

NOTES FROM TIM SHENTON'S SERMON- 14th January 2024 am

TITLE: "When trouble knocks on your door" TEXT: Psalm 46

Scripture references from the ESV

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Life is so uncertain and often filled with pain. We never know what is round the corner for us, even while all seems to be going well. We are reminded of Job, who got up one day, thinking it would be a day like any other, but by the end of it, his life had utterly changed. Events such as the 2004 tsunami, with the loss of 230,000 lives, or 9/11 when nearly 3,000 lives were ended in a way no one had foreseen, show us that life can change in a moment. Even today, in our apparently well-ordered lives, many of us will be experiencing trouble and pain in relationships or in spiritual matters. In that trouble, and in the face of so much tumult and commotion in the wider world, we will see who we need to turn to, and why, as we look at verses **1-3** (above).

- 1. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are not like the faithless.** Where do people turn when they are in crisis, but are not believers in Jesus Christ? They have no one whose help they can implore, and no hope when they are on the verge of death.

Psalm 46: 1-3 gives us a picture of the world being turned upside down. Mountains that seemed stable and secure fall into the sea. All that the godless have depended on is

being stripped away, whether it be physical or political and economic upheaval. For the faithless there is no light to look to in an emergency – all is darkness. For contrast, take the words of Thomas Cranmer as he was being burnt at the stake: ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit...I see the heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God’.

Thomas Cranmer went home to glory. The faithless have no such hope. They cannot cry, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ can cry:

God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble

2. **As followers of Jesus Christ, trials test our faith.** We do not have hearts of stone where the storms of life are concerned. When mountains fall into the heart of the sea, we are shaken. We may doubt God’s promises and purposes, and try to take things into our own hands. Our faith is tested.

Sometimes God strips us bare to see if we can stand the cold. Here are two examples of many in the Bible:

- Hezekiah: **God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.** (2 Chron 32:31)
- The Israelites (when God left enemies in the Promised Land) **They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the LORD,** (Judges 3:4)

Sometimes Jesus leads us into a storm, and we cry with the disciples: **do you not care that we are perishing?** Our faith is tested as we go through the trial, but we come to see with the disciples that Jesus Christ is **our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.** Trials and testing will one day come to an end.

In a testimony meeting, a semi-illiterate old lady stood up and said she was always blessed by the words in the Bible: ‘and it came to pass’. ‘When I am upset by troubles,’ she said, ‘I go to the Bible & I never get very far before I read the words ‘and it came to pass’. And I say, “Bless the Lord, it didn’t come to stay – it came to pass.”’

God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble

3. **As followers of Jesus Christ, we run to our Saviour in times of trial.** It is natural for us to do this. After all, he is our Saviour! When we are shaken, our response is to

run to our Rock and shelter under the shadow of his wing. We know he will enable us to stand firm and ride out the storm.

- In all the pain of his suffering, **Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshipped** (Job 1:20)
- When David's child had been struck down by God, he **arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the LORD and worshipped** (2 Samuel 12:20)
- When Jonah was in the belly of the great fish, he **prayed to the Lord his God** (Jonah 2:1).

We run to our Saviour in times of trouble. Each hammer of a nail only drives it more firmly into the wood. When we are hammered by trials, they are hammering us more firmly into Christ our Saviour. There is nothing that proves our sonship more than our running to Christ when our ship is sinking. The wind of trials blows us in Christ's direction. If that wind blows us in the opposite direction, then we must question who or what we are putting our trust in.

When we stumble and fall, we fall into the arms of Christ who is ready to catch us. We run to him in times of trial because

He is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

- 4. As followers of Jesus Christ, we know that trials are for our good and for the benefit of others.** Do we truly believe that our trials are never wasted? There is a purpose in them. They come so that our dross might be turned into gold. Trials cause us to become mature **so that the tested genuineness of your faith.....may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** (1 Peter 1:7)

That is why we never lose heart. The bush may burn but we will not be consumed. Instead God will speak to us through them. Trials may batter us but they batter us into the shape of Christ.

- The anvil, the fire and the hammer are the making of us (Charles Spurgeon)
- Grace grows best in winter (Samuel Rutherford)

In suffering, Christ is there with us to mould us into his image and to prepare us for works of service. Jonah prepared his sermon for Nineveh in the belly of the great fish. Trials make us useful to God, so that we are able to feed others.

Trials are for our good and for the benefit of others.

5. As followers of Jesus Christ, there is never a reason to fear. Untold dangers may be surrounding us, persecution may be our daily diet, the world may be in uproar and turmoil **BUT we will not fear** because God never changes. He is the same God that he was when the psalms were written and he is always **our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**

The confident cry of faith calls out: **If God is for us, who can be against us?** (Ro 8:31). Even in the midst of the stresses and tragedies of daily life, faith is at rest. A baby who is rocked back and forth falls asleep in her mother's arms, and though trials rock us back and forth, faith enables us to fall asleep in our Saviour's arms. Jesus, the man of perfect faith, was asleep in the storm!

'When all things are excited to fury and reveal their utmost power to disturb, faith smiles serenely. She is not afraid of noise or even of real force; she knows that the Lord stills the raging of the sea and holds the waves in the hollow of his hand. Great men who are like mountains may quake for fear in times of great calamity, but the man whose trust is in God need never be dismayed.' (Spurgeon)

There is never a reason to fear because our God is omnipotent and omnipresent.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble

David gives us an example to follow:

- **I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.**

(Psalm 3:5-6)

- **Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me (Ps 23:4)**

- Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident (Psalm 27: 3)

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

Therefore we will not fear, come what may!