

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, June 25, 2014 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

A LOOK AT PSALM 46 “A Stand Alone Study of Psalm 46”

GETTING STARTED – Take a Hymn book and open to Hymn #8, “A Mighty Fortress Is our God.”

1. What does verse 1 teach us about God and His enemy?
2. What does verse 2 teach us about man and God’s provision for man?
3. What does verse 3 teach us about the world and its effects on man? What hope does it offer for man in the face of this world and the prince of this world?
4. What does verse 4 teach us about God in the face of our weakness?

We can deny it. Fake it. We try to ignore it. But the truth stubbornly persists – we are weak creatures! Being sinful, we fail. Being prone to sickness, we hurt. Being mortal, we ultimately die. Pressure wears on us. Anxiety give us ulcers. People intimidate us. Criticism offends. Disease scares us. Death haunts us. The Apostle Paul writes in **Roman 7:15, 17-19**, “*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do... As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.*” (see Rom. 7:15-25). Poor Paul recognized his own weakness and struggle. This explains why Paul writes in **Roman 8:23**, “*Not only so, but we... groan inwardly (struggle) as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*” How can we continue to grow in this bag of bones, carrying weaknesses too numerous to mention? Psalm 46 puts hope in our path.

I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PSALM 46

This 46th Psalm was born in a context of stress, feelings of insecurity and weakness... vulnerability. Trouble had come, and the sons of Korah (not David) composed a song leaving a legacy to those who know life as they knew it... a legacy of hope in “the Lord of hosts.” The sons of Korah were descendants of Kohath, son of Levi (Levites), who served in the temple as musicians. Let’s briefly give attention to some details that will help the song have its greatest meaning to us.

1. “**Set to Alamoth**” – The instructions to use the “Alamoth” have more significance than what you might think when reading and studying this psalm. The instructions “set

to Alamo” (NAS), “A song for Alamo” (NKJV), “According to Alamo” (NIV), denote an instrument of vulnerability or weakness and may have one of several different meanings:

- (1) **A technical term** – The early Greek translation of the Hebrew (the Septuagint), interprets this technical term as “hidden things.” Some of the more modern English translations (i.e. NIV), which would perhaps pick up on the “Septuagint” translation would say “according to Alamo” rather than “set to” or “a song for Alamo.” The idea that this psalm contains the “hidden things” or “hidden truth” of God is a reminder that the world and those of the world vainly seek strength, power, honor, and glory not realizing their own human frailty and weakness... they are and all is dust. The worshipper and believer in Yahweh God recognizes his or her weakness and God great power and strength that is sufficient.
 - (2) **A high pitched female voice** – The Hebrew word translated as “Alamo” normally has to do with “girls” or “young maidens.” Consequently, the most likely conjecture about this phrase is that it is a technical musical notation, possibly indicating a song which was to be sung with a high-pitched female voice, an unusual and rare occurrence in Hebrew worship, where women were only allowed designated areas of worship and participation was almost exclusively for men. The use of “Alamo” was perhaps a reminder of “weakness” and “vulnerability” of man given the Judeo idea of women as the weaker vessel.
 - (3) **A high pitched, harp like instrument-** The alamo was a harp of “maiden-like tone” (see 1 Chron. 15:20). Apparently this instrument of high-pitched tone was to be used to encourage a long remembrance of the song, reminder of man’s vulnerability before a big and powerful (thunderous) God.
2. **A Repetitive Reminder (vv.7, 11)** – “*The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*” This verse is repeated twice in verse 7 and 11 of Psalm 46.
 3. **“Selah” (vv.3,7,11)** – Its use suggests several possibilities; pause for the sake of reflection and contemplation, to express a crescendo or a swell (adjustment), or pause for silence. Some sort of change is called for.
 - (1) **Reflection and contemplation** – Taking in the truth and mulling it over in our mind, thinking on it.
 - (2) **Crescendo and adjustment** – Adjusting our life to the truth
 - (3) **Silence and meditation** – Waiting on God and allowing Him to work His truth in and through our lives
 4. **Theme: God is our imminent help when we are in a tight squeeze** – In the words of the sons of Korah, “*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*” (v.1) The word, translated here as “trouble,” is a word in Hebrew that literally means “restricted, tied-up, confined to a narrow, cramped place.” We could say the songwriters’ message was, “God is a refuge... a strength in those times of stress and weakness. When we’re pressed and shoved down, when we are weak and discouraged, God will build a tent of protection over and around us.” Wow! What a promise!

II. THE SITUATIONS OF LIFE

Many life circumstances bring about stress and take advantage of our weakness. They remind us of our helplessness and weakness... earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornados, fires, thunder and lightning, sickness and disease, death and separation, family crisis,

economic collapse and failure. This psalm, Psalm 46, deals with three areas that most of these will easily fall under, and gives an accompanying reaction to the circumstance either stated or implied.

- 1. Situation: Nature in Upheaval (vv.2-3)** – What affects us today affected the sons of Korah – certain life-threatening phenomena which are stress-producing. “ Notice in verses 2-3, *“Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the sea, through its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”*”

Reaction: Confidence “... we will not fear...” (v.2)

Help:	Isaiah 41:10	2 Timothy 1:7
	Joshua 1:9	Psalm 27:1
	Psalm 91:1-2	Psalm 91:5-10
	1 Peter 5:6-8	

- 2. Situation: Civil Disturbance (vv.4-7)** – Verses 6-7 say, *“Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts His voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”* The City of God, Jerusalem was under attack.

Reaction: Stability - *“... she will not fall...”* (v.5) The term “fall” (or “moved” in some translations) comes from the Hebrew idea of “tottering or shaking, as if to fall.”

Help: Two reasons explain why the city could remain unmoved...

- (1) God is within her... in her midst (v.5)**
- (2) God will help her (v.5)**

- 3. Situation: Post-Battle Fatigue (vv.8-11)** – The sons of Korah realized that victory was not a result of their might... but God’s. Verse 9 reminds us “He (God) makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; He breaks the bow and shatters the spear, He burns the shields with fire.” Regardless, they had still strived and had become weary.

Reaction: Relaxation – According to God’s directive they were to stop – “Be still, and know that I am God...” The command is powerful in its original Hebrew form with literally says, “Cease and know that I am God.” In other words, stop, quit running... moving.

Help: Normally, under pressure we do just the opposite. When we feel our weakness, we double our speed, increase our efforts, add velocity to our striving. We try harder. God’s counsel through the psalmist, the sons of Korah, is “cease,” “stop,” “be still,” “rest” in Him.

III. THE STRENGTH OF GOD

Instead of trying harder, or further entangling ourselves in our own weaknesses, we need to acknowledge and act upon the realities of God’s strength.

3 Things to Remember about God Strength in Our Weakness:

1. **God's strength is immediately available** – No one has to wait for it.
2. **God's strength is overpowering and unmatched** – It is tailor-made for stress and weakness. Listen to Paul's confidence in God's overpowering and unmatched strength in Roman 8:31 and 37, "*What, then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? (v.31) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (v.37)*" (see Roman 8:31-39)
3. **God's strength is sufficient** – God does not need our help. Paul perfectly state it this way in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, "*But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power (strength) is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*"