

## NOTES FROM TIM SHENTON'S SERMON- 25th February 2024 am

TITLE: "War and Peace" TEXT: Psalm 46 verses 8 & 9

### Scripture references from the ESV

**Psalm 46** God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,

<sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah*

<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

<sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.

<sup>6</sup> The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth.

<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire.

<sup>10</sup> "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

<sup>11</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

It is vital that we understand God as he has revealed himself in the Bible, and do not attempt to turn him into the shape we would like him to be. We can read Christian books that emphasise one attribute or another and get a distorted picture of him. There might be something in the Bible we do not like, and so we try to cover over it. One of the most misunderstood stories in the Bible is that of Noah. This is often presented (particularly to children) as a lovely story about Noah and a lot of animals safe in the ark, and we forget that it is an unveiling of God's wrath and judgement against the wickedness, corruption and violence of mankind. Millions perished in this global catastrophe.

The Bible gives us a true picture of God, and here in Psalm 46, too, we can see that he is not some weak and distant deity, but rather he is a warrior – a God of war. We read in Isaiah 42:13: **The LORD will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.**

- That is the language of war.

It has been calculated that war is mentioned some 400 times in the Bible, so the Bible clearly portrays God as a God of war. In the Old Testament, it is more physical battles that take place, such as the entry into the Promised Land when the Israelites were commanded to destroy the inhabitants, or the battles fought by David. In the New Testament, the battles are more spiritual as we are told in Ephesians 6: 12: **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**

**On Calvary, when Jesus was crucified, a battle was taking place.**

Teaching about God as a God of war is not popular, but God does not seek to be popular. Jesus said **'Woe to you when all people speak well of you'** (Luke 6:26), and he himself is both the most loved and the most hated person who has ever walked on earth.

**The Christian message of repent or perish is offensive.**

As we focus on **vv8-9** (above), we will come to see how our God is a God of both war and peace.

1. **God is a God of desolations against his enemies (v8).** We are invited to come and view the spectacle of what God has done so that we rightly understand what has happened. The word **desolations** means a thing of horror, something that has been laid waste and devastated. The Psalmist is probably celebrating some great victory that God has won against his enemies, such as that over the army of Sennacherib when the angel of the Lord slaughtered 185,000 men in one night. **And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.** (2 Kings 19:35).

There is no softening of what happened – the Bible points out that there were dead bodies lying there for the people to see exactly what God had done to their enemies. Similarly, Exodus 14:30 tells us: **Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore, and that victory was celebrated in song by Moses: The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name.** <sup>4</sup> **"Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers**

were sunk in the Red Sea. <sup>5</sup>The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. (Ex 15:3-5). All this was done for the benefit and salvation of God's people, but it is not a teaching that is popular or that people want to hear.

Now we have an invitation to come to another battlefield, that of Calvary, and as we climb the hill of Golgotha, we are called to look around and see all that has been laid waste here.

**Sin, Satan and death are all lying face down in the mud, dead.**

**Christ is standing over them as the conqueror.**

**He has pierced them through with the cross.**

a) **Come to Calvary and look at our sin:** sin has immense power. It has captured every single one of us. Sin is the strength of death (it is why we die) and the death of strength. It makes the way look beautiful, but it leads to eternal death if we do not know Christ. William Plumer rightly said 'Sin has dug every grave'.

**Sin has been described as 'that abominable thing that God hates.'**

Though people may not like to hear such strong language, it is right that we are upset for we need to be upset, and not complacent, about our sin. When we come to Calvary we can see our sin face down in the mud, with Jesus Christ, the conqueror, standing over it. **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus** (Romans 8:1)

Never again will sin condemn us and drag us to hell, for hell's mouth has been closed to the believer by the blood of Christ.

**Jesus Christ has won the battle against sin – he has thrust his cross through its heart.**

b) **Come to Calvary and look at Satan.** Satan is a roaring lion and a serpent that spits out poison. He has enslaved and deceived us all. He can make men dance on the brink of hell as though they were on the verge of heaven, to quote Spurgeon. Come to Calvary and see Satan face down in the mud at the foot of the cross. He can never rise to victory again or deceive us into his kingdom of darkness, because Jesus has defeated him by his shed blood. Christ has **disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him** (Col 2:15). We overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb.

**The Lamb of God has crushed the roaring lion and stands over him in victory.**

c) **Come to Calvary and look at death.** There is nothing more certain and more horrible than death. Even the longest life is a lingering death, and how terrible it is to die without Christ and be lost forever. Come to Calvary and see death face down in the mud. It is death that is in the grave with the stone eternally rolled over its tomb. We have **the death of death in the death of Christ** (John Owen). Jesus Christ is the conqueror and his own words tell us of his victory (John 11:25):

**I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,**

**and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die**

Come to the battlefields of Calvary, and as citizens of the New Jerusalem let us go forth and view the slain. Come and see the devastations he has brought on the earth and may we never forget what we see:

**The cross as a sword has been plunged into the heart of Christ's enemies.**

**It is the blood of Christ that has left the battlefield strewn with the bodies of his enemies.**

**Let us stand back and admire and rejoice in what he has accomplished.**

**Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth (v8)**

**2. God is a God of peace for his people (v9).** The ancient custom was to collect the armour of defeated foes and burn it all. In defeating every enemy of his people, and burning all that opposes us, God gives us peace. It is not for his satisfaction but for ours.

As we look around Calvary's battlefield, we realise that all is now quiet.

- Satan, the accuser of the brethren, has been silenced. He can no longer point at our unworthiness for we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ.
- Sin, with its shouts of guilt and condemnation, is now mute. Instead, there is forgiveness.
- Death, with its howls of terror, cries no more for we have eternal life.

**Christ has won the war. He has plundered the enemy.**

Our prize is peace with God. God's hostility, his wrath and his judgement, all of which raged against us, have been extinguished. The raging waters that were about to sweep us into hell are now calm. The sword that was in God's right hand ready to execute us

has been turned into a cross of salvation. Because Christ has won the war, we are now objects of God's mercy and at peace with him. That is why we can have fellowship with him and not be afraid. No matter happens in our life, we can go to him and talk to him about it.

**Christ has won the war with sin, Satan and death and there is now peace with God.**

**Now he is a God of peace for his people.**

When we are fearful, we need to listen to the words of Jesus and remember that the battle is over:

**It is finished**

When something is finished, it is finished – there is no more to be done. It is an insult to the cross of Christ if we try to make up for anything. There is nothing for us to do except rejoice in the victory, and enjoy it. None of it is dependent on how we feel and no one can take away our peace.

Christ, our captain, won the battle that took place on Calvary's hill:

- We are no longer under sin's tyranny, though we still sin
- We are no longer captives in Satan's kingdom, but are in the kingdom of light
- We are no longer fearful of eternal death, though we may still fear death.

**God is a God of desolations against his enemies and a God of peace for his people.**

**We are at peace with God through the blood of Christ.**