



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – January 11, 2024

The Lord be with you.

Have you ever been in an earthquake? Everything around you is shaking the ground under your feet. It feels like jello. You don't know what to do. You don't know where to run. Well, maybe you've not lived through a real literal earthquake, but I'm wondering, have you ever lived through a time that just really shook you?

It felt like an earthquake is everything you thought you had nailed down is flying loose. It's the kind of thing that could happen with a two o'clock in the morning phone call, bad report on the biopsy, the stock market crashes and you're afraid you don't know what to do. You don't where to run.

Well, this is what I wanna think through with you for the next few moments. As I turn in my Bible to the book of Psalms. How can we turn to the book of Psalms when we're in trouble? That's what I'm doing today. Looking at Psalm 46 as the world of the Psalmist. It is shaking mountains, quaking tsunami waves roaring as the Psalmist writes in verse one, "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 its tumult."

Now, the psalmist here does not tell us what the earthquake in his life is. I mean, whether it's a real earthquake has shaken him or maybe his health has been shaken, his finances, shake him, his family life shaken or maybe there's war, maybe there's pandemic. He, he doesn't tell us, but he does speak of an earth, changing mountains, shaking mountains, trembling with tumult.

Now for the ancient Hebrew people, the two most stable, most reliable and changing things in the world were well, the earth under their feet and the mountains surrounding Jerusalem. I mean, you can always rely on those things that they'll always be there. The mountains around you and the earth under your feet. But now the Psalmist is talking about an earth that's changing mountain, shaking, trembling. He doesn't tell us what has happened. He doesn't tell us what has gone wrong. But, but, but it feels like an earthquake has slammed him. I mean, it's nine point on the Richter scale.

But then in the midst of all of this trouble, the psalmist catches himself and he speaks words of affirmation. God is our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble. And then after writing these verses, he, he inserts the Hebrew word selah. I mean, just what we call these podcasts- Selah. And I want to explain that for a moment.



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The Hebrew word *selah* comes from a word meaning to hang as when people would hang up something in order to weigh it, they would hang up a sack of wheat, a sack of olives to weigh it. Thus, some must frequently insert the word *sla* telling us to weigh what they have just said. Hang it up, weigh it, measure it, assess it. I like how the amplified Bible translates the word *selah* here as it's they say pause and think calmly of that. So let's do that for just a moment.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth should change or the mountains shake in the heart of the sea though its waters roar and foam. Though the mountains tremble with its tumult pause and think calmly of that.

So let's just do that for a moment. Let's let, let's pause in the midst of everything going on in the midst of the craziness in the world. And let's pause and let's catch our breath and let's think calmly that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. *Selah*.

Then some verses down in this 46 psalm down in verse 10 as the Holy Spirit now interjects the Holy Spirit comes into the text and says in verse 10, be still and know that I am God now, frankly, being still is the last thing I'm prone to do in the midst of an earthquake when trouble strikes, I mean, being still in the midst of trouble. Well, it seems counterintuitive. I mean, when things go wrong, I wanna rush around and try to fix it. I mean, I wanna take matters at hand, but the spirit of God says in the midst of all of that be still be still and know that I am God for the ancient Hebrews to know it, it really has the idea to know by experience, not, not just to know in our heads, not just to know theoretically, but to really come to know and to experience, be still and know that I am gone. The Hebrew word translated as be still. It's an interesting word. It has the idea of letting the arm hang limp as a soldier, letting his arm hang limp, laying down his sword or a farmer, letting his arm hang limp, laying down his stool. So that sometimes actually this Hebrew word is translated simply as to be limp to be still.

When I was a chaplain for the Department of Juvenile Corrections II, I was sharing this passage with the, with the boys that were locked up. You know, they, they got the idea of this verb and they, they, they translated into their, into their language as they said, chill out. I like that. Chill out. Don't don't get all upset and afraid, but chill out be still, be still make time to be still before God in his presence and know that He is God Lord over all the year of 1527 was an earthquake kind of year in the life of Martin Luther. His biographers call 1527 the deepest year of Luther's depression. But one day as Luther was reading and meditating on Psalm 46 and practicing sa He, he, he paused here at these words, God is our refuge and strength. And Luther was moved by what he read and pondered and he put pen to paper and he wrote that great hymn.

A Mighty Fortress, a mighty fortress is our God a bulwark, never failing our helper. He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing. If your world is shaking today and you don't know what to do. The spirit of God tells us what to do. Be still, be still in its presence, be still and know that He is God a very present help in time of trouble.

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