with scenarios, but I think you get the point.

- [18 : 43] The point is, if we live long enough, we will face life-altering events that will drive us to fear. But if we remember that God is present in our troubles to help us in our troubles, and we truly turn to him in our troubles, we will not fear.

But as wonderful as this truth is this morning, that God is present with us in times of trouble, sometimes we look elsewhere, we place our hope and our trust in the midst of our troubles elsewhere.

And I'm not saying to us this morning that the only thing we should do is turn to God in prayer and reading his word. Not at all. I'm not saying that. We should use all available, legitimate, practical means that we have to help us in the midst of our troubles.

but God who is present with us must be our refuge. And he must be our true refuge and the one to whom we truly look for help, ultimately, above and beyond all the practical things that we do.

Friends, our comfort must come from him, not from some solution that we see on the horizon. Because in a fallen world, that's subject to change. Our comfort is to come from the one who does not change and was promised to be with us in the midst of all of our troubles.

[20 : 21] Over the years, time and time again, I have come to Psalm 46 in times of trouble for myself and for others. Just recently, I was in hospital and reading Psalm 46 for someone, and I was reminded of how often I have turned to this Psalm as I have sought to minister to and encourage people walking through trouble and through sickness in particular.

But this morning, if your life is not identifying with these troubles, if by God's grace the sun is shining down on you and life is all as it should be, I want to especially encourage you to hide this word on the shelf of your life, that you would remember this truth about God that he's present with us in times of trouble.

But for those of you who are facing troubles this morning, I want to ask you, are you aware of God's presence in the midst of your trouble? Are you turning to him as your refuge and your strength and your present health?

I want to encourage you that the promise that God is present with his people in the midst of their troubles is a source of great comfort and great assurance if you will accept it and if you will lay hold of it.

The second truth from Psalm 46 that we need to remember in times of trouble has to do with the power of God.

[22 : 05] In the midst of life's troubles, not only is God present, but in verses 4 through 9 we see that God is powerful. Verse 4 is quite an interesting verse.

It says, there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. It's an interesting verse because it is referring to the city of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem has no river, has no physical river, yet the psalmist talks about a river that makes the city glad.

And here the psalmist is clearly talking about an invisible river that cannot be seen, but is the joy of the people of God. the psalmist is pointing to the reality that even in the midst of life's troubles, God is powerful enough to cause his people to know great peace and joy in the midst of their troubles.

No, their troubles don't change, but God being God is able to cause them to know joy and peace that the world cannot give, that the world doesn't know.

That is this invisible river that the psalmist tells us is present in the midst of God's people in the times of trouble. It brings them joy.

[23 : 42] Notice in verse 6, the psalmist refers to what we can refer to as human chaos, nations raging, kingdoms tottering, but God who is with his people simply utters his powerful voice, the earth melts, and the formerly tumultuous peoples and nations and kingdoms are melted into quiet submission.

Notice in verse 7, it says, the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress, this term Lord of hosts is a military term, it's a military title for God, and it points to the fact that he fights for his people and he defends his people, and two times we're reminded of this truth in Psalm 46, here in verse 7 and then again in verse 11, the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is a fortress.

this is what God does for his people in the midst of trouble, he fights for them and he demonstrates his great power.

In verse 8, the Psalmist calls us to remember God's power in what he has done, God's power in God's power in God's power in world. And sometimes we have to do that. Sometimes in the midst of our circumstances, we can forget the greatness of God that he has demonstrated and what he has done in the past and we need to be reminded and the Psalmist is reminding us.

He says he has brought desolations on the earth, referring to God's mighty acts. His mighty acts of judgment at different times.

[25 : 36] We think of the flood. We think of God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In verse 9, the Psalmist helps us to see that God has sovereign power over the most destructive means of mankind, over war and the catastrophe and uncertainty that it brings.

He makes wars to cease. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the chariot with fire. Those things that are intended to oppose God's people and inflict harm upon us, the Psalmist says he makes them cease, he breaks them, he shatters them.

And yet, in the midst of daunting circumstances, we can lose sight of how great and how powerful God is.

But here's the sober reality about the power of God. The sober reality is that when trouble comes, God, although he is present with us, God, he does not always use his power in the way that we want him to and even in the way that we pray for him to.

He doesn't always use his great power to protect us from trouble or to remove our trouble. trouble. Sometimes he, with his great power and with his nearness in our troubles, permits us to walk through our troubles, sometimes extended troubles for extended periods of time.

[27 : 31] time. Yes, he does that. Despite how many prayers for him to do otherwise, to intervene and to do what only he can, there are times that God allows his people to walk through great trouble, great trials.

And the big question is why? Why would God, who is omnipresent, he is everywhere, so nothing escapes his gaze, and who has all power, why would he not intervene in our troubles?

all the time. We know that he does sometimes, but he doesn't do so all the times. Why doesn't he do that? Why doesn't he intervene all the time? Why doesn't he just stop the trial in its tracks?

Now, I don't know the reason for every specific circumstance! and situation where this question would arise.

I don't know the reason generally, specifically, sorry, but I do know the reason generally. And the reason generally that God does that brings me to my third and final point, which is the third truth from Psalm 46 that we need to remember in the midst of trouble.

[29 : 22] and it is the glory of God. The reason that God acts the way that he does in all of our troubles, whatever he does, whether he delivers us from them or he sustains us through them, the reason that he does all that he does is for his own glory.

And I'll try to explain this. But first notice verse 10. Prior to verse 10, the psalmist was describing God's presence with his people and his power that's available to his people.

But now in verse 10, what we see is a direct word from God that the psalmist has received and is quoting. In verse 10, we read, Be still and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. It is the only verse in the entire psalm that is that direct quotation.

The word that God gives us in the midst of our troubles when he says to us, Be still and know that I am God. And humanly speaking, this is not easy to do because when trouble is swirling all around us and our lives are in an upheaval, the last thing we want to think about is being still.

[31 : 00] But the God of the universe says to us, Be still and know that I am God. Don't get frantic. Don't get bent out of shape. Know that I am God.

God is God. And the extent to which we will be still is the extent to which we have come to know that God is God. The sovereign Lord, ruling over all things.

Perfectly sovereign, perfectly powerful, perfectly good, and perfectly wise. God is so nothing about our troubles is hid from him.

And however he acts, he acts in a way that is just and right. And the truth is, if we were God, we would do no differently. We would do no differently because God is perfect in all of his ways.

It is easy for us, limited human beings, with limited wisdom, to look at God and say, well, you should do this or you should do that. But we don't have God's wisdom.

[32 : 11] And if we had God's perfect wisdom, we would see things in a perfect way. And friends, it is through hearing God's voice that we are especially reminded of this third reality in Psalm 46, which we so easily forget, and that is that God seeks his glory in all things and at all times, and that includes our troubles.

Again, look at what verse 10 says, be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. God is saying, no matter what is going on, I will be exalted.

I will be exalted in the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. I will be exalted in your life. I will be exalted in your troubles. Whether I deliver you from them or I allow you to walk through them and sustain you through them, I will be exalted.

And limited human beings who are wise will bow before the living God and say all of your ways are perfect and just and all of your ways are right. And because you are God, you are able to use our greatest troubles and our greatest trials and our greatest sufferings for your glory.

God and that's why in some circumstances God does not remove the troubles because he is more glorified for his own wise reasons by allowing those troubles to remain than to remove them.

[34 : 03] And if he did any less, he would not be God. If he did any less, he would be less than perfectly wise. And he calls us to be still and know that he is God, we are not.

God will be exalted in all of our troubles. We don't need to understand that, we need to accept that because it is the plain teaching of scripture.

But oftentimes in the midst of our troubles, instead of fixing our eyes on the Lord, we fix our eyes on our comfort and not on his glory. We fix our eyes on our deliverance and not on God's glory.

And here I'm not saying to you don't pray. I'm not saying to you that you should not seek deliverance from the Lord. Do so. I do so. Scripture calls us to do so.

We read earlier in the call to worship the psalmist says in chapter 34 of the Psalms that he cried out to the Lord and the Lord heard him and delivered him from all of his fears.

[35 : 12] Let's do that. But let us remember that God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. And he doesn't always answer by delivering us from our troubles because he does it for his greater glory.

God's glory. He is the sovereign Lord who has declared that he will be exalted among the nations and he will be exalted in the earth.

That is an emphatic statement without exception. It matters not. Coronavirus or no coronavirus, God will be exalted in all the earth.

for those of you this morning who are facing the storms of life and facing trials, how aware are you of the primacy of God's glory in the midst of your troubles that you're facing?

How aware are you? And how can you seek his glory? I believe that the foundational way that we seek the glory of God when trouble comes is by following his word to us in Psalm 46 verse 10, be still and know that I am God.

[36 : 41] And perhaps in the providence of God for some of us we have about eight days left now where we can try to be still. We can try to hear from God.

But in his providence he is giving us this open time that we can seek his face in prayer, we can seek his face in his word, and we can hear his voice.

And the more we are aware of the presence of God and the power of God, we are more positioned to seek his glory. glory. And friends, God is glorified when the soul that is quietly trusting in him in the midst of life's troubles would be still.

That brings him great glory. Great glory. And this truth can be the source of great comfort and much hope if we lay a hold of it this morning.

But friends, as great as Psalm 46 has been to saints over the ages, as great as it was for the psalmist and those in Israel who would have read it, there's a greater comfort in trouble that the psalmist didn't know.

[38 : 14] And that comfort is the message and the meaning of the cross of Christ. As we face troubles in this life, those of us who have put our trust in Christ must remember that God has already rescued us from our greatest trouble.

And the time of greatest trouble is scheduled for the day when God will pour out his wrath on the ungodly. God rescued us when Christ bore our sins in his sinless body and hung on the cross as he was suspended between heaven and earth and as he was extended between two thieves.

He bore the full furious righteous wrath of God that we all deserve. And friends, that future day of the wrath of God in its severity and in its scope will cause all of life's trouble, the coronavirus included, to seem like a party in comparison.

And so for those of us this morning who know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, whatever our troubles presently are or whatever they will be in the future, this is our greatest hope, that we have been rescued from the wrath to come and did this well with our souls.

If you're watching the live stream this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, I want to remind you that as comforting as Psalm 46 is, Psalm 46 is only a promise of comfort to God's people.

[40 : 09] It is what we call an exclusive Psalm. It excludes those who do not belong to Christ. And so I urge you this morning to turn to Christ.

I urge you this morning to believe the gospel that God has sent his Son into the world to do for us what we never could do, that he lived the perfect life that we could never live.

And he pleased God in every single way where we all fail. And then he went to the cross and he took upon him sins, not his own sins, but the sins of every single person who would believe.

And he died in their place so that they can be forgiven and they can be reconciled to God. And Scripture says that all who come to the Father, all who come, none will be turned away.

And so I urge you today, trust in Christ. I urge you today, believe the gospel, turn from sin, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is with us and promised that he will never leave or forsake us.

[41 : 30] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you this morning that in the midst of trouble, we have a refuge and a very present help in the time of need.

Lord, would you through your word this morning encourage and strengthen and comfort and give perspective to those who are walking through trouble.

help us all to respond in our times of trouble by remembering your presence, your power, and your glory.

Father, would you do this, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.