

Psalm 46
SAFE AND SECURE UNDER ATTACK!

(The word "selah" perhaps indicates a musical interlude.)

God is our refuge and strength,

A very present help in trouble.

Therefore, will not we fear though the earth be removed,

And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,

Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,

The holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:

God shall help her, and that right early.

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:

He uttered His voice, the earth melted.

The LORD of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Come, behold the works of the LORD,

What desolations he hath made in the earth.

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow,

And cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire.

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen,

I will be exalted in the earth.

The LORD of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

You are under attack. Can you feel it? Can you sense it? How smooth is each day and each week? It's a fight, to survive and keep moving ahead. Sickness and injury interrupt your agenda and plans. The weather brings setbacks. The state of the nation brings stress. Various forces want you to fail. Effects of age prevent you from doing what you were once did. Death for old or young, is lurking--behind a tree, around a curve, during the night or in broad daylight. Satan himself wants to separate you from God: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).* You are under attack. Whether you are as independent as can be, or an I-can-handle-it person, you are under attack; and on your own, the attackers will in the end defeat you. It's a losing game—like to hear it or not. Harsh.

This Psalm provides a life-giving breath of fresh air. *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.* In the face of every attack, "A mighty fortress is our God, a trusty shield and weapon." The Lord is your defender from all physical foes and woes; and He is your defender from all spiritual forces and woes whether from the minions of hell or Satan himself. Scripture says, *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8).* He delivers you from sin and death. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:55-57).* In Jesus, you are forgiven and heaven awaits. *The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.* The Lord of "hosts." A host is a "multitude"—"a host of blackbirds took flight from the tree." The Lord is the Lord of the multitudes of earth and heaven. He is Lord of the creatures of the sea, of the land, of the sky, of the stars in the night sky, of the peoples of the earth, of the angels in the heavens. The Lord of every host that there is, is the one who is with you during every attack. He is the one in whom you have refuge, safety, and peace.

This Psalm is very applicable on Reformation Sunday. Consider Martin Luther's strong stance some 500 years ago, taken by God's doing, to bring the teachings of the church on earth back into line with the teachings of Holy Scripture. Luther learned from the Bible that which he had not learned at church. Man is not saved from the punishment for sins by purchasing certificates of "exemption"—indulgence—from the Church of Rome as was done back then; nor by the penance assigned after confession so as to qualify for forgiveness; nor by viewing "relics" (supposed ancient remnants from the time of Christ) displayed at Roman Catholic dioceses and parishes.

Luther learned from Scripture that man is not saved by his own good works before God, or by paying money to have a mass read. Mass is another name for the Sacrament of the Altar. A mass could be purchased to be read by a priest whether anyone was in attendance or not. The act of the “mass” was of itself supposedly a re-offering of Jesus’ body and blood for sin—an “unbloody” sacrifice. Luther learned from Scripture that becoming a monk or a nun, devoting one’s life to doing good, living separately and sparsely, does not secure forgiveness. Luther learned that man is not saved by submitting to the authority of the pope in Rome who claimed to be the appointed vicar and substitute of Christ on earth over all Christendom. Luther stood fast on passages like “If righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died in vain” (Galatians 2:212). “A man is justified by faith, apart from the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). “By the deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20).

Luther was attacked by the forces of Satan so as to shut him down, or a little more crassly, to shut him up, Luther was excommunicated from church and labeled an unbeliever. Also the Emperor, the ruler over the kings of Europe declared the unyielding Luther to be an outlaw, wanted dead or alive. But Psalm 46 was a favorite of Luther’s. *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. . . . The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.* The Lord sustained Luther physically and spiritually. He died of natural causes at age 62. Through Jesus the dear Savior, Luther’s heart and conscience were assured his sins were forgiven—gone in Jesus! On the basis of Psalm 46, he had written the hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” with its many great lines. “And take they our life, goods, fame, child, and wife. Let these all be gone, they yet have nothing won. The Kingdom ours remaineth!” (v. 4).

But Psalm 46 is bigger than you and Martin Luther together. It talks about “we, us, our” in “our refuge and strength.” in “therefore, will not we fear,” in “the Lord of hosts is with us.” Who is the “we, us, our”? It is the entire Christian church of all times and places. The church, not the physical entity of church or of all churches, but the church, the spiritual entity of Believers, speaks in this Psalm with confidence in the Lord. The whole Christian Church on has been and always will be under attack during this lifetime. Satan led Adam and Eve into sin. Ungodly Cain murdered Abel. Unbelievers intermarried with the believers until at Noah’s time only Noah and his family (8 altogether) were left. The Egyptians oppressed the Children of Israel, etc. throughout the Old Testament. Behind all these scenes Satan was working. The same was true in the New Testament. The opposition against Jesus and the apostles, Christians were persecuted to the death. Attacks against the church on earth continue to the present. Communism has wanted to shut down Christianity, Muslims want to shut down Christianity, New Ager are opposed to salvation in Christ alone, the Equality and Fairness Voices want to tolerate anything and everything except Christianity, sometimes forces even within the physical church want to snuff out the pure Gospel of forgiveness, resurrection, and eternal salvation in Christ alone. For the church to stand with Scripture puts the church in the line of attack—which is pictured so dramatically in the Book of Revelation. Satan comes with everything he has against Christ and Christ’s church.

But clinging to this Psalm, we hear: *The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge,* God protects His church on earth—those trusting in salvation from sin by Jesus alone. He protects them, generation to generation and on into eternity. Hear the beautiful message in the Psalm. *There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted.* The church, the city of God, is where God dwells through His Word. Through that city the river of the water of life, the water of God’s grace in Christ, flows bringing heavenly comfort, joy, and peace—pictured at the end of Revelation. God dwells in her midst and is ready to help at the drop of a pin. Hell and Satan can rage and chafe all they want, but He utters one word and they melt. Game over!

The great day of that ultimate victory is coming. Surely you get weary of being attacked. You want to be on top now, in this life! It won’t happen. Keep your eyes fixed ahead. The best is yet to come. The Lord of hosts, who at great cost to Himself declares you righteous for Jesus’ sake, is with you. Jesus says, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (John 20:27-28).* The Christian church is safe. That includes the hearts and souls at St. Luke’s, in the CLC, and worldwide. Which is not to say that St. Luke’s building cannot fail, that the physical organization of St. Luke’s or the CLC will never disintegrate, but the Christians in them, and the invisible church of The Lord, the Holy Christians Church, the Communion of Saints, the community and gathering of all believers of all time, is safe. *Come, behold the works of the LORD, What desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, And cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.* Fear not!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---