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THE LORD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH

You've heard it — when it comes to problems and crises it's not *if* they will come, but *when* they come. We don't need to take a deep dive into our memory banks to know that is true for us.

The question is, "What do you do when a crisis strikes?"

One man tells us, "For most of my life I have either run through problems with my head down, or I have retreated." Does that ring a bell? sound familiar? Naturally we face the same options every time, *fight or flight*.



King David opened Psalm 11 with a statement: "In the LORD I take refuge." Then he follows with a question, a question from those around him, "How can you say to my soul, 'Flee as a bird to your mountain?'" We may have taken that advice and tried to run away from our crises and problems, but David didn't.

Recall the opening stanza of Psalm 46.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very ready help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth shakes and the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride."

Those are wonderful words. Yes, but do we know, do we experience what the Psalm writer did? Let's briefly survey this Psalm that tells us that God *is* our refuge and strength, *is* our very ready help in trouble.

Overall this Psalm teaches us that we can be confident because God is our refuge, strength and help. While the Psalm says much more, let's look at these three from the opening verse.

- God is our refuge. A refuge provides shelter and protection from danger or distress. King David sang in Psalm 62, "My salvation and my glory rest on God; the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts before Him; God is a refuge for us." God is *the* refuge, *the* shelter, *the* protector for any and every distress and danger we face. That is part of who He is, part of what He is like.
- Then, God is our strength. This moves us from seeking protection from God to receiving His strength for the difficulties we face. In a time of distress, recorded in Psalm 28, King David

sang out to God, “The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart triumphs, and with my song I shall thank Him.” Paul knew this truth as he declared that “power is perfected in weakness.” God gives us strength as we seek and rely on His strength.

- As well, God is our very ready help in trouble. This is another wonderful part of who God is! The point is that God is always willing and ready to help us. King David wrote in Psalm 34, “The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears and rescues them from all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Yes, we like David, experience long, dark nights of uncertainty and agony. But even then God is there to help us through the nightmare.

This Psalm also teaches us that our confidence will grow as we study God’s works (verses 8 and 9), and “stop striving and know that [He] is God, or stop pushing and shoving to accomplish things on our own (verse 10).

Our confidence in and from God means that we will not be fearful. Verses 2 and 3, “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth shakes and the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.” This is the granddaddy of all disasters! Even if everything really does go wrong, even when we do walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will confidently not fear. Why? Verse 1, because “God is our refuge and strength, a very ready help in trouble.”

Our confidence from God also means we will not be moved, be shaken, slip and slide. Verses 4 and 5, “There is a river whose streams make the city of God happy, the holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.” People with confidence in and from God can, will stand their ground, will not be shaken, moved or destroyed by the worst attacks, betrayals or disasters.

And, finally, confidence in and from God means we will be happy! Verse 4 again, “There is a river whose streams make the city of God happy.” True happiness, not the fleeting and circumstantial feelings from our experiences. In Psalm 16 King David sang, “I have set the LORD continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely.” Real heart, mind and soul happiness comes only from God and only to people who have confidence in and from Him.

The reformer Martin Luther faced ongoing criticism, condemnation and threats of actual physical violence. So, we are told, he looked at Psalm 46 and told his friends, “This is a good one. This is a good Psalm to sing.” While are not on the run for our lives, hiding out, fighting the fights that Luther was, we face our own crises and *drama*. Yes indeed, it a good Psalm to sing, and to live.