



Help in Trouble

Psalm 46



- ❑ As we consider our world today, we see and experience various kinds of trouble. Jesus told his disciples, “In this world you will have trouble” (*John 16:33*). Our troubles range from the personal to the universal. Concerning the present age, Jesus said, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places” (*Matthew 24:7*). In such a world, we may get discouraged. But Psalm 46 says...

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

- ❑ These words apply to each person who has trusted in the Lord. Read Psalm 46.

In Natural Catastrophes

- ❑ Verses 2-3 speak of catastrophic¹ natural conditions. These descriptions (e.g., “the earth giving way” and “the mountains falling into the sea”) sound like the undoing of the creation order.



1. Why are God’s people able to say, “We will not fear” even when the creation order is being destroyed?²

📖 God “fashioned and made the earth, he founded it” (*Isaiah 45:18b*).

📖 God “formed the mountains by [His] power” (*Psalm 65:6a*).³

📖 God says to his people, “I am with you” (*Isaiah 41:10a*).

In National (or International) Catastrophes

- ❑ Like the “waters roar and foam” (*46:3a*), “nations are in uproar” (*46:6a*). Like the “mountains fall into...the sea” (*46:2b*), “kingdoms fall” (*46:6a*).

2. We live in an unstable world. There is much danger, conflict and war. Various individuals, groups and nations are battling for power and control. Do you think the human race will be able to achieve peace and harmony in this world? Explain.⁴



¹ ‘catastrophe’ – a sudden and violent change that causes great loss, suffering, or damage; a terrible disaster. God brought order out of chaos (Genesis 1:1-2, 9-10), which seems to be reversed in verses 2-3. This language is likely hyperbolic (exaggerated), but is used to describe the most terrible of circumstances.

² The Creator still rules. ‘So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you’ (Isaiah 41:10). ‘Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me’ (Psalm 23:4, NIV). In these New Testament times our hope is even greater (see 1 Peter 1:3-5).

³ This does not necessarily conflict with geo-scientific theory (plate tectonics), but God is the designer, creator and sustainer of the natural world, thus his power and rule remain stable even when the natural order destabilizes.

⁴ True peace is peace with God. As long as individuals, groups and nations are opposing God, true peace and harmony will not be achieved. True peace cannot be achieved by humans. It can only be achieved by God (46:9), and universal peace will not be achieved in this present age. Though Christians should attempt to ‘live at peace with everyone’ (Romans 12:18), we should realize that conflict is inevitable in this age. Thus trouble is sure to happen.

The City of God

- ❑ In contrast to the roaring and foaming waters (46:3a) there is a peaceful river in the “city of God” (46:4a).⁵ While the “mountains fall into...the sea” (46:2b), the “city of God...will not fall” (46:4-5a). The city of God is secure because of God’s mighty presence (*Psalms* 48:8).

📖 “As we have heard,
so have we seen
in the city of the LORD Almighty,
in the city of our God:
God makes her secure forever” (*Psalms* 48:8, *NIV*).

- ❑ Of course, the physical city of Jerusalem was eventually destroyed,⁶ but it pointed to a “new Jerusalem” at the end of this age.

📖 “Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’” (*Revelation* 21:1-4, *NIV*)



Our Fortress

- ❑ An earthly structure, location or position is *not* our fortress (place of protection and security). “The LORD Almighty...is our fortress” (46:7, 11). He is “our refuge and strength.” We enter the “fortress” through faith in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and was raised from the dead. We *will* have trouble. “But take heart! [Jesus has] overcome the world” (*John* 16:33).
- ❑ So the LORD says, “Be still, and know that I am God” (46:10a). Cease your striving, realize who God is (as the all-powerful sovereign Creator), stop worrying, and start trusting.
 3. Psalm 46 promotes a radical trust in God even in the worst of circumstances. How can we develop that type of trust? How can we apply this psalm to our lives today?

Reflection/Application

- We all live in a world of trouble. When the worst of troubles hits you, how will *you* handle it? Where will you go for help? What is *your* refuge and fortress? Do you have one?⁷ Only God can provide the protection, security and help we really need. We receive that protection, security and help by trusting in Jesus Christ. Have you trusted in Him?
- As a believer, how do you handle the troubles in your life? How would you handle the worst of troubles? Does your faith need to be strengthened? Seek to know God, and take steps of faith (so you will see His faithfulness). Reflect on Matthew 6:25-34 and Romans 8:18-39.

⁵ The ‘city of God’ is a reference to Jerusalem (*Psalms* 48:1-2, 8; 87:1-3; *Isaiah* 60:14), where the Most High (God) dwelt (46:4). Actually, Jerusalem has no river, but it is used as a metaphor for the continual outpouring of God’s blessing, which makes the city like the Garden of Eden, where God’s special presence was realized (*Genesis* 2:10).

⁶ Continued life in the temporal Jerusalem (and Promised Land) was conditioned on the peoples’ obedience to God’s covenant with them (*Deuteronomy* 29:9-28; *1 Kings* 9:6-9). God was faithful, but the people were unfaithful.

⁷ You may not think you need one. But you do, and you will realize it sooner or later (hopefully not too late).