

Sure And Steadfast

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 September 2019

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

- [0 : 01] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter that we read in the book of Psalms, Psalm 46. Psalm 46. I'm just going to consider the psalm this morning.
- It's, I suppose, one of the best-known psalms. We so often sing it. It's a psalm that, particularly at a time of death, brings so much strength and comfort to families.
- But the world that we live in is a very, very uncertain world. And it's a very different world to the world that I grew up in.
- Because when I was a boy, when I grew up, there was no such thing as 24-hour news. There was no internet. In fact, where we were, there was no television.
- It was yesterday's newspaper. So that what was happening in the world was, as far as I was concerned, was of little relevance.
- [1 : 10] Of course, there would be conflicts here and there. And there were wars. There's always been wars here and there. But you're kind of oblivious to all these things. I remember, when I was maybe about 10, I remember there was a Cuban crisis.
- And I remember asking my mum. That was about the only thing that I knew of, was there going to be a war? Now, obviously, for some of you, you grew up in a very different world.
- I was very fortunate, my age group, that didn't see that war. Or like my mum was in Glasgow at the time of the Clydebank Blitz and my father was in the Destroyer.
- So their world was a very different world. And it would be the same for many of you who can identify and understand that. But the world we're living in today is a world that everybody is aware is a very uncertain world.
- Because there is non-stop conflict. And we live in a world where the safety and security, even at a national level that we used to take for granted, that it just isn't there.
- [2 : 17] We're always being told we've got to be aware. I remember back in, I think it was 1993, going out to Israel. I was out in a sponsored cycle.
- And I arrived, I went out on my own. The rest were coming. A couple of days later, I made a wee kind of holiday of it. And I had to stay the night, or a good part of the night, at the airport, because the plane came in late.
- And I couldn't get over the security, because we weren't used to the likes of that. There were people going around with guns. There were searching bins. There was just, you were aware all the time in the airport there that security was at an absolute maximum.
- And even when they would go through your stuff, your luggage. And I couldn't get over just the, there were, there were just some people that were just taking every single bit.
- I remember watching, and they actually opened a pen that a man had. It was an Arab that was going through. And you could see there was, you were aware of the tensions, conflict.
- [3 : 21] And that was foreign to ourselves back then, because it was just a different world. Now, of course, that's all changed. And we have all this heightened security, because we live in this world that is so insecure.

And that causes pressures and anxieties and fears and all these sort of things with people. And the imagery in this psalm is really, at the beginning of it, is quite terrifying.

Because it is, you're seeing really that the world is in upheaval. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way. The mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.

Its waters roar and foam. The mountains tremble at its swelling. And when you look at that, you see it yourself. These are terrifying pictures. And again, we're very aware, and I suppose that's one of the things now of media coverage, where events are brought before us.

We still remember the horrors of the tsunami. And just the devastation that it caused. And we see all these kind of things, where there's volcanic eruptions, and the devastation of earthquakes.

[4 : 35] And there was just recently that hurricane that hit into the Bahamas. And it just flattened everything. I think it was 180 or up to 200 mile an hour winds hitting.

I can't even begin to imagine the ferocity of that. And that's the world we're in. And we've got to remember that this world has been affected by the fall. It wasn't just us, but the world itself.

And Romans tells us that the whole creation is groaning. That it's not just, we're not the only ones that groan. But the very creation is growing because of the impact of the fall.

Because of the devastation that the fall brought. Because it's like the curse that came through the fall has affected everything. And so this is why the world is, the earth is groaning.

And it spills out, and it bursts out. And we see it in its volcanic eruptions, and in its tidal waves, and the tsunami, and all these things. So that's very much what we find here in this particular, in this psalm.

[5 : 42] And it's just all this upheaval. And that's why it is absolutely essential to have, at the very heart of our lives, God as our refuge and our strength.

And it's a wonderful thing that, that's what it says. God is our refuge in strength. Spurgeon used to be very fond of saying there's grace in the grammar.

And how true that is. Because God is our refuge. It's not, he was in the past a refuge to his people.

Or that he was a refuge to the saints in the Old Testament. But he's not a refuge to us. But God is a refuge. He is right now.

He's our refuge. God is our. Yep, yep. You're mine. He is our refuge. And our strength. And what a wonderful balm that is to any troubled soul.

[6 : 44] And you know, often in trouble, if we're in some kind of trouble, we say, oh, I wish so-and-so was here. They might be able to help me with this. But you know, if you have the Lord, we have someone that sometimes we don't appreciate just how wonderful.

That's one of the great things that the Bible shows us, great examples of how the Lord is there in the time of trouble. When you think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the burning, fiery furnace.

God was with them. We find that the Lord, we believe it was the Lord Jesus that was with them. Not outside the furnace. Not just, as it were, ministering by the Spirit into their hearts.

But that he was right in the furnace with them. And Nebuchadnezzar was given, it was like an amazing insight into the spiritual realms.

It was like, every so often you find that, like the shatter shall pull back. And we're given an insight into what's happening. And there, in the midst of that burning, fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar calls and he says, How many men did we throw in?

[7 : 59] And they said, Three. Yes, that's what I ordered. Well, I'm seeing four. And the fourth is like the sun. And it was an amazing moment.

But that's where the Lord promises, that through the fire he will be with us. And through the floods, it doesn't matter where we go, he is the constant refuge and strength who is a permanent presence with his people.

And it's a wonderful encouragement and consolation for us. And so, in all our worries and in all our troubles, here is the one person.

And one of the things that the Lord does for us in all the troubles of the world is that he enables us to have peace. He gives us peace. Even when other people all around might be, as we use the expression, losing their heads.

The Lord can give a calmness and a composure to his people. Because that's part of what he does. He is a refuge and a strength. And he gives strength to his people.

[9 : 05] He imparts strength to his people. Because he is strong. He is so strong. But that's what he does. Now, he gives, as I say, he gives this calmness.

A great example of that was the Apostle Paul and the storm. Remember when they were traveling and there was a fearful storm. And the captain and the sailors, they were convinced the boat was going to go down.

They were throwing the goods that were on it overboard to try and lighten. And the Lord reassured. The Lord came alongside the Apostle and reassured him.

And he said, Fear not. No one in this ship is going to be lost. Now, we know the boat was wrecked. But the thing is, nobody was lost.

And Paul there, in the midst of the storm, was able to reassure. The captain and the crew, it's going to be all right. None of you are going to perish. And you see, this is his calmness, this is his assurance, this peace that the Lord can give.

[10 : 15] Now, in life, we're often advised to take out insurance policies. And people say, and it's a good thing, don't get me wrong, to take out an insurance policy. We have them for our cars. We have them for our houses, for the contents, for various things.

Maybe for going on a trip abroad or something like that. People take out an insurance policy. Because in case, in case, something happens.

That's why you take it out. And sometimes people will go on holiday. Every so often you find it, they go abroad on holiday and they take ill. And they end up in hospital. And they don't have an NHS there.

And all of a sudden, the bills are astronomical. Running into thousands could even run into hundreds of thousands depending on the length of time and what was needed to be done.

And so sometimes people are called short. And so that's why it's illegal to drive without having an insurance. So people are advised rightly to take out insurance.

[11 : 15] But you know, at a spiritual point of view, it is absolute folly for any person to go through this life. And that's not why we seek the Lord.

But at one level, having the Lord as our Lord is an insurance policy in life. Now we, don't get me wrong because that is not our primary purpose for taking the Lord as our Lord.

to have just in case something goes wrong. That's not what we have Him for. But when we have Him, it is wonderful to have Him because He is there in all the storms of life, in all its trials, in all its tribulations, in all its ups and all its downs, in all its highs and lows, everywhere.

He is with us. He is a permanent presence with us. And that is the wonderful thing about it. And so that is why it is vital that we are rooted and grounded in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then we have here, we are told that from all the pounding and all the crashing and all the fear that we have in the first three verses, and it is amazing, when you read through, I love that word though that keeps appearing.

[12 : 41] But God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way. Now I'll tell you if there was any reason to fear, that would be it.

That's a major earthquake. The earth is giving way. We won't fear. Though the mountains be moved, there's your volcanic eruptions into the heart of the sea.

The waters roar and foam, there's your tsunami. And yet, we won't fear though, though, though, all these things.

And then from all the turbulence and all the climactic sort of movement of this earth and all the fearful pictures, it changes very quickly.

And it tells us in verse 4, there, there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. There's this river.

[13 : 39] Now, here we have very simply a picture of the church of God. And we must always remember that the church belongs to him. It doesn't belong to us. Because sometimes we think the church is ours.

It's not. It's his. And we, we are his representatives here in this world. And we are to seek the, the, the, to live.

Because every one of us, we've got to remember that we are. We are the church. Each, each individual and then collectively brought together, we are the church.

And it is for the church that Jesus died. He is, he is the head of the church. And he, often in scripture, the, the, the reference to my church.

My church. Not, not our church. It doesn't belong to us. It belongs to him. And I think that's something that people have always got to remember. Because it's very easy to, to begin to almost lose sight of the Lord and say, oh, this is, it's, it's my, this is my, it's not.

[14 : 44] We, we belong to him. And then we have here this idea that the church is likened to a city. And, the city, of course, in the, in the Old Testament was always looked upon as a, as a, the place you long to get to.

Because the city, first of all, offered you protection. When you were out in the wilderness in the desert, you, you had no protection. You were out there to the wild beasts, to the tribes that might be on the move and armed bandits and all sorts.

You were looking forward to getting to a city because a city had walls. A city was a safe place. There were gates in that city and every night these gates were shut and nobody could go in and nobody could go out.

And there were watchmen on the walls. So the city was a place that was, that you, you felt secure and safe in. And that's the idea. It's a different picture of our city today because sometimes we might feel much more unsafe in the city today than we would here.

But in the Old Testament that's part of where the city was, this place of security, this place of refuge. And that's the same for the church because the church is a place of security.

[16 : 06] You and I are in the safest place in this world. Though the mountains move, though the waters come crashing over us, though this, though that, though the next thing, we are safe because we have divine protection.

And no one, remember what the Lord said, no one shall pluck them out of my hand. God has given his people to his son and he is, there's not, there is not one single soul that has ever in the history of this world been plucked out of the hand of God.

despite all the assaults of the evil one, despite all the enmity that has come against the individuals. And we know that the church is under attack all the time in different ways.

Some parts of this world are horrendous persecution. It's ongoing. Hundreds, thousands dying throughout this world because they love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most of it doesn't, most of the, these deaths never make the news. But there's news in heaven. But the, the, the, there's fearful persecutions.

[17 : 21] And also the church is often enticed, drawn, sucked in. But the thing is that the church, the church, it's quite incredible in many ways how the church continues because again, there are so many attacks within.

It's not just from without. It's not just the persecution from without. But fearful damage has been done to the church down throughout the centuries from within. From internal disputes, from heresies, from various things that has taken the church completely off.

And it's got, it's only the Lord that has enabled the church not only to survive but to continue to grow until there will be a number that no man can number.

And so there is this wonderful protection. And we've got to remember Jesus said this. This is what's going to happen against the church. He said, on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Which means that the gates of hell are open against it and fighting against it. But the city was not only a place of protection, it was also a place of company.

[18 : 35] Because one of the things you know, cities are full of people. And particularly today they're incredibly international. You will find every kind of skin colour and every kind of culture, background and language.

Even on some of the big city streets you will hear people speaking in other languages. Even here you'll hear people speaking in other languages. Because the world is becoming smaller, it's becoming more international all the time.

But the city is speaking of this large number of people, of a great company. And that's what the church is. And the church is made up of all different type of people, different backgrounds, different cultures, different skin colours, different everything.

But we're all one in Christ Jesus. And we've always got to remember that. Every Christian is precious to the Lord Jesus Christ. And every Christian should be precious to us as well. Because Christ is, and there's someone, there's a brother, there's a sister.

We become family. The moment we become born again, we become family. You belong. You belong to one another. And also the city was looked on as a place of rest.

[19 : 55] And again today, different ideas because sometimes the city is a very opposite to some of the cities never sleep at all. They're just going night and day. But back in the time of the Old Testament, the city was a place of rest.

The desert, the wilderness was a place of the wandering. They strayed in deserts pathless way, no city found to rest. But once they got into the city, whoa, that's it, I'm home.

And again, that's the idea that the Lord has given us here. That the church, the city, this is a city of rest because he is at the head of it.

And you see there's a river running through it. And this river, this river proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb. And this river is washing us clean by the blood of Jesus Christ.

We are being washed by the washing of regeneration. Our sins are being washed. But it's also a river of refreshing that we go to and we drink from. And our souls are thrilled and encouraged and built up as we journey along the way.

[21 : 06] And so this river, as we say, it refreshes and satisfies. And so we are protected by the Lord all the time because God is in the midst of us.

That's what it tells us. God in the midst. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. The holy habitation of the Most High. It's not an amazing thought.

The holy habitation of the Most High. Back in the Old Testament, where would the holy habitation of the Most High be? Well, you'd go to the temple or the tabernacle.

And you would go through and you'd be brought through one curtain and then and then there was one you couldn't go to. That was the holy of holies. The holiest of all. This was the place where the Ark of the Covenant was there.

The high priest was only the high priest was allowed in there and only once a year. On the great day of atonement. That was a holy habitation of the Most High.

[22 : 13] That's what it says. The holy habitation of the Most High. Come to today, to the New Testament. Where is the holy habitation of the Most High? Here. In you.

In me. Now that is really sometimes hard for us to understand. But that is where he has come to dwell. This is his dwelling place on earth.

Is in his people. And we would never have the audacity to say that. ourselves. We would say, oh that, you can't say that.

That I am the dwelling place of the most, the habitation of the Most High. That's what the Bible tells us. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

That's what Paul tells us. The Holy Spirit has come to dwell within us. We are now the habitation of the Most High. And this is something that we tend to forget, but the scripture reminds us over and over again of how special we are to the Lord.

[23 : 17] We are his inheritance. We are his portion in this world. Nothing else is he going to take from this world but us to be with himself.

And so, we've always got to remember this. And that's why the Lord is protecting his people all the time because they are his special portion.

And so, because God is in the midst of them, they shall not be moved. You know, so many people today are so anxious about the future. You're always seeing people say, oh, the future, the future, but so anxious.

Well, I suppose there are genuine reasons why we could be anxious about the future. But there is one level in which there shouldn't be undue anxiety about the future because the future is God's.

It's his future and he reigns over it. He is in absolute control. He has not lost control. Sometimes you look out at this world and you say, oh, it's chaos. It's not. Different points in history, people, God's people could very easily have said the same thing.

[24 : 32] But at no point has God lost control. He reigns. He's clothed with majesty most bright. And he's ruling over everything. And that's a great thing.

So we ought not to fear. And we're told here that God's people will not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns. And then in verse 6 it says, the nations rage.

The kingdoms totter. And then it says he utters his voice. The earth melts. Now isn't that quite a statement? Here you have all these nations and all these people and these mighty forces.

And they rage and it's like the whole earth totter. And all that the Lord does is he utters his voice. and what happens?

The earth melts. Here's the Lord who brought everything into being by the word of his power. That word is awesome. All it takes is one word.

[25 : 36] Do you know that all it would take would be one word from the Lord to annihilate the whole human race. That's all it would take in a moment. He is so in control of everything.

And we don't understand the awesome might and power that belongs to him. But he's in control of everything. And then verse 7 it says the Lord of hosts is with us.

The Lord of hosts. Of all the hosts of heaven. All the great angelic hosts. Remember when Elisha was in the city and this huge army surrounded the city.

And Elisha said to the young man who was with him you know the young man was saying to Elisha what are we going to do? They're after you. Elisha said there's more with us than with them.

And I'm sure the young man at that moment must have thought oh Elisha you're losing yourself here. Just look out. We're surrounded. Remember Elisha prayed Lord open the young man's eyes.

[26 : 46] The Lord did. The young man saw the whole whole everywhere was surrounded everywhere by this spiritual army.

And he realized that human army is nothing. And so this is what we have here that the Lord of hosts the Lord who is in charge of all the hosts of heaven he's with us.

He's with us. And then it says the God of Jacob our fortress. Now I love that. Jacob think about Jacob and think of Jacob away in the wilderness in that howling wilderness and God is with him.

Remember how God revealed himself to Jacob the dream the ladder and all throughout Jacob's life God was with him. And that life was quite complicated in many ways.

But all the time the Lord was with him. And Jacob at the end of his days as he reflected back he was able to see how the hand of God every step was there even when Jacob thought he was alone.

[28 : 01] The Lord of hosts. Why? Because he's a covenant keeping God and that's why Jacob comes into it. We're here back into the covenant and God is saying just as I was the God of Jacob so I am your God too.

I will never ever ever leave you or forsake you. Then verse 8 come behold the works of the Lord. Now this word behold generally is a word for seeing with the inward eye like the prophets used to see.

For us it is seeing with the eye of faith. And we've got to lay hold upon the fact that however crazy your world might be and however uncertain it might be morally physically financially and all the different ways in this world the Lord is in control and he holds everything in his hand.

And we see behold he makes wars cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots with fire.

there's a lot of sort of turmoil in these verses and then all of a sudden change. Be still and know that I am God.

[29 : 21] There's a huge contrast here to be still and know that I am God. Know God personally. Not just know about. It's one thing to know about God.

You can come to church and know a bit about God. It's to know personally. To know intimately. to experience within your own life, within your own heart and to be able to embrace him.

And it tells us to be still. To be still in the face of all the chaos and carnage that's going on round about. But you know this is essential for our lives because it's in the stillness that God reveals himself.

And often we don't hear the Lord because we're not still. it's vital that we take time to be alone. Yes, we saw that part of the thing just reflecting on the city for a moment of the fellowship and fellowship is vital.

Fellowship is vital for our Christian life. We need one another. Iron sharpens iron. It's not good to be alone but we need times of being alone. We need to get alone with God.

[30 : 30] God. And it's often in the silence that we hear the voice of God like Elijah did. Remember Elijah when poor Elijah had gone to the very edge and he had pushed the boundaries in the zealous service of God.

And God was restoring the prophet. And remember how he gave displays on the mountain of the power of the earthquake and the fire and all these things. But God was not in these.

But then there was a still small voice. And it was through that voice that Elijah was restored and renewed to get back into service. And often we're missing out.

Sometimes Christians say you know God doesn't speak to me anymore the way he used to. He is. But maybe we're not listening. Maybe we're not in the silent place.

maybe not in the secret place. And we've got to remember that it's not by might not by power but by my spirit saith the Lord.

[31 : 39] And so it's vital that we learn what it is to be still and to know that I am God. And you know so many people are spending all their effort and all their resources and everything on life's questions.

and they're none the wiser. The answer to the questions of life although we might never have answers as such is to know God. If you know the Lord and your life is content in him and you're resting in him you have all the answers that you need in life.

Life is set out for you and you're able to say lots I don't know but what I do know is this I know that my Redeemer liveth.

I know in whom I have believed and I am persuaded like this is what the Apostle was saying. And I pray that that's how it will be for all of you that today that you will be still and know that he is God.

Let us pray. Oh Lord we pray to bless us this day with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. we give thanks Lord for your word and for your goodness and mercy towards us and we pray that you will accompany this word with power.

[33 : 01] We pray Lord that you will have encouraged Scott down in the church today and that he will have known your strength and blessing. We give thanks Lord for leading him and guiding him to enter into the ministry.

Be with him we pray and with Fiona and the family. Lord watch over us and take away our sin. Taking us home safely. In Jesus name we ask it. Amen.