

What To Do When Trouble Comes

Psalm 46:1-10

Have you heard the story of "*Alexander and the Horrible, Terrible, Not Good, Very Bad Day*"? Alexander was a boy about 7 or 8 years old, and he had one of those days when everything went wrong, disasters one right after another. Nothing went right. "*It was a Horrible, Terrible, Not Good, Very Bad Day.*"

For instance, when Alexander woke up in the morning, he discovered that he had gone to bed with gum in his mouth, and when he woke up it was in his hair. When he got out of bed he tripped over his skateboard, and then he dropped his sweater into the sink where the water was running. He said, "*I just knew it was going to be a Horrible, Terrible, Not Good, Very Bad Day!*"

Then he went to school, and he had a horrible day there, too. After school he had a terrible experience at the Dentist's office. Then came supper, and he said, "We had cauliflower for supper, and I hate cauliflower! And on TV all I saw was huggin' and kissin', and I hate huggin' and kissin'!"

"Then my bath water was too hot, and I got soap in my eyes, and I lost my marble down the drain. When I went to bed, Nick took back the pillow that he said I could have. And my Mickey Mouse night light burned out, and I bit my tongue, and the cat decided to sleep with Nick and not with me. "*All in all,*" he said, "*it was a Horrible, Terrible, Not Good, Very Bad Day*"

When Alexander finally came to the end of that day, he heaved a sigh and cried, "I think I'll run away to Australia." (as told by Melvin Newland)

You've felt like that sometimes, haven't you? I don't know if I would choose Australia, but there are many days I wish I could run away to Colorado, or at the very least, just pull the covers back over my head. But there is an alternative, and our Scripture tells us what it is.

1 Hide in Him, v. 1

"*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*" The Hebrew word "trouble" that is used means "pressed in, confined in a tight space." Do you remember the old saying, "between a rock and a hard place?" That is the kind of pressure the psalmist is talking about. When life presses in upon us, when trouble comes, then we can know that we have a place to run to. It is not Australia. It is not Colorado. It is not even your own backyard. God is our refuge and

strength. It does not matter what form the trouble takes, or how it is delivered, or how long it stays. God alone is our accessible, protected place of refuge and retreat. We can hide there and know that nothing can get through to us unless it goes through Him first.

Some may depend on their bank accounts, their jobs, their families, their relationships. But our God is a far better refuge than any of those. It is not that relationship we've invested so much time in that is our refuge and strength. It is not a job or a house that is our ever present help in time of trouble. It is not the economy that gives us our strength. It is not the age, appearance, condition or health of our bodies which provides us help. It is God Who provides us with a place to run, a place to hide. Deuteronomy 33:27 contains this awesome, encouraging truth: "*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.*"

Here is a great verse to remember: Psalm 57:1—*Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.* What does it mean to "take refuge"? It means that we hide there. The Scriptures tell us that we can hide in Him: *For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock* (Psalm 27:5)

Listen to this one: *Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah.* (Psalm 62:5-8). Here is one more, though there are many, many others: *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.* (Proverbs 18:10)

2 Believe in Him, vv. 2-3

"Therefore we will not fear..." The psalmist is talking about the kind of overwhelming violence of emotions so common to all of us. He illustrates this by using metaphors from nature. He says that he 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.*

The psalmist probably had plenty of reasons to be afraid. Look at the words he uses here. The word "fear" in verse two is from a word which described great emotional pain, turmoil and distress. Also in verse two, the phrase "give way"

refers to something being changed in such a dramatic fashion that it could be said to have been removed, and something else put in its place. It has totally collapsed. Sometimes life feels like that, doesn't it?

Then he describes the mountains falling into the heart of the sea, and he uses a word there that describes something which was apparently immovable suddenly being toppled. And so it is that in our lives sometimes, the things we thought we could depend on, the things which were apparently immovable and dependable, are suddenly discovered to be just the opposite. We lean on them, and they topple over.

In verse three, we see the word "roar," a word meaning "tumultuous." It has the idea of something being shaken or moved in a violent manner so as to crush or destroy, like the waves of the sea beating against the base of a cliff with enough force and regularity that the cliff eventually erodes and falls into the sea. The word "foam" means "to boil." It is used in Lamentations 1:20, "*See, O Lord, how distressed I am! I am in torment within, and in my heart I am disturbed.*"

That sounds pretty violent. It's catastrophic! But, he says, even if that should happen, I will not be overwhelmed with fear. Why? The key to this is found in the first word in verse two: *therefore*. What does it mean? It means "on the basis of what has just been said." And here is what has just been said: *God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble*. Let the worst we can imagine come—we will believe. Though life tosses us around, and the things we lean on suddenly disappear—we will believe. Though circumstances are tumultuous and uncertain—we will believe. Though the situation would crush any other person—we will believe. Though all our hopes and dreams suddenly wash out from under us—we will believe. Why? *God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble*.

3 Depend on Him, vv. 4-5

Verse four gives us a pretty sharp contrast. Here we have a *river* and *streams*, instead of the boiling foam of the sea. But there is more than a contrast: A great concern of any city in the ancient Middle East was that they would be besieged by an invading army. So there were three things that were absolutely necessary: an abundance of food, an adequate source of clear water, and a fortified wall around the city. Many of the ancient cities had walls to protect them, and they were constantly storing up food against the day when they might be attacked. But what to do about the water supply?

2 Chronicles 32:30 tells us that among many other things that King Hezekiah did to strengthen the city of Jerusalem, he masterminded a brilliant project which would provide an endless supply of water to the city even during siege. There is a small spring called Gihon, which came to the surface just outside Jerusalem. Hezekiah had that spring stopped up, then he built a tunnel through 1,749 feet of solid rock, through which the waters of the Spring of Gihon could flow. It is called Hezekiah's Tunnel, and is still in use to this day.

By drawing attention to that continuous source of water deep in the earth, the psalmist was reminding the worshippers that they had a constant, never-ending source of help in God. It is constant, like the Spring of Gihon. It is deep, like Hezekiah's Tunnel. It is fresh and clean, like the waters which flow through it. And the psalmist was telling us that we can depend on God to be there for us, even during the siege times of our lives, even during the drought times. So we have a choice when trouble comes into our lives: we can wring our hands and worry, or we can tap down into the ever-flowing springs of life deep beneath the surface, and learn to depend on God.

The word “*glad*” in verse 4 means “to rejoice.” This is not mere happiness at the way a thing turns out. This joy is deep, like Hezekiah’s Tunnel. It flows even when things on the surface are dry, bare and threatening. And through all the years since, the River of God flows as full and strong as ever.

In verse five, we see the words, *God will help her at break of day*. Instead of “break of day,” The King James Version reads, “right early.” The literal translation is “at the turn of morning,” referring of course, to the time when night changes to day. The idea is that God helps at just the right time. You can certainly count on God to help you when you need it most. He will never be too early, and He is never too late.

4

Remember what He has done, vv. 8-9

Verse eight reads, *Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth*. The words *Come and see* mean “Pause and meditate over this; think about its implications.” Verse nine depicts the battlefield after the war is over. It is as though the psalmist was calling the worshippers to come out from behind the wall when it was all over, and see the desolation God had brought on the heads of their enemies.

When we say that we are to remember what He has done, we mean that we need to be reminding ourselves of all the times when we ran to Him for a refuge, when our

strength was gone, and we found His strength to be more than enough. We need to remember the times when our fear was washed away with belief and faith, when our resources were utterly exhausted, and we found the Fountain of Living Water to be more than adequate to quench our thirst.

Remember the times when you didn't know what to do, and God came through for you. Remember when your own springs were dried up, and God stepped up and punched a hole through solid rock for you, so you could drink. Remember when you felt lonely and abandoned, and God comforted you with the sweetness of His presence. Bring to your mind the times when there was no hope, and God gently breathed hope into your soul. Remember when you felt misunderstood, and God said, "I understand." Remember when you felt that no one cared, and God spoke, "I love you."

Go and stand on a pinnacle of your faith, and look out over the past of your life, and recall that God has never forsaken you. Recall that He has always been sufficient, always been present, always been powerful on your behalf. He will not let you down this time, either.

5 Be still before Him, v. 10

In times of difficulty, one of our first impulses is to take matters into our own hands. We want to figure it out; we want to resolve the problem. And while it is true that there are times God wants us to get up and work for ourselves, there are also times when He tells us to sit down and be quiet—let Him do the work. There are situations where no matter how hard we try, we only make it worse than it was. God says to us, "Be still. I'm God, and I can fix this."

But we seem to think that unless we are doing something, that it won't get done. Can you not see that this is nothing more than fear in action? I'm afraid that God will not come through for me, so I've got to do it, even if I don't have a clue what to do. That's fear, not faith. And sometimes we have the attitude that if we are being still and quiet before God, that we are not actually *doing* anything. In reality, being still before God is sometimes not only the *only* thing we can do, it is quiet often the *best* thing we can do.

Pay attention to this: God says *Be still*. The word used here means "to abandon, to relax, to stop striving." It means "to sink," as one might relax and just sink into a chair. It pictures a soldier who puts down his weapons, who stops his fighting, who lets down his defenses, who relaxes his entire body, because the danger has passed. So we can see clearly now that being still before God is a very active step of faith.

But the verse doesn't just tell us to *be still*. It also tells us to *know* that He is God. It includes the idea of *acknowledging* that He is God, and all that *that* means. Since He is God, that means that He is great, and above all comprehension. It means that He is sovereign and absolutely perfect in His dealings with us. It means that there is nothing which escapes His notice, and there is nothing which is beyond His ability.

So the next time you have a *Horrible, Terrible, Not Good, Very Bad Day*, remember that you don't have to run to Australia, Colorado, the back yard or even hide under the covers. *God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Hide in Him. Believe in Him. Depend on Him. Remember what He has done. Be still before Him and acknowledge His sovereignty in your life and circumstances.*