



water from rock

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – March 3, 2022

The Lord be with you.

What do you do when trouble strikes?

What do you do when out of nowhere you get hit by bad news?

When you see the horrific images out of the Ukraine and other troubled places in the world, what do you do?

I wanna share with you something that I like to do, something that helps me with trouble strikes when something rocks my world. I'd like to turn to Psalm 46 and to reflect on its opening words that I read right now. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with their tumult.

We do not know the setting of the psalm, we do not know what has happened, whether the psalm is written at a time of national catastrophe, or written at a time of calamity of nature, or some upheaval in the life of the psalmist. It is obviously a time of great upheaval and turmoil, as it talks about the Earth changing, mountains shaking in the heart of the sea, mountains trembling, whatever it is, it has happened in the life of the psalmist is to be compared to an earthquake, to a tsunami with waters, roaring and crashing. I wonder... Have you ever been in an earthquake? I mean, you go to take a step and the earth is like jello, the earth just slips away under your feet, and you know life can feel like that sometimes when everything you thought you had nailed down comes flying loose. Now, for the ancient Hebrew people, the two most stable, most reliable certain things in life were the mountains surrounding Jerusalem and the earth under their feet, the solid terra firma, and now in the life of the Psalms, all of that is up for grabs as it's slipping away, the earth is changing, mountains trembling.

You know it can come at you with a phone call at 2 o'clock in the morning, or it can come with a doctor giving the results of an MRI, and we are shaken by what's happened. What do we do? Well, I am helped by what the Holy Spirit tells us to do in the psalm... Down in verse 10, chapter 46 verse 10, the Holy Spirit says, Be still and know that I am God. But that's just the opposite of what I tend to do when trouble strikes. It sounds so counter-intuitive. Doesn't it? To be still. To Be still and know that I am God. I mean, I like to try and fix things, Hey, I like to rush around and see if I can't make things better, but the first thing that the Spirit of God tells us to do when trouble strikes



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is to be still and know that I am God. It's an interesting Hebrew word translated here as be still. It's a Hebrew word, it's raphah. And its meaning is to... Well, it's to let the arm goes slack, to relax the arm, it's used of a soldier letting go as a weapon, it's used of a worker letting go his tool. Some years ago, I was sharing this verse with some teenage boys who they immediately got the idea of this verb, as they said, chill out. I like that. The first thing we need to do when trouble strikes is to chill, to be still, to make time to be still in God's presence. So the Spirit of God says, be still and know that I am God. And the Hebrew word here for know, well, it has the idea of an experiential knowing. It's not just something that we know and in our heads theoretically, but as we learn to be still in God's presence, we come to know in our lives that He has truly God.

Verse 10 says, Be still and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations, I'm exalted in the earth. And so as we learn to be still before God, then we began to really learn to know in our lives that He is God over all, and he's got all things well in him. Once at a time of trouble, Martin Luther was reflecting on this very psalm, Psalm 46, and he was moved to write that great hymn, A Mighty Fortress is our God. Let me take you down to the second verse of that song.

Did we, in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing?

Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing.

You ask who that may be. Christ Jesus, it is He.

Lord says, His name from age to age, the same, and He must win the battle.

So when trouble strikes, when we get bad news, the first thing we need to do is to be still and to know that He is God, there's a way of praying that helps me to be still and to know that He is God, and I'd like to do that with you right now is you just take the palms of your hand, turn them downward, perhaps on the top of your desk are the top of your knees, and with palms down, you are letting go from your grip, from your grasp, you're letting go of those worries that you have about world events, those anxieties that you have about the future, perhaps those regrets that you have about the past, whatever it is, whatever burden you're carrying with palms down, you let go of all of that into God's faithful hands. The psalmist says, Cast all your cares upon God and He will sustain you. So just take a moment now to let go of all of that with palms down into God's hands, let go, be still, and now let us turn palms upward, palms upward in this universal gesture of supplication of cry for help, Lord, fill our hands today with that which we need put on our hands today, your peace, your wisdom, your direction, your love for this day. Be still and know that He is God.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.