

Sermon 7-2-2017 Our Mighty Fortress Psalm 46

Dear Fortified Believers:

What do you tell someone who is...

- Living with cancer
- Dealing with life after a stroke
- Mourning the death of a loved one
- Struggling with family issues
- Overwhelmed with worry, doubt and fear
- Coping with peer pressure and rocky relationships

At times life seems so overwhelming. Life is a battle at times.

- It is a battle against sin
- It is a battle against the world
- It is a battle against the devil
- It is a battle against illness, sickness and disease
- It is a battle against lies and wickedness

How do we face these battles?

- Where can we go to find strength to continue on?
- Who is going to hold us up to continue on?
- Who will be our anchor when all seems to be falling apart?

“Only the power of the Lord Jesus Christ can give you and me the resiliency to handle life. How is it possible for anyone who copes with life to be able to survive without a relationship with Jesus Christ, I don’t know.” Charles Swindoll

Psalm 46 teaches us to STOP...

- Stop and remember the Lord is God
- Stop and remember the Lord is with us
- Stop and remember the Lord is our strength

This October we will celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. It was a time when a little known monk by the name of Martin Luther stood before the world and said: “Here I stand...I cannot do otherwise.” Luther knew about the battles of life.

- He fought the battle of faith
- He fought the battle of truth
- He fought the battle of righteousness

How did he continue on? How did he keep going?

“A mighty fortress is our God, a trusty shield and weapon”

When Martin Luther wrote this hymn of the Reformation he used the words of Psalm 46. This Psalm was read by the Old Testament believers to thank God for defending and preserving Jerusalem their city. This Psalm was used by Martin Luther to thank God for defending and preserving the Church. We use this Psalm to thank God for preserving us who live in a sinful and chaotic world.

I. Fortress in a chaotic world vv1-4

A. God is our only security vv1-2

1. He is continually alert and ready to rescue us

a. “No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life...I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Joshua 1:5

b. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me.” Ps 50

In this life we face trouble and stress....the death of a spouse, divorce, loss of employment, the illness of a child, unsettling news of a medical test.

Trouble – to be tied up

V1 says God is our help in “trouble”...the word means “to be tied up”

----“to find oneself between a rock and a hard place”

----“I am being pressed...I am being squeezed in”

But, remember God is the our refuge and strength and ever present help....

“Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you; for I am your God.” Isa 41:10

“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.” II Tim 1:7

God says: “Rest in my eternal embrace.”

+++ “He will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” I John 1:9

+++ “Come to Me...and I will give you rest...you will find rest for your souls.” Mt 11:28

2. Alone we are powerless and open to every attack by our enemies

a. Alone we would fail; alone we would be fearful; alone we would fall

b. Some people say we believers need a “crutch” to make it in life Well, I don’t mind saying I need a “crutch”the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. God is our only foundation vv3-4

1. Therefore, we will not fear...

a. Violent natural catastrophe (earthquake, hurricane, floods, blizzards, etc.)

b. “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” The sheep made their way back to their winter pasture coming down the mountain side which was such a dangerous trip.

2. God is more powerful than any force of this world

“Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea --- the Lord on high is mighty.” Psalm 93

II. A fortress protecting His Church

A. We are children of the City of God, the church vv5-6

1. God protects His own - Psalm 121:7-8

- a. We are His children by faith and not by works “The righteous will live by faith” Ro 1
- b. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...not by works.” Eph 2

2. God’s presence abides with us v5

The Lord binds Himself to His people. The word for “binds” is the Hebrew word *hasaq* which speaks of a tethered love, a love attached to something or someone.

Jesus says: “Remain in Me and I will remain in you.”

- Through the Word “The Word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart” Ro 10
- Through the Sacraments - Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper
- Through our hearts - “God is the strength of my heart” Ps 73

3. God promises us a heavenly home “I am going there to prepare a place for you” Jn 14

B. We, the church, will remain forever vv6-8

1. Nations of the world come and go v6

a. The church has outlived the great powers of the world (Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome)

b. The church has survived great persecutions of the past, present and will so in the future

---During the Roman empire believers were fed to the lions and tortured

---At different times and places anti-Christian governments put believers in prisons

---Today in certain parts of the world believers are executed, churches are destroyed and Bibles are burned

c. God’s judgment is coming II Thessalonians 1:7-8

d. The church will survive and enter into glory

You are the church.

“God vacuum-seals us with his strongest force: his Spirit. He sheathes his children in a suit of spiritual armor, encircles us with angels, and indwells us himself. The queen of England should enjoy such security. Christ paid too high a price to leave us unguarded. “Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.” Ephesians 4:30

----Max Lucado

2. God’s promises stand forever v7

a. He commands his angels to serve us “Angels are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.” Hebrews 1:14

b. He gives us rest and refuge “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you...” Hebrews 13:5

c. We praise God for preserving us and preserving His Word God is our...

III. Fortress bringing us peace vv9-12

A. Our enemies have been destroyed...those that really matter v9

1. No power over us - death has been destroyed “He has put all his enemies under his feet – the last enemy to be destroyed is death.” I Cor 15:26

2. No physical enemies can harm us eternally Roman 8:31ff

If God is for us who can be against us?

B. Our battles have been won

1. God fights for us ie David and Goliath “The Battle is the Lord’s”

2. Joshua 10:13 “Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel.”

C. Our worries are to “Stop” v10 “Be still and know that I am God”

We are to....Be still ---- Stop!

- Stop everything
- Stop striving
- Stop worrying
- Stop complaining
- Stop and just listen
- Stop and know that the Lord is our God --- our Mighty Fortress

The Lord promises to preserve us...the church...our life. The Lord says to us:

- I am here
- I will help you
- “Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

“Through Your strength, O Lord, I will not be moved. I will stop running, stop striving. I will not fear. I will hold on to you. I will count on You to build that tent around me and protect me from the blast. Thank you for giving me, in love, this blizzard of stress. Thank You that I can’t even see the distance or the goal. I admit my weakness. I need Your strength.”