

## Staying Calm in a Crisis

### Psalm 46

On February 8, 1750, London experienced an earthquake. Four weeks later, on March 4, 1750, a jolt five times stronger struck the nation. John Wesley turned to Psalm 46 when he entered the pulpit on March 8, 1750.

Where do you turn when our nation experiences an emergency? Many across the nation are turning to the Lord as we are faced with this terrible and mysterious Coronavirus. Others are terrified and are beginning to panic.

Some assume that scripture would have nothing to say about living during a time of crisis since they presume that it is fairy tale and myth anyway. But that is not true. Every passage has a historical setting in which it was written.

Psalm 46 was written when the Assyrian army surrounded the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah, the city of Jerusalem. The northern aggressor had already plowed through Syria down into Israel and had now penetrated Judah. The Judean King Hezekiah was told to open the gates and submit to the King of Assyria. You can read all about this actual crisis in 2 Kings 18-19, 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 36-37.

If you have been blessed by the hymn, *It Is Well with My Soul*, then you might find it interesting to know that Horatio Spafford was inspired to write those great lyrics as he meditated upon this wonderful psalm. He had just experienced a terrible tragedy in his family as his daughters were lost at sea when their ship went down in the middle of the Atlantic. He obviously drew personal comfort from these words during his difficult times.

Let's consider some of the ways this text can lead us to have peace rather than panic in the midst of this current crisis that our world is experiencing simultaneously.

#### **Emergencies during a Crisis, 46:2-3**

It is really hard not to focus on the areas of life that begin to totter and shake when one is suddenly submerged into a crisis. But despite what Hezekiah was seeing just outside the city gates, he made a volitional resolve with the gates of his heart that made all the difference in his leadership during that hour. He wrote, "*we will not fear*" (v. 2). He made a choice with his will.

Ok, but how does one make a sane decision against fear when the world is falling apart around you? Ah, let's let this king tell us what he did. He had a reason that led him to this resolve. What was his reason that justified a peaceful resolve? Look at what came just before he wrote these words in verse 2, "*Therefore we will not fear...*" What was just written just prior to this up in verse 1? "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*"

Emergencies are not a big deal if the Lord is present to help you in the middle of the troubled times. This was the place from which Hezekiah drew his peace.

There are many kinds of personal emergencies tucked within a national crisis. For example, think about those Americans right now who are experiencing something similar to an

emotional sinkhole (*"even though the earth be removed"*). Or consider those who are watching their finances slide downhill with a financial landslide like we are watching in the Stock Market this week or those who work in restaurants who are now facing a drastic reduction in customers dining in their cafe (*"through the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea"*). Naturally, there are some not only across the country but around the world who are in the midst of physical storm as they have been diagnosed with this virus (*though its waters roar and be troubled*). As some allow the emotions to suddenly explode like the man who pulled a knife on other customers in the Sam's Club this week, they are losing control in relational eruptions (*"though the mountains shake with its swelling"*).

Despite all of these different kinds of personal emergencies, the Lord would offer us peace as we follow His tracks through each of these with the word, *"though"*. Romans 8:38-39 gives a similar message of comfort despite various kinds of difficulties.

### **Endurance through a Crisis, 46:4-5**

As King Hezekiah was informed of an approaching problem (185,000 Assyrian troops coming down from the north toward his city), he began to think of what they would need in order to withstand an attack. How could they endure a prolonged conflict since Jerusalem was one of the few ancient cities NOT established by a natural water source, such as a river.

Hezekiah had an idea that he felt would help them persevere through the assault. He would have a work crew to chisel an underground conduit from the Springs of Gihon in Kidron all the way to the Pool of Siloam within the city of Jerusalem. This was a major undertaking since it was a distance of 1,777 feet through rock! 2 Kings 20:20 and 2 Chronicles 32:30 give some historical details to this amazing preparation!

Do believers have any "underground" resources from which we can draw the strength we need to endure difficult times? Yes! Jesus spoke of the indwelling Spirit of God that would be placed within every believer and compared His activity to *"rivers of living water"* (John 7:37-39). Could it be that Psalm 46:4 hints toward this internal River? One thing is certain, if we are referring to the Spirit, He is most certainly, holy (46:4).

Some build their lives upon foundations that shift during storms, but in Psalm 46:5 the psalmist speaks of those who have the Lord in their midst and states, *"she shall not be moved."*

Jesus shared a parable of two men in Matthew 7:24-27 who each built a home. One chose to build his house upon a rock, while the other thought the sand would suffice. The wisdom of the locations was not revealed until a terrible storm blew through that tested the two foundations. The storm washed away the man who built his home upon sand, but the man who chose to build his life on the rock was able to weather the storm.

The reason a Christian can endure a storm is simple. Psalm 46:5 says, *"...God shall help her, just at the break of dawn."* No, Christians do not endure the tough things of life because we are stronger or smarter. The only reason we can keep standing is because Someone greater than us is helping us. Note that He sometimes doesn't help until just the last moment, referred to here at *"just at the break of dawn"*. He doesn't always help us on our time schedule. He knows what He is doing and has a greater agenda than any one of us that He is working on. If you struggle with His timing, then fall back to His character.

## **Enemies during a Crisis, 46:6**

Let's face it, real life includes some shady activities even during the midst of a crisis. Ever heard of any price gouging when tough times hit? How about looting after a tornado or a hurricane? A woman made the following comment after she saw two looters quickly carrying away "free" items from a WalMart in Joplin, Missouri after it was struck by a tornado, *"To me, there's nothing worse than somebody who takes advantage of someone at their lowest point!"*

It is sad that some strike during a crisis. Hezekiah was faced with a ruthless enemy in the Assyrians, known for filleting and impaling those they conquered. By the time the Assyrian army arrived at the gates of Jerusalem, they had already sacked 46 towns in surrounding areas around the city of Jerusalem and had taken 200,000 refugees. So, before you write off Psalm 46 as merely "religious talk", you might want to consider what it would have been like for them at that time.

Yet, Isaiah 37:36-38 describes one of the most incredible rescues of all time! One morning the residents of Jerusalem wake up to 185,000 dead enemy troops all around the city! God had taken care of the problem. No wonder the psalmist summarizes the deliverance so succinctly with these words, *"The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted."* Hmmm. And just like that...the enemy was gone.

Now, tell me, what is it about this virus or about whatever crisis that you and your family are in that is too difficult for the Almighty? If He wants to He can make it vanish overnight.

## **Entrance into a Crisis, 46:1, 5, 7, 11**

Ok, so it is time to review. Why do we not panic when we enter into a crisis? The answer is so clear in Psalm 46. He says it four times. We do not have to fear because God enters the crisis with us! Let's look at the verses. Hang on to these truths in the midst of your troubles!

*"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."* 46:1  
*"God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved..."* 46:5  
*"The Lord of hosts is with us..."* 46:7  
*"The Lord of hosts is with us..."* 46:11

The Jamaican Christians used to have this saying, *"If Christ is in the boat, we will not fear the storm!"* Shouldn't that be the main concern of every human being? Have we personally invited Christ into our life? That is the biggest decision of life not whether or not we will survive a certain emergency.

Romans 10:9-10, 13 breaks it down for a simple man like me. It tells me that if I want Christ to enter my life, then there are three steps that I need to take. First, one needs to believe that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead. Second, we must invite Him in prayer to be the Lord of our life. Third, we should not be ashamed of Christ and should give a clear profession of our faith in Him before others around us.

### **Exaltation above the Crisis, 46:10**

I do not want to minimize the intense situation that we are currently in facing the Coronavirus, but I do want to stretch our perspective a bit before we wrap this bible study up. Look with me at Psalm 46:10.

Have you ever seen a satellite image of a hurricane from way up in the atmosphere above the planet? The storm is really destructive on ground level, displacing all kinds of things and causing tremendous damage. From the aerial view, however, it shrinks it down in size. It one can just get high enough, most storms don't look that bad from way up there!

Psalm 46:10 calls us to look at life from the exalted position of the Throne of God. The word "*exalt*" is used in scripture 128 times. Psalms, of course, is the individual winner, using this term 35 times, the most of any other book in the Bible. If you ever want to get a Heavenly vision, then I recommend spending time in the Psalms. They remind us of just how great God is and just how small we are.

Focus on your intimacy with God when your crisis decreases your activity. "*Be still...*" We are typically a busy people these days with lots going on in our daily schedules. Sometimes we are so busy that we cut time with God right out of the daily to do list. Don't do this. The Lord has almost shut this country and many other countries around the world down. We can spend this time frustrated, or we could use this time to draw closer to the Lord.

If we do spend this crisis or any emergency in our life seeking the Lord, then I predict something will happen. Wait! Let me rephrase that. Scripture says something unique will begin to take place. We will move from intimacy with God to the supremacy of God. He doesn't say in this passage that He "might be exalted". He says, "*...I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!*" This is a return to what our existence is all about anyway...the glory of God. When will this crisis end? It will end when this earth gives Christ the glory and the honor that He deserves.

There is a supernatural progression here in Psalm 46:10 that we don't need to miss. If we will concentrate on our intimacy with God, then He will take us to the place where we can behold the supremacy of God. Once we have this perspective, then we move to accuracy about God. Uh, huh. Have you ever hear of the "pocket Jesus"? Sometimes we like to keep Jesus in our pocket and pull Him out when we face a test in life. This is not an accurate description of Who the Lord Jesus Christ is. The last book in the Bible, Revelation, reminds us of where this planet is headed. Bumpy times are ahead for sure, but the end of the road is when this entire planet and every nation confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord and King. He is worthy of more than being concealed in our pocket. He is worthy of honor in our lives. This is one of the reasons that we are going through this as a nation. Is your concept of God based on the truth of Scripture? If not, this is the time to realign your beliefs with His Word.

### **End of All Crises, 46:8-9**

It is tragic that some reject faith in Christ on the grounds of the brokenness that they see all around us in the world. They boastfully push back from the table claiming that if He was God, then He would not allow all of this destruction, sickness, heartache, fighting, etc. to take place. What they don't realize is that He is going to take care of it. He is preparing a place where there will be no more damaged lives, no death, no sickness, no sin, etc. The reason that He is allowing it now is so that we can come to Him, rather than trying to repair it ourselves. We will never fix the problems that cause crises since we started them.

Even some Christians are not interested in biblical prophecy. They assume that it is irrelevant to their daily lives. Yet, in reality, God knew that we needed hope of a better day. We need to know that He has a plan that is going to reach His goal of removing every crisis from life.

Psalm 46:8-9 is like being surrounded by a mountain range with peaks in every direction. From where we stand, we can't determine how far away that peak over there is from us. Many prophecies that were given in the Old Testament have already been fulfilled. Other predictions that God chose to disclose to us in His Word are coming to pass all the time, right now. Other prophecies are still yet to come to fruition. But they will take place, some day.

Whatever current crisis you are in, meditate on the promise He is making in verse 9. He is going to end your emergency and your difficulty some day. He is going to end all difficulties some day.

How will it all end anyway? Revelation 21:1-5 is one of my favorite glimpses into the future. It speaks of a time when there will no more crises. It speaks of a time when we will be given a reset. Listen to how this conclusion.

*<sup>1</sup> Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup> Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup> Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."*