

When Trouble Comes

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[0 : 00] I also want to draw your attention to a note in the bulletin regarding supervising children. Parents, I want to ask for your help and cooperation with this.

! I believe that all of us know that the people of God, that we are the people of God. We know that the people of God is not a physical building.

We are the people of God, the house of God, that is. It is not a physical building. It is the people of God. So here at Kingdom Life, we who have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, we are the house of God.

But there is also a sense that this building, which we are privileged to meet in, is also God's house. Even though it is not God's house in the same way, we who are flesh and blood are God's house, who have trusted in him, nonetheless, this building is God's house.

This building has been acquired with tithes and offerings given by God's people, and it has been set aside for the worship of our triune God when we gather corporately.

[1 : 17] And so when we gather in this place, we have to remember that this is God's house. We have gathered to worship in this place. And this is not only true of the auditorium.

It is not only true about this part of the building. It is true of all of the building. All of the building, all of these premises have been set aside for the worship of God. And so parents, I ask that you would take the time to explain this to your children, let them know when we are gathering on a Sunday morning, we are gathering to come to God's house.

I encourage you to ensure that they bring a Bible along. It's so easy to remember the electronic device rather than the Bible, and I would even encourage that electronic devices not be brought with the children on a Sunday morning, that we can do things that would distinguish this day from our other days because this is the day that we have come to corporately worship the Lord.

And while they are here, I ask that you supervise them and control them. Sometimes when we are gathered, there are children who are getting up frequently.

They are walking out, going to the bathroom, getting water. And I imagine that some of it really is not necessary. And so parents, we ask that you would govern them and you would watch for those kinds of things.

[2 : 39] Sometimes we have a lot of running through the building, going into areas where they ought not to go in, areas that are clearly marked off-limits, authorized persons only.

Sometimes we are in visitors' reception. We have children who would come and knock on the door asking for snacks, even after they would have gotten snacks during the break time in children's church.

So parents, these conversations I would ask that you have with your children about when we gather, that we gather to worship the Lord. And there is a particular way that we are taught to conduct ourselves when we come in God's house.

So please let us work together to cause this place to really be not just in name, but also in deed, the house of God. Thank you for your cooperation with that.

Well, this morning we were scheduled to resume our sermon series on the Letter of Galatians. But during the course of the week, as I pondered the trying and difficult circumstances that some of you are facing, I felt prompted of the Lord to preach a message from Psalm 46, which I've titled, When Trouble Comes.

[4 : 01] And while I have in view those of you who I am aware of are walking through trials and difficult circumstances, I imagine that there would be some who I'm not aware of, who are all the same walking through their own share of troubling and difficult circumstances.

And I say this because trouble is a part of the human condition in this fallen world. Job makes this point clearly in Job 14, 1, when he said, Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble.

Although trouble comes to us in different ways and to different degrees and at different times, the truth is we are all people of trouble. And so I want to begin this morning by asking the question, What do you do when trouble comes into your life?

What's your typical response? My question is primarily directed to those of you who are followers of Christ, those of you who have come to trust Jesus Christ, a Savior and Lord.

I ask this question because our response should be different from the response of those who do not know Jesus Christ.

[5 : 34] If trouble comes to us as believers and we respond as unbelievers, something is wrong. And I say this because a believer's response in the face of trouble should be Godward.

And this is the foundational part of a Godward response. Or Godward response for a believer, one who looks up, one who is reacting to trouble and trials, not by looking around, but really looking up, looking Godward.

And the two foundational parts of that are prayer and God's word. And over the ages, Psalm 46 has been one of the primary portions of Scripture that God's people have turned to and been pointed to in the midst of trouble.

And this morning, I want to point us there as well. So if you have not yet done so, please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 46.

I'm reading from the English Standard Version. If you have another translation, yours would read slightly differently. Psalm 46. God is our refuge and strength.

[7 : 04] 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. The kingdoms totter. He utters his voice. The earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us.

[8 : 05] 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 to 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. Let's pray together. Father, we're so grateful this morning that we who belong to you are able to look to you when trouble comes.

We thank you for your word. In particular, we thank you for Psalm 46. We thank you for the well-used path that saints over the ages have taken to come to find comfort and strength and perspective from this psalm.

[9 : 24] And Lord, we pray that the same comfort and assurance and strength that have come to others over the ages will be our portion this morning. Lord, though I have a general awareness of the burdens and the cares in our midst, Lord, you have a particular awareness.

You know us by name, by nature, by circumstances. you know our friends. You know every single detail of our lives and the trials we face and the burdens we bear.

And so, Lord, I pray that in a way that I could never do, that you would care for these who are gathered this morning through the preaching of your word and through the ministry of your Holy Spirit.

I pray that you would grant me grace to be faithful to your word. And Lord, I pray that you would give me unction that I may speak and proclaim your word today to your people.

And so we thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, crisis management experts tell us that people who prepare for crisis tend to do far better if they prepare than people who do not prepare.

[11 : 00] And they tell us that we should have a plan for the likely crises and emergencies that we may face in our lives, like a medical emergency, or natural disasters, like a hurricane or a fire.

These experts tell us that some people write out their plans. But in the moment of crisis, they forget they have a plan and they fall into panic mode and do something other than what they planned to

do.

So they tell us that we are to both write our plan and remember to follow our plan in the midst of the crisis. And while we all need to do these practical things to develop plans for reasonable crises that may come our way, Psalm 46 provides us with perspective shaping and comfort-granting promises for life's crises that we may face from time to time.

We can call it our spiritual crisis plan. The plan that is important for us to remember when trouble comes our way. And this Psalm is rich in promises that followers of Christ can lay hold of in any crisis.

And here's the unshakable assurance that it gives us in the midst of all of our troubles.

[12 : 31] Here's the unshakable assurance that we can have. In all of life's troubles, God is our dependable refuge and our present help.

That's the truth that we see in this Psalm. And as I said, it really, when we lay a hold of it, it is perspective shaping. It is comfort granting.

Because the Psalmist reminds us that it does not matter how earth-shaking our problems might be, God is our dependable refuge and our present help.

And yet this truth is so easy to forget when trouble comes. And so it's my prayer this morning that the Lord will use this sermon to help us to remember that He is our dependable refuge.

And He is our present help when trouble comes. In our remaining time this morning, I want to consider three realities from Psalm 46 that we need to remember when trouble comes.

[13 : 43] Because remembering these realities will help us to embrace God as our refuge and our strength in times of trouble.

The first reality is this, the presence of God. The presence of God. God is near to us in the midst of our troubles.

And more than that, Psalm 46 tells us that He is present with us in the midst of our troubles. Now I know this sounds very obvious to us this morning, but in the midst of trouble, it's very easy to forget. It is not so obvious in trouble. But the way that Psalm 46 is written helps us to remember it begins with the word God.

And then it goes on to tell us who He is and what He does for us in trouble. He is our refuge and He is our very present help in trouble. I know this sounds strange because when trouble comes to us, one of the first thoughts that tends to come to our mind is that God is often far from us and our troubles.

[15 : 06] We sometimes wonder if God is against us in the midst of our troubles. We sometimes conjure up ideas that maybe God is the one who is trying to punish us perhaps for something we have done or not done at some point in time in our lives.

But the very first verse of Psalm 46 tells us otherwise. It tells us that God is our refuge and strength. He is a very present help in trouble. Now I know that we, most of us would be aware that God is omnipresent.

He is everywhere all the time at the same time. And we know He has given a promise to His people that He will never leave us and He will never forsake us.

So why is the Psalmist telling us that God is present with us in the midst of our trouble? I think the Psalmist seems to be saying to us that God is with us in trouble in a special way.

[16 : 17] Not just in omnipresence but in personal presence. That God in ways that we can't fully understand, the God who's always with us, who's always there, that He draws near to us in a very real and personal way in the midst of trouble other than we can know and experience Him in the absence of trouble.

When we think of a shelter, we think of a place that we go to, we think of something like a hurricane shelter designed to protect people from the storm and so people go to the shelter and sometimes they have a long way to go to that shelter.

Sometimes they encounter difficulty going to the shelter. But God, who is our refuge and strength, is different. He is a different kind of shelter.

He's a different kind of refuge. He is very present. He's a very present help in trouble. We don't need to go to Him as much as we need to turn to Him.

And we turn to Him as we turn to Him in prayer. We turn to Him through His Word. Thank God that that is the case. Because sometimes we would say to ourselves, the journey would be too long to journey to where God might be.

[17 : 49] But the psalmist says, He's right there. He's with us. He is present. We simply need to look to Him and turn to Him. And this is important. This is so important.

It's not enough for God to be our shelter. It's not enough for God to be our present help. He is that. But that will avail us no good if we don't turn to Him, if we don't look to Him, turn to Him in prayer. Look to Him through His Word. The extent to which we can remember that God is our refuge and our strength and that He is present with us in trouble is the extent to which we will not fear in the face of earth-shaking, daunting circumstances.

Look at what the psalmist says in verse 2. After stating that God is our refuge and strength, the very present help in trouble, He goes on, therefore, we will not fear, 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.

This is why we will not fear because God is our refuge and He is present with us in these difficult circumstances.

[19 : 22] Here in verses 2 and 3, the psalmist is figuratively describing natural disasters and upheavals to talk about events that sometimes seem arbitrary and He is using them to describe how our lives at times could be turned upside down in the midst of all of life's troubles.

again, look at how He describes it beginning in the latter part of verse 2. Though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, the earth gives way, that which seemed unshakable and steady no longer is, we can't stand on it.

The mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, that which seemed unmovable and fixed, no longer is. He tells us about the waters roaring and foaming, that which was calm is now chaotic.

And then we see that mountains are trembling at the swelling of waters. That tells us that what seemed impossible, what is causing mountains to tremble, has taken place.

The psalmist is talking about nothing short of cataclysmic, earth-shaking things that can and do happen to the people of God. And I think this is so important for us to recognize that he is indeed speaking to the people of God.

[20 : 56] Psalm 46 is an exclusive psalm. It's not an inclusive psalm. It doesn't speak to all people. It speaks to God's people. There are some psalms that speak to all people, like Psalm 127, verse 1, unless the Lord builds the house, those who labor, they labor in vain.

That's to everyone. Psalm 46 is to the people of God, that God is their refuge. And by clear implication, it tells us that God's people sometimes experience amazing troubles, indescribable troubles.

troubles. And I think many of us in this room have lived long enough to experience some of those troubles. And for those of you who have not yet experienced them, it's probably because you're young.

And I don't say this because I wish ill on you. I say this because this is life. If you live long enough, you will have trouble. Because Job said, man who was born of woman is a few days and full of trouble.

Some of us have experienced it. We've experienced sitting in a meeting with our boss and he passes us a letter of termination and the supposedly secure job that we had is no more.

[22 : 18] Some of us have experienced it, talking with a spouse and hear those piercing words. I want a divorce. And confident love and trust are shattered.

For some, the trouble comes in the form of an adverse medical report. And then life that seemed predictable is no longer. It is unpredictable.

Sometimes it comes in the form of death. Death of a loved one. Yesterday I attended a funeral and saw a young man bury his wife, his young wife, and his nine-year-old son's mother.

And no doubt, verses two and three of Psalm 46 describe their world. For some people, for some people, for some people, like students, the life-altering event was that less-than-stellar BGCSE result, that less-than-stellar SAT score that caused scholarship opportunities and college attendance to fizzle.

people. And I can go on with scenarios this morning, but I believe you get the point. If we live long enough, we will face life-altering events that will drive us to fear.

[23 : 51] But if we belong to God, the psalmist tells us that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. And if we would remember that in the times of trouble, we will not fear.

fear. We should fear. Anytime you see the Bible telling us not to fear, it means we should fear. But because God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, we will not fear.

The degree to which we can etch that in our souls by the grace of God, we will look at these circumstances and we will not fear.

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

And by this, I'm not saying that as believers in the midst of trouble, we only look to God, we simply look to God and we do nothing else. I'm not saying that at all. We should use all available legitimate means open to us in the midst of our troubles to deal with them in practical ways.

[25 : 16] But God, who is our refuge, who is our strength, who is our very present help, must be the one to whom we look first and foremost, ultimately, as we walk through whatever trouble comes comes our way.

I'm not saying we should not be concerned and have a don't care attitude. No, we can be responsibly concerned and still not fear when we remember that God is a very present help in trouble.

Over the years, in my personal life, and my pastoral ministry, in times of difficulty, in times of trial, I cannot tell you the countless number of times that I would turn to Psalm 46.

And many times, just read it. No exposition of it, no elaboration on it, just read it. And as we hear it, it brings amazing comfort to our souls.

where we know that we belong to the Lord. So if you hear this morning, and you are by the grace of God experiencing the sun shining on your life, and things are all as they should be, I want to encourage you to hide this truth in your heart now.

[26 : 50] See, this is harder to get in our souls in the time of trouble and trial, but if we can put this on the shelf of our souls now, that we can draw from it in the midst of trial, we would be doing what the crisis management experts tell us.

We prepare the plan, and then we carry out the plan in the time of difficulty. The second reality from Psalm 46 that we need to remember when trouble comes is the power of God.

look again with me at verses 4 through 9. 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, the kingdoms totter, the others' voice, the earth melts.

God of Jacob is our fortress. Verse 4 is the most interesting verse.

[28 : 17] It's interesting because Jerusalem, the city of God, has no river. Yet the psalmist talks about one, a river that makes the city glad.

And here the psalmist is obviously talking about this invisible river that cannot be seen, but it is the joy of the people of God. God. And I think he's pointing to the reality that even in the midst of life's troubles, God's people can know and experience peace and joy.

In the same way, there's no river in Jerusalem. And he talks about this river making glad the city of God. God.

The unseen river with his people. Make us glad and give us peace in the midst of trials. Not a giddy gladness.

Not a passing gladness, but a sustained gladness in our souls that is above and beyond the circumstances that we face in life. A divine gladness that he gives to us that is not connected to what we have or don't have or what we experience or don't experience.

[29 : 47] The psalmist tells us in verse five that God also is in the midst of his people to demonstrate his power on their behalf. Verse five says God is in the midst of her.

She shall not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns. And then in verse six, notice how the psalmist refers to human chaos, like the natural chaos that we read about earlier in verses two and three.

Nations raging, kingdoms tottering, but God who is with his people simply utters his voice and the earth melts. And verse seven, he tells us the Lord of hosts is with us.

The God of Jacob is our fortress. The term Lord of hosts is a military term. It's a military title for God. He fights for and he defends his people.

He is not just there passive as some kind of a shelter, but he is an active shelter who is not only sheltering us, but defending us and protecting us against that which comes against us.

[30 : 59] And notice that it's used two times here in verse seven and also again in verse 11. He is referred to as the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob who is our fortress.

He fights for his people and he demonstrates his power in times of trouble. But sometimes in the midst of daunting circumstances, we can lose sight of how great and powerful our God is.

And verse eight the psalmist calls us to consider God's power and what he has done. Notice he says he has brought desolations on the earth, no doubt referring to God's mighty acts of judgment at different times.

We think of the flood, a mighty act of judgment by God and an incredible show of power. We think of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Again, a mighty show of the Lord's power. In verse nine, the psalmist helps us to see that God has sovereign power over the most destructive means of mankind, war, and all the uncertainty that it brings.

[32 : 15] He tells us he makes wars to cease. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear, and he burns the chariots with fire. That was the state-of-the-art weapons and munitions of war at that time.

And God, with his voice, brings it to nothing. But in the storm, when trouble comes, it's easy to forget it.

perhaps in the midst of troubles that you may be facing at this very moment, you may not be aware of the presence of God nor of the power of God as our refuge.

You may be aware more of the power and presence of your troubles. But what does the psalmist do? The psalmist invites us to look back on the awesome displays of God's power in human history, and in particular, in his dealings with the nation of Israel in the Old Testament.

He calls us to consider his works and remember that he is the same powerful God who is with us now. For the third reality that we need to remember when we experience trouble is the glory of God.

[33 : 50] The glory of God. In verse 10, we have the words of God himself, and this is so important to see in the structure of this psalm. We have the psalmist speaking in verses 1 through 9, and now in verse 10, God's voice breaks in.

His voice breaks in telling us what we need to do in times of crisis, but what we so easily forget to do, and that is to be still and know that he is God.

In the midst of trouble, the most important voice we need to hear is the voice of God, more than any other voice. When trouble comes, the counsel of others is helpful, it is encouraging, sometimes the voice of God can come through that counsel, but there is no substitute for hearing God's voice in the midst of our troubles.

There's no substitute. We need to hear God's voice in a primary way. We need to be in God's face in prayer. We need to be in God's face in his word. And many times in the providential dealings of God, God has it so that those circumstances would bring us to him and to cause us to seek his face and to cause us to pray to him.

Truth be told many times, otherwise we would not. Being still does not mean that we cease activity.

[35 : 35] Sometimes we need to do that, but in general it doesn't mean that. Instead it means that we must quiet our racing souls and that we must know that God is God and he's God over those circumstances and he's present and he's powerful in the midst of them and all of life's troubles.

And it is through hearing God's voice that I believe that we'd be reminded of this third reality of Psalm 46.

Again, which is easy to forget when we are faced with troubles. And this third reality is the glory of God in all things. See, God seeks his glory in all things, in all of life.

He would have it no other way. No matter what the situation is, no matter what the circumstance is, even in our troubles, God seeks his glory.

And that's what he says in Psalm 46 verse 10. Notice, be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth.

[36 : 45] God is speaking to his glory. And he's speaking about being exalted over all things and in all things. No matter what's going on, this is God's declared plan.

He will be exalted among the nations. He will be exalted in the earth. And brothers and sisters, this speaks to God's glory in our troubles as well. But so often in our troubles, we're not thinking about God's glory.

We're thinking about our comfort and nothing wrong with that. We're thinking about deliverance, nothing wrong with that. Pray for comfort, pray for deliverance, but let us not lose sight of God's glory. We want to be praying.

And asking God, God, in the midst of my trials, in the midst of my difficulties, no matter how hard they are, would you help me to seek your glory and desire your glory above all other things? He's a sovereign God and he has declared, I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth.

[38 : 06] Brothers and sisters, this is the only command in the entire psalm in verse 10, be still and know that I am God.

It's the only command in the whole psalm. it's the only thing we're told to do in the midst of trouble, to do something actively, to be still, to still ourselves and to know that God is God.

And when we know that God is God, we know that part of him being God is his glory and his exaltation in all things.

And our trouble is no different. And you know, if you see a person who is inviting trouble in his or her life, it's probably a sign that they're not well.

It's probably a sign that they're not well. Then we don't invite trouble. We don't want trouble. God didn't make us for trouble. But when we get to the place, when we realize that our deliverance from trouble and having a life of comfort is not the priority of God, brothers and sisters, that's a mark of growing up in the Lord.

[39 : 32] That's a mark of becoming jealous for the glory of God where we are saying, God, even in the midst of the hardness of the circumstance, glorify yourself. God's love. And he will.

And I believe we'll find comfort in the outworking of his glory. glory. For those of us this morning who are facing life's storms and trials, how aware are you of God's glory in the midst of what you're facing?

How can you see God's glory? What would it look like for God to be glorified in the trouble that's in your life right now?

Perhaps no answers come to mind, but I would encourage you, be still and know that God is God. And I believe that God will show you how he can and will be glorified in the midst of your trial. It doesn't matter what it is. Because God is God, he can be glorified in the midst of it. God, I remembered many years ago, an old preacher who's dead now, he was saying it jokingly, but he was making a point.

[41 : 04] He said, the garbage truck never comes up to God's workshop. And he said, the reason is because God uses everything.

the worst junk, he can use it, doesn't have to throw it away. God will use all of our troubles, no matter what it is, for his glory.

And that is what he desires to do. So let us quiet our souls before the Lord, let us hear his voice.

And you know what, even in that act, God is glorified.

If you could see it, perhaps two persons, an unbeliever and a believer receiving the same or similar earth shaking news. And one is frantic and running like a chicken with its head cut off, and the other one is being still, knowing God is God and trusting God.

God is glorified in that. Brings him great glory to see his children trusting him, looking to him, believing in him when trouble comes.

[42 : 22] This truth can bring us much hope and much encouragement. So let us, by the grace of God, lay hold of it this morning. But I close this morning by reminding us that as comforting as Psalm 46 would have been to God's people in the days of the Psalmist, there is an overriding comfort that the Psalmist could not see and did not know that the comfort that we can enjoy because of Christ and because of the meaning of the cross makes our reading of this Psalm very different from when they would have read it.

As we face troubles in this life, we must remember that God has already rescued us from our greatest trouble. It is scheduled for a day when God will pour out his wrath on the ungodly.

But God rescued us when Christ bore our sins in his sinless body and hung on the cross suspended between heaven and earth. There he bore the full, furious, righteous wrath of God that we deserved.

And that future day of God's wrath, its severity, its scope, will cause all of life's troubles to save like a party.

Yet we who know Christ this morning, whatever our troubles are, or whatever they might be in the future. This is our greatest hope. Our greatest hope is that we have been forever rescued from the wrath to come, and that it is well with our souls.

[44 : 26] That, brothers and sisters, is our greatest hope and comfort in the midst of trials. If you're here today and you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, I remind you that, again, you've been in many ways listening in.

You've been eavesdropping on a conversation for God's people because Psalm 46 is an exclusive psalm. It offers comfort to God's people. people. But you can join that company.

You can become a part of the people of God by turning from sin, repenting, and by trusting in Christ, believing in him for forgiveness and for salvation.

And Psalm 46 will be yours as well. Lord, so I urge you this morning to turn to Christ, the only true refuge, both for this life and for the life to come.

Let's pray.