

**Text: Psalm 46:1-11 (Pew Bible, pg.559)**

**Title: “Faith Sings ... When I’m in Trouble”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Read Psalm 46:1-3.

Open your Bibles to Psalm 46 where we find the words I have just read. I’m preaching these days from the Psalms. Psalms are “Faith Songs.” They were composed by saints whose faith sang in the various seasons of life. And these songs have been sung by the people of God in every age, even to this day, to express our faith in our worship, in our praying, in our struggles. Today, “Faith Sings ... When I’m in Trouble.”

I tell you, life can be like the situation in Japan. One day, without any warning everything begins to shake and crumble. And if that isn’t enough a massive wave out of nowhere slams into your life. When that happens, where do we turn? What do we hold on to? We hold on to our awesome God.

Now as we have learned, some of the psalms have inscriptions, and these inscriptions help us in studying the psalm.

**For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. According to alamothe. A song.**

The Sons of Korah were priests in OT times. They were given the assignment by King David to assist the people of God in making music in their praise to the Lord. And it also says, “According to alamothe.” That word usually means “young woman” or “soprano.” So likely, this was a song that was to be sung by a woman or a young man with a high voice. Aren’t we grateful for our musicians?

This faith song assures us of certain powerful truths in our troubles. And the first one is this:

**1. WE CAN TRUST GOD FOR HIS PROTECTION OVER US (vv.1-3).**

That’s the essence of the first three verses. They come in the form of a confession.

**Psalm 46:1 - God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.**

**ILLUSTRATION** – When I hear that word “trouble” I think of that silly commercial that’s playing on television these days advertising some bank or investment company. There’s a little dog that’s worried about his bone. He hides it somewhere, but he’s worried another dog will get it. He even takes it down to the bank and put’s his bone in a safe deposit box, but he still can’t sleep in his little doggy bed because he’s worried something will happen to his bone. He takes his bone out of the bank and buries it in the ground; but he’s still worried and can’t sleep. And in the background the song is playing ... “trou-ble ... trouble, trouble, trouble, been doggin’ my soul since the day I was born.”

The word “trouble” means “distress.” Distress is a product of stress. We are familiar with stress aren’t we? It’s our ever-present companion in life. We have stress because of our busy schedules. We have stress because of our money problems. We have stress because of our demanding jobs. We have stress because of our changing world.

Stress starts in our thoughts and quickly moves to our emotions. And before long it begins to affect our physical health. Stress is a major cause of many of the illnesses that are the most common today among Americans. It keeps us from sleeping at night. It causes us to be irritable with our family members and friends.

We can never escape the problems that cause stress. But wouldn’t it be great to find a way to face our troubles with the courage and confidence that keeps us settled through distressing times? Well the secret is found right here in these verses.

The first word in the psalm is the most important word in the psalm ... “God.” In fact the psalmist will bring us back to God over and over. He refers to God by various names in Psalm 46 ... and each name is important for us. You’ll remember in our past studies of the names of God that His Names are more than just titles or tags for God. In OT times a name was synonymous with the character of the person bearing that name.

### **Psalm 46:1 - God is our refuge and strength...**

The name “God” is actually the very first name the Bible gives to our God ... Elohim.

#### **Genesis 1:1 - In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth.**

When you stop to think about it, if we didn’t know anything else about God but what we have in that verse, it would be enough to sustain us. He is all-powerful. He created the heavens and the earth. That means that He is greater than heaven or earth, since He created it. So there is no force in heaven or on earth that can shake God. God is able to protect us from anything in the heavens or on the earth.

Now specifically we are told that God is three things to us in the way of protection:

“refuge” = literally, “a shelter from the storms and from danger.”

“strength” = power and confidence. The Bible says, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”

“an ever-present help” —literally, “a helper who is always found.”

That’s who our God is. So in light of this the psalmist says...

### **Psalm 46:2 - Therefore we will not fear...**

What confidence and courage! Wouldn’t you love to face your troubles without fear?

**Psalm 46:2-3 - Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah**

In that video we watched earlier of the horrific scene in Japan after the earthquakes and the tsunami, people were shrieking in fear. That's the very picture that the psalmist has in mind.

Now there's a word here that we are seeing for the first time in our study of the psalms ... Selah (seh'-law). Most scholars believe it to be a technical musical term probably indicating a pause or an interruption. Maybe there's a rest in the music ... time to absorb ... time to think ... don't rush by this thought. Trust God for His protection over us.

Next ...

## **2. WE CAN TRUST GOD FOR HIS PRESENCE WITH US (vv.4-7)**

That's the essence of the next four verses. They come in the form of observation.

**Psalm 46:4 - There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.**

Just notice the contrast. In the last verses he talks about wild, mad, rushing tsunami wave destroying everything in its paths. But here there is a river ... literally "a river branching off into various channels" bringing its life wherever it flows ... a life-giving river vs. a life-taking flood.

So there is a place ... a holy place where God dwells with His people. The psalmist is thinking of the city of Jerusalem, where the temple was located ... the place where God chose for His presence to dwell. And His presence is like a sweet river that makes His people glad.

It is the "holy place where the Most High dwells. And here have yet another name of our God.

NAME OF GOD - "Most High" = El-yon means the highest of all." That's what God is ... the highest of all. There's no ruler, no power, no devil or demon that is as high as the Most High.

The psalmist continues to think about this place of peace:

**Psalm 46:5 - God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.**

So here is this place where God dwells with His people that is a safe place because God secured it. And even at the break of day when the troubles and battles were lined up against them, God would help them.

**EXAMPLE:** There's a great illustration of this in II Kings 18-19. In fact, some scholars believe that this incident is the inspiration for this psalm ... this faith song.

At this point in Israel's history Hezekiah is king of the southern kingdom, Judah. He was one of Judah's good kings because he had a great confidence in the Lord. Judah's great enemy at the time was the Assyrians, under the leadership of their ruler Sennacherib. They had Jerusalem surrounded. Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah threatening to destroy Jerusalem if they didn't surrender. Well, Hezekiah's faith sustained in that hour. He went into the temple and spread out the letter before the Lord and he prayed:

**2 Kings 19:19 - Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God."**

The prophet Isaiah at that sent a message to Hezekiah. He said, "The Lord says that He has everything under control. The king of Assyria will not lay a hand on Jerusalem. God will defend this city and save it."

During the night the angel of the Lord went out into the Assyrian camp and put to death 185,000 soldiers. And when the people of Jerusalem got up the next morning ("at the break of day") all they saw were dead Assyrians soldiers for as far as the eye could see. And the king of Assyria broke camp and went home.

**Psalms 46:5 - God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.**

**Psalms 46:6 - Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.**

Note: When the psalmist talks about the nations being in an uproar and falling, he uses the same words that he used to describe the natural forces that shook and swirled back in vv.2-3. What this means is that whether our world is shaking from nature or from the nations, God is our refuge.

**Psalms 46:7 - The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah**

There it is again. We can trust God for His presence with us.

NAME OF GOD - And here we have yet another name of our God. "Lord Almighty" is Jehovah Tsaba ... "Lord of hosts." God is the one who commands the all-powerful invisible army that fights our battles for us ... that army of angels that went into the camp of the Assyrians in II Kings 19 and killed 185,000. God is the supreme Commander-in-Chief.

But that's not all. God is the "God of Jacob."

NAME OF GOD - "the God of Jacob." God has watched over Jacob, a name for the covenant people of God ... Israel.

So the LORD Almighty, the God of Jacob, is our fortress. A "fortress" is "a high safe place" or "a stronghold." It's where the people of God can run for safety.

David loved this image of God. It may have become a favorite of David because he spent so much time escaping to physical places like this as he was chased by King Saul.

**Psalm 62:2 – (God) alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.**

Now for the psalmist and the OT people of God, God's presence was focused in a place ... Jerusalem. But for those of us who are NT believers, God's presence is focused in a Person ... Jesus.

And when trouble comes our way we run to Jesus. It all starts when we realize that we are lost in our sins. We realize that God made Christ to be sin for us ... He paid for our sins. And the only hope of rescue from the judgment of God is to run to Jesus. Are you lost? Run to Jesus.

And once again we are instructed to pause ... Selah. Think about this ... meditate on this ... catch your breath.

We can trust God for His protection over us ... His presence with us ... and...

### **3. WE CAN TRUST GOD FOR HIS POWER TOWARD US.**

That's the essence of the last four verses. They come in the form of an invitation.

**Psalm 46:8 - Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth.**

Ponder the works of God. Behold what He has done in nature and in history. Now here we have yet another name of God.

NAME OF GOD – “the Lord” = Jehovah ... the proper name of the one true God.

**Psalm 46:9 - He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire.**

Now God speaks. Up to this point the psalmist has been exhorting us. Now God speaks. We can trust His protection over us ... His presence with us ... His power toward us. What are we to do?

**Psalm 46:10 - “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”**

“Be still...” = The NASB says “cease striving...” Another translation says, “stop your fighting.”

Now this is the last thing we tend to do when we're in trouble. We strive, we fight and we try to work it all out ourselves.

But God says, “Be still and know that I am God.”

“know” = intimate personal knowledge and interaction

Know what? “Know that I am God ... that I will be exalted above the nations.” God is supreme above all. Nature and the nations answer to Him. Don’t you think you can trust Him with your troubles?

And the impact and the implications of all this will never settle over us until we are still and quiet before the Lord ... until we stop striving and running ... until we turn off the television or your computer and get alone before Almighty God. It’s only as you are overwhelmed with God’s greatness that you can begin to see your troubles in perspective.

**Psalm 46:11 - The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah**

And once again we are instructed to pause ... Selah.

## **CONCLUSION**

**ILLUSTRATION** – Martin Luther is one of the most important figures in church history. At the age of 24 Luther was ordained a priest, and five years later received his doctorate. He translated the Bible into his native German language and wrote 37 hymns for the church. But he had some real problems with the theological error in the Roman church. He challenged the supremacy of the Pope. He spoke out against the indulgence tax. He taught that everyone should read the Bible, not just the priests. And all should be allowed to sing in church. All this got him into hot water with the Catholic Church. This led to his writing a thesis with 95 points of contention, which he nailed to the door of the Wittenberg Church for all to see. He led a protest and became the Protestant Reformation. The Pope issued an order that Luther was to be excommunicated. He was brought to trial at Worms. Luther was commanded by the Roman Emperor to retract his convictions.

Luther’s response shook the world: “Unless I am convinced by Scripture or by clear reasoning that I am in error – for popes and councils have often erred and contradicted themselves – I cannot recant, for I am subject to the Scriptures I have quoted; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. It is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against ones conscience. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. So help me God. Amen.”

For the next several years Luther and his followers were constantly being dragged into one trial after another. It was on the eve of one of these bitter court battles in 1529 that Martin Luther wrote a hymn that was based upon the psalm we have been studying ... A Mighty Fortress is Our God. You’ll recognize some of the words and phrases:

1. A mighty fortress is our God,  
a bulwark never failing;  
our helper he amid the flood  
of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe  
doth seek to work us woe;  
his craft and power are great,  
and armed with cruel hate,

on earth is not his equal.

2. Did we in our own strength confide,  
our striving would be losing,  
were not the right man on our side,  
the man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is he;  
Lord Sabaoth, his name,  
from age to age the same,  
and he must win the battle.
  
3. And though this world, with devils filled,  
should threaten to undo us,  
we will not fear, for God hath willed  
his truth to triumph through us.  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
we tremble not for him;  
his rage we can endure,  
for lo, his doom is sure;  
one little word shall fell him.
  
4. That word above all earthly powers,  
no thanks to them, abideth;  
the Spirit and the gifts are ours,  
thru him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go,  
this mortal life also;  
the body they may kill;  
God's truth abideth still;  
his kingdom is forever.