

## "Stop Striving and Live Out Your Faith!"

*Psalm 46:10*

'*Be still and know that I am God*' is a great verse that I think we usually use in situation where we were becoming anxious about a person or circumstances and sensed our heart beating a little too fast or we were feeling a bit panicky. Maybe we were late for a meeting or you're just tired and trying to get the kids together and get in the car and go home or get in the car and get to a game or practice or wherever, and you quote that phrase, '*Be still and know that I am God*'.

But notice I said 'phrase' and not 'verse' because there's more to the verse than 'Be still and know that I am God'. And while we use the verse when we feel worried, rushed or anxious, we still may not practice being still, which we'll see what means. As we look at the verse in the context of the psalm itself we find that the writer originally wrote it when concerned about geographical, political and military issues. So yes, we will see that we can apply it to our personal anxieties as we rush around like headless chickens some days just doing our routines but we can also apply it to world disasters like hurricanes and wars and elections. So let's pray.

Ps. 46 is a song of trust. It was written and led by the sons of Korah, descendants of the Levites. Eleven psalms are accredited to them. Korah was a descendent of Kohath, the same Korah that rebelled against Moses and Aaron in Num. 16. We'll come back to that story in a few minutes because there may be an allusion to a significant event in Israel's past.

The psalm could be divided based on the repeated refrain in v.7 and 11, "*The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*"

However, structurally the psalm divides nicely in 3 sections where the term 'selah' is found at the end of v.3, 7, 11. No one is completely sure of what selah actually means. It was some kind of poetic or musical term found only in songs that most likely marks a break or a pause in the poem. If so, then the writer is dividing the psalm in places where we are encouraged to pause and reflect on what was just sung.

The command to 'be still and know God is God' in v.10 seems to be the applicational point of the whole psalm. The first verse, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble", reminds us we live in a world where we experience trouble. So if the conclusion to getting through all this trouble is '*Be still and know I am God*', how do we get there?

<sup>1</sup> *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

<sup>2</sup> *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way  
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,*

<sup>3</sup> *though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah*

If we want to enjoy the peace of God and be at peace with God, there are at least 3 things we need to work at doing less and hopefully stopping. If we truly believe God is our refuge and strength and an ever present help in trouble, we will act on that belief and

**Stop Being Afraid; God is our Resource**  
**(46:1-3)**

He is the fire hydrant that puts out the fire of our fears. He is what we need when we're afraid. The troubles that the psalm addresses are uncontrollable calamities that happen like when the earth moves/changes because of a hurricane, tornado, avalanche, earthquake, tsunami or a sinkhole as we saw on the screen. And the earth 'giving way' may be a hint at an event in Israel's past that the Sons of Korah are only too familiar.

Levi – one of Jacob's 12 sons - had three sons, Gershom, Merari and Kohath. Each of these three sons' sons, were given specific responsibilities in carrying the pieces of the tabernacle and its furnishings. The Kohathites were given the greatest responsibility of carrying the ark, the table of showbread, the menorah and all the gold items that were in the tabernacle itself.

However, while the descendants of Gershom and Merari were able to transport the tabernacle tent poles and coverings on carts with wheels, the Kohathites had to carry the tabernacle furnishings on poles on their shoulders because God did not want any of the holy things touched. Some of Kohath's descendants – Korah, Dathan and Abiram – were unhappy carrying the tabernacle pieces. They wanted to be priests. Moses warned them not to rebel lest they incur God's wrath. They gathered 250 men and confronted Moses and Aaron, challenging their authority. Moses issued a challenge to them and had all of them burn incense. He then said if nothing unusual happens to those who aren't supposed to burn incense and they live their normal lives growing old and dying, then God has not sent Moses. But if God does something totally new – like open the earth and all these men fall alive to their deaths into the earth, which God then closes over, then they are guilty of rebelling against of God. Num. 16:28-35 records how the earth swallowed them up.

While it seems to appear all the families died, God did spare some. Perhaps infants or small children because Num. 26:11 says *'But the sons of Korah did not die.'* And God in His mercy spared some of the line of Korah and some of them acknowledged the grace of God in their lives and served God humbly and happily in their worship roles under David and Solomon's rule. And so the line 'if the earth should give way' might not just refer to earthquakes in general but might also be a hint about their own history. God is their refuge because the earth did move and destroy many of their family due to rebellion. They stood here as a testimony that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

'Refuge' means a place to find shelter while 'strength' refers to the power to get through the present trouble. If we're going to work on stopping fear, we must believe that

### ***God is our defense and offense (v.1)***

'Refuge' being the defensive, protective aspect of God's provision for us and 'strength' is God's offensive power to help us handle the trouble we're in. A very present help. A 'He's available anytime kind-of-help'. Whenever there's trouble God is available. When there's not trouble God is available. And the psalmist says we don't need to be afraid

### ***Even in the worst possible scenarios (vv.2-3)***

Natural or weather related calamities, floods, volcanoes erupting; he is imagining the worst possible experiences we might face. What they have in common is we have no control over them. But the child of God who believes in God can trust God even in life's worst scenarios and know that God is with them, able to provide whatever resource we need. He can calm our fears because if we believe He is our refuge and strength, we will trust Him and know He's in control when life seems out of control. 'Selah'. Stop and think about that. When we experience calamity, our natural reaction is

fear. The psalmist says, if you believe God is an ever present help, able to provide for your needs then stop being afraid. Fear less, trust God more.

Is that an area we need to work on? Do we believe these verses? Do we go to verses like these and others when calamity strikes, or do we default to fear and forget God?

The psalmist moves from exploding mountains and crashing waves and howling winds, to the complete opposite scene of nature at rest:

- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.*
- 5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.*
- 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*
- 7 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

If the city of God is Jerusalem, then the writer seems off. What river? There's no river flowing through Jerusalem – yet! Both the book of Revelation and the book of Ezekiel describe the future New Jerusalem with a river flowing through it that starts at God's throne. It's calm waters are a source of provision and peace. Unlike the crashing waters just described. This is the place where God dwells. God's dwelling place can't be attacked. He has the high ground. He sees all that goes on around Him, including nations who are in an uproar always trying to destroy any evidence of His existence. Should that make us anxious? Don't we worry when our countries try to live as if God doesn't exist, as if His rules don't matter, as if He didn't make this world and as if we won't be accountable to Him when we die?

The psalmist encourages us to ...

## **Stop Worrying; God is With Us** **(46:4-7)**

The psalmist changes scenery from tumultuous earth to calm heaven, where God dwells. His plans to bring this New Jerusalem to earth will not fail. All His plans and the promises He has made to Israel and to the church will come to fruition. So stop worrying,

### ***Our future is secure (v.4)***

Before Jesus left earth, He said He was going to prepare a place for us in His Father's house because in His Father's house are many rooms. When we read Rev. 21-22 about the New Jerusalem, we read this:

*2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

This is what Jesus is 'preparing' for us now. It's our new home because when a Jewish couple were engaged in Jesus' day, the wedding didn't take place until the husband-to-be finished building their new home, usually a room added to His Father's house.

But the nations are in an uproar! Kingdoms continue to rise and fall. Wars continue to be waged. Where is God? Why doesn't He do something?

- 5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.*

<sup>6</sup> Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

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

### **God is always in control (vv.5-7)**

The LORD ALMIGHTY means the Lord of hosts. He has at His disposal a vast host of angelic powers at His beck and call. And when it is time for Him to fulfil His promises to Jacob that will signal the end. For Jesus will return when Israel will appear doomed and ready for annihilation. But He returns to the Mount of Olives and begins to dispense with the nations who are always in an uproar.

Don't worry when you watch the news and God appears to be defeated. Don't worry when the nations wage another war. Don't worry when the war is a verbal one that comes at you from your neighbour, family member, co-worker or government. God is in control. He's biding His time. He's waiting because He's wanting to see more people come to know Him. Which means we shouldn't let these threats hinder our evangelistic efforts. If Paul said the days were evil 2000 years ago, what are they like today?

Selah. Again, pause and reflect on the things we worry about. What do we often worry about? Why do we worry? Because we are failing to live out what we believe. Do we believe God is with us? Do we believe our future is secure? So then why do we worry? Because we say we believe it but we don't live it out. Live what you believe. Act like its true. Act like God is actually with you – because He is. Trust like He's an ever present help. Stop worrying.

The Psalmist has declared God is our refuge and strength; an ever present help in the uncontrollable and without warning disasters in life. God is also present and with us when people (nations or individuals) make an attack on God's people. Stop worrying because God secures our future and if our future is secure then so is our present – even if we can't understand God's plan at the moment. We always know His overall purpose; to glorify himself and make us more like Jesus. Some of our problem is we feel we need to 'help' God or do something about our situations. Yes, there are some things we can do but often God's not asking us to do anything other than live out what we believe. Trust Him, trust His promises to provide and protect and stop being afraid and worrying. So the psalmist ends with an exhortation to

## **Stop Striving; God Will Win** **(46:8-11)**

I believe he's been slowly getting his way to v.10, wanting us to be still. The word for 'still' means to stop striving, stop trying to work things out yourself. The word is often used negatively in the Bible to describe people whose hands went 'limp' because they were powerless to do anything about their situation. However, here God uses it positively to encourage us to release our grip, our desire to control our own circumstances, to go limp and purposely acknowledge our powerlessness for the purpose of knowing God more intimately. '*Stop striving and know me more*'. The word 'know' meaning an intimate knowledge of God. How can you know someone closely, intimately? By listening to them; observing them and understanding what makes them tick.

Do we do that with God? That's what we're being told here to do. You can't get to know God if we keep trying to be our own Saviour and figure out our own problems. If our problems are small often we can sort them out but the context of the psalm is uncontrollable situations. We need to stop hurrying and being frantic with worry and figuring out solutions to things we can't control. So release

your grip, let your hands hang limp and talk to God and go to His Word for peace and strength. What will that do?

***You'll look back and see what God has already done (vv.8-9)***

*<sup>8</sup> Come, see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. <sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; He burns the shields with fire.*

When we read His Word we are reminded time and time again how God spared Israel and defeated the warring nations around them. Sometimes through strategic warfare, other times by absolute miracles and sometimes without Israel doing anything. Since he was originally writing to his fellow Israelites he was telling them 'Look at your life. Look at how God has worked in your own life.' That's an invitation for us to look at our own life as well. What victories has God done in your life? What problems did He solve? What calamities did He spare you from? If He's done it before, He'll do it again. But we won't think about what God's done in our past if we don't take time to

***Be still so we can know God intimately (v.10a)***

Putting a cease to our own striving is a call to inactivity but so we can be actively getting to know God more. There's a more important thing we should strive for; knowing God. Read and study His Word. Observe the ways He's worked in your life. Share that with others. Ps. 42:1 tells us to strive after God like a thirsty, tired deer who pants for streams of water. But that's a metaphor for how our soul should pant after God. *"My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"* The psalmist couldn't wait to meet with God. By the way who wrote Ps. 42? Not David. The sons of Korah! The family that had a history of rebellion but also a family whose testimony existed then as a work of the grace of God. How did that happen? Some of them put their faith in God. They stopped striving to be more important in the world's eyes and were satisfied in how God was using them today.

But 'Be still and know that I am God' is only part of the verse. *'I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.'* Did you notice the change in v.10 from the rest of the Psalm? God intervened and was speaking directly. Stop striving and know that I'm God. I will be exalted. God says don't just remember the past, but remember what's He said about the future,

***Look ahead; God will be glorified in all the world (vv.10-11)***

I've quoted Hab. 2:14 many times,

*<sup>14</sup> For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*

That will happen one day. Believe it. Live it out by faith by bringing these truths to mind when we're afraid. Remember God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Or when we start to worry remember what God's Word says. Believe our future is secure and that He's in control of our present too. Because if God can't control our present how can He control the future?

Stop striving; stop trying to figure everything out in your own resources. Let go and pursue God, know God and then watch God work out the problems in our world (catastrophes and wars) and then trust Him to work the things out in your life that feel like a catastrophe or a war. *The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.' Selah.*

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