

# A Refuge For A Weary Soul

**Psalms 46:1-3 KJV** God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. [2] Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; [3] Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

## I. INTRODUCTION—AN OLD HYMN

### A. Dear Refuge of My Weary Soul

-This past week during some of the normal private devotional time, I happened to run across several old hymns that I was not familiar with. As I listened to them, their words were so incredibly compelling that I started seeking out the story behind some of the writers. One particular hymn was written by Anne Steele. I found an excellent biography about her written by Kevin Twitt, who is one of the leaders of a band called Indelible Grace.

*Anne Steele lived in England from 1716-1778. She was born in Broughton, where her father, who was a timber merchant, preached for 60 years – most of the time without receiving a salary! She actually lived only 15 miles from the great Isaac Watts, although it is unlikely that they ever met. Her mother died when she was 3 years old, and when she was 19 she suffered a severe injury to her hip, rendering her an invalid for most of her life. When she was 21, she was engaged to Robert Elscourt, but the day before the wedding he was drowned while swimming in a river! She never was married, and assisted her father in his pastoral labors for her whole life, although for the last 9 years of her life, she was never able to leave her bed. Still in spite of all of this her disposition was described as “cheerful and helpful” and her life as one of “unaffected humility, warm benevolence, sincere friendship, and genuine devotion.”*

*She wrote 144 hymns, as well as 34 psalms in verse. Amos Wells (writing in 1914) says she was “the first woman writer whose hymns came to be largely used in hymn-books.” He describes her hymns as “very simple, clear, and beautiful,*

*breathing a spirit of Christian faith and resignation.” 200 years ago her hymns were very popular – in 1808, a church in Boston published its own hymnal, and out of the 152 hymns in the volume, 59 were by Anne Steele! Henry Burrage says that over 100 of her hymns can be found in “modern” hymnals – more than any other hymn writer! He says that “her hymns, written to lighten her own burdens, give beautiful expression to the sweetness of her Christian character, and the depth of her Christian experience.” Her hymns are so rich, and yet easily understood even by those living 250 years after her death!*

-The hymn that so struck me was “Dear Refuge of My Weary Soul.”

1. Dear refuge of my weary soul,  
On Thee, when sorrows rise  
On Thee, when waves of trouble roll,  
My fainting hope relies  
To Thee I tell each rising grief,  
For Thou alone canst heal  
Thy Word can bring a sweet relief,  
For every pain I feel

2. But oh! When gloomy doubts prevail,  
I fear to call Thee mine  
The springs of comfort seem to fail,  
And all my hopes decline  
Yet gracious God, where shall I flee?  
Thou art my only trust  
And still my soul would cleave to Thee  
Though prostrate in the dust

3. Hast Thou not bid me seek Thy face,  
And shall I seek in vain?  
And can the ear of sovereign grace,  
Be deaf when I complain?  
No still the ear of sovereign grace,  
Attends the mourner's prayer  
Oh may I ever find access,  
To breathe my sorrows there

4. Thy mercy seat is open still,  
Here let my soul retreat  
With humble hope attend Thy will,  
And wait beneath Thy feet,  
Thy mercy seat is open still,  
Here let my soul retreat  
With humble hope attend Thy will,  
And wait beneath Thy feet

-She was one who learned to live with the painful limitations that life had placed on her. From the death of her mother, the poverty of her father's house, the painful injury to her hip, and the terrible loss of the love of her life all had the capacity to shape her life into a willing vessel.

## **B. Regular People Needing Supernatural Help**

-If you expected never to have difficulties after you came into the church, you are going to be one sadly mistaken person. Trials and tribulations seem to be the very lot in life that some regularly have to bear in this life.

-All that you have to do is to muse through the psalms and you will find that there is much difficulty and burdens that some of God's greatest people had to bear. Take a look at some of them, Psalm 7, 10, 13, 16, 17, 22, 25, 28, 40, 42, 51, and various others are present. They give us a look at the troubled souls of men.

- Attacks from giants of despair.
- Attacks of doubt in their own hearts.
- Attacks of lies being spread about them.
- Attacks of prominent, proud, and wicked men.
- Attacks of strongholds that overwhelmed them.
- Attacks of stilled silence that provoked them.
- Attacks from fears that paralyzed their faith.
- Attacks of dryness that choked their prayers and their worship.
- Attacks of sickness that flattened their energy.
- Attacks of barbaric and uncouth spirits.

-When the psalm writers felt overwhelmed by life, the Lord in His great grace instructed that their struggles be written for our instruction and our admonition.

## II. PSALM 46

### A. The Background

-The background of difficulty in this psalm is not expressly known but many scholars speculate that this psalm had its origin when Sennacherib was about to attack Jerusalem. This would have been a time of incredible terror for Jerusalem who was going to be attacked by an army of 185,000 men. They would have overwhelmed Jerusalem with their force. (2 Kings 18:29-35; 19:6-15, 28, 35.)

-This particular psalm can be broken up into three segments. The way that you can note the divisions is by the little word, “Selah” which means repeat or stop and pause and think and meditate on what has been written.

- Help in trouble—vv. 1-3.
- Comfort in trouble—vv. 4-7.
- Deliverance from trouble—vv. 8-11.

-Another word that gives us some insight into the way it was to be sung is the little word in the superscription that states it is a song for “Alamoth.” This means that it was to be sung with high notes that only women could have sung. It was to be sung as an anthem by a female choir.

-They were to bring it to a place of great worship when they expressed that God was a refuge to them. There are other similar passages that give the same thought that God is indeed going to shelter those who serve Him despite being placed in a situation of danger:

**Deuteronomy 33:27 KJV** The eternal God *is thy* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms: . . .

**Psalms 27:5 KJV** For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

**Psalms 31:20 KJV** Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

**Psalms 71:3 KJV** Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou *art* my rock and my fortress.

**Proverbs 18:10 KJV** The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

**Isaiah 25:4 KJV** For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones *is* as a storm *against* the wall.

## **B. Why You Need a Refuge**

-Why do we need a refuge? The answer to that question is answered by the content of the psalm itself:

- Because of trouble—v. 1
- Because of the instability of the earth—v. 2
- Because of the upheaval of mountains—v. 2
- Because of the threat of roaring, troubled waters—v. 3

-I have a feeling that most everyone, even the strongest of muscle and stoutest of mind, have had moments when they were overwhelmed with the attack of an enemy that they thought was going to destroy them.

- Bills you can't pay.
- Grades you can't make.
- Expectations you can't live up to.
- People you can't please.
- Weaknesses you can't resist.
- A job you can't escape from.
- A past you can never forget.

- A hopeless future you can't face.

-It is during those times that you need a refuge. The longer you live the more you will discover that your strength isn't going to get the job done. You are going to need a Refuge!

**J. A. Black**—Our faith is not for an hour or a day. It is to be our mainstay through life and in the hour of death. It is meant to steady and strengthen us in every calamity, however sad, and in every crisis, however sudden.

-Three times in Psalm 46 the word “refuge” appears. In verse 1, verse 7, and verse 11 the word is written but the word in verse 1 is different from the other two. In verse 1, the word signifies a high place or a high tower. It is a place to retreat beyond the reach of foes but when you get to verses 7 and 11 the word changes to indicate a high cliff or a place in the rock to hide in.

-Verse 1 gives to us a place of trust while verses 7 and 11 provide for us a place of safety. Consider the ways that God works in our lives:

- In times of sickness and weakness, He is our healer.
- In times of fear, He is an everlasting arm to lean on (Leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms, what have I to fear, what have I to dread?, etc.).
- In times of anxious worry, He is a wise counselor.
- In times of danger, He is our support.
- In times of sorrow, He is our comfort.
- In times of sin, He is a voice of forgiveness.

-That sums up the work of God who is a refuge in times of difficulty. He is a Refuge for my weary soul. Think again of that third verse of that old hymn written in the 1800's.

3. Hast Thou not bid me seek Thy face,  
And shall I seek in vain?  
And can the ear of sovereign grace,  
Be deaf when I complain?  
No still the ear of sovereign grace,  
Attends the mourner's prayer

Oh may I ever find access,  
To breathe my sorrows there

### **C. Where the Refuge Is**

-You may ask where that refuge is. Psalm 46:1 tells us that He is a very present help in trouble. Again the Hebrew word used literally means that it is “greatly found.” It is not very far from any of us. You don’t have to seek very far for it because it is not very difficult to find.

-On that dark night when Jerusalem was about to be flattened by Sennacherib, she was delivered miraculously. When the foes begin to approach her gates, the watchful guards were shocked at the suddenness of the attack of the angels. The brook Siloam rippled quietly and the angels slew the enemy with such power that it took place almost at the snap of a finger or the blink of an eye.

-This is how close your Refuge is!

### **III. CONCLUSION—THE CITIES OF REFUGE**

-Do you need a refuge?

-In ancient Israel six cities were founded as cities of refuge. They were for fleeing men who, without malice or premeditation, had taken the life of a fellow man. Once within the gates of the city of refuge, they could not be touched by any hand of vengeance or judgment.

-The rabbis have an interesting tradition that once every year the roads leading to these cities of refuge were carefully repaired and cleared of obstacles and stones, so that the man fleeing for his life would have no hindrance in his way.

-The six designated cities were located on both sides of the Jordan River.

-On the west side:

- Kedesh which means a sanctuary. A place of renewal.
- Shechem which means shoulder or back. A place of strength.

- Hebron which means an association or league. A place of support.

-On the east side:

- Bezer which means an inaccessible fortress. A place where enemies cannot get in to pursue you anymore.
- Ramoth which means a lofty place. The Church is a place that we can dwell in heavenly places.
- Golan which means an enclosure. A place where protection totally surrounds us.

-There is a place of refuge for your weary soul!