

Sons of Korah #4: Victory: Psalms 46

by Stephen Kaung

God is our refuge and strength, empowering us to overcome the world's troubles and trust in His promise to help us in our distress.

Duration: 50:23

Scripture: Psalm 46:4

Topics: "Sons of Korah"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that although God does not promise a life without distress or problems, He does promise to be our help in times of distress. The preacher refers to Psalm 46:4-7, which speaks of a river that brings gladness to the city of God and assures that God is in their midst, providing stability and protection. The preacher also mentions the concept of cities of refuge in the Old Testament, where people could find safety and protection. The sermon concludes with the reminder that through Christ, we are more than conquerors and can do all things because of His empowering love.

Transcript

Will you please turn to Psalm 46, 46th Psalm, we'll read the whole Psalm, Psalm 46, to the right. He said, A river is a refuge and strength, a help in distresses, very readily found. Therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the heart of the sea.

Though the waters thereof roar and foam, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, sealer. There is a river, the stream squared off, make glad the city of God, the sanctuary of the habitations of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.

God shall help her at the dawn of the morning. The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved. He uttered his voice, the earth melted.

Jehovah of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our high fortress, Selah. Come, behold the works of Jehovah, what desolation he hath made in the earth.

He hath made wars to cease unto the end of the earth. He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in thunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire.

Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth.

Jehovah of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our high fortress, Selah. May we look to the Lord.

Our Heavenly Father, how we praise and thank Thee that we are privileged to remember and to worship our Lord this morning. We do praise and thank Thee, knowing that we are in Thy presence, Thou art with us. We only ask at this moment that there may be no veil upon our hearts, that we may truly behold Thee, the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, that we may be transformed from glory to glory according to His image by the Lord the Spirit.

So we just press ourselves to Thee for Thy working this morning. In Thy precious name, Amen. Lately we have been considering together on these songs of the sons of Korah.

As you remember, the sons of Korah were those who were spared from destruction when Korah and his party were swallowed up alive into the earth. And these sons who were spared knew the mercy of the Lord. They had gone through deep experiences, and these may be called the sons of the cross.

And out of their deep experience, they became singers in the house of God. They knew how to sing from the fullness of their heart. And this song 46 is another song of the sons of Korah.

Of course we mentioned before that they may not be the people who wrote these songs. They might, they might not. But at least they were those who sang these songs in the house of God.

Now this song is on Elamoth. The word Elamoth means virgins. So probably this song is to be sung with high notes because it is a song of victory, a song of great rejoicing.

Now in the preceding song 45, verse 14, the queen shall be brought into the king in raiment of embroidery. The virgins behind her, her companions, shall be brought in unto thee. Now in song 45 we find the marriage of the king and the queen.

It typifies the marriage union of Christ and his church. And the virgins here speak of believers as individuals. When we look at believers individually, they are virgins.

But when we look at believers collectively, they are the queen. So following the preceding song, we have this song that is to be sung with virgin voices. In other words, these virgins are to sing the victory of the Lord.

We know the scripture never speaks of the people of this world as virgins. Because so far as spiritual sense is concerned, people in this world are considered before God as adulterers and adulteresses, defiled by this world system. Only those who are redeemed of the Lord, they are virgins.

Because they are washed by the precious blood of the Lamb. And they are as virgins unto God. You remember Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, I am jealous with you with the jealousy of God.

I have espoused you as virgins to one man, which is Christ. And he said I am fearful lest the enemy has enticed you away from the simplicity that is of Christ. So we who are the redeemed of the Lord, who are purchased by the blood, we are virgins in God's sight.

And it is for us to keep our virginity, our chastity before God. We have been espoused to Christ. We are waiting for Him.

We are waiting for that day when there will be that marriage union. But before that day comes, we as virgins must keep our virginity, our chastity to the Lord. But we know it is not an easy job.

The enemy, the world, sin, the flesh, everything try to corrupt us to destroy our chastity towards God. But thank God through it all, we find that God is able to keep us until the day of Christ. So this is the background of this psalm.

Out of every trouble, out of all kinds of temptations, through the tempest, the rolling seas, God is able to keep those who are His until that day. And therefore it is sung as a song of victory. Now this psalm is considered as Luther's psalm.

We know Martin Luther, the great reformer, how Martin Luther and his companions, how they were willing to sacrifice their lives for the work of God in reformation. Now we would think that Luther and his companions certainly knew no fear. They had no time of despair, but certainly they were of lion hearts.

But if we know human beings, Luther and his companions, when they were faced with all these problems and difficulties and trials and persecutions at the time of reformation, sometimes their hearts grew faint. And when their hearts grew faint, Luther would say to his companion MacLanthor, we know MacLanthor was a younger man than Luther, he was the theologian of reformation. And Luther would say to MacLanthor, let us sing Psalm 46.

And together they would sing this psalm. Now Luther has a special translation, of course it is in German, but it has been translated into English. And I will just read two stanzas of it, because it really gives you a kind of feeling there.

Now Luther and MacLanthor would sing this Psalm 46 in this way. A sure stronghold our God is he, a timely shield and weapon. Our help he'll be and set us free from every ill can happen.

And were the world with devils filled, all eager to devour us, our souls to fear shall little yield, they cannot overpower us. I'll repeat it. A sure stronghold our God is he, a timely shield and weapon.

Our help he'll be and set us free from every ill can happen. And were the world with devils filled, all eager to devour us, our souls to fear shall little yield, they cannot overpower us. And as they sung, their spirits were lifted, and they were able to go on with God's work of reformation.

Now this psalm is divided into three parts. And you can readily see it because all these three parts are ended with a sylla. As we mentioned before, a sylla means a pause, a rest.

But it is not a passive thing, it is a very active pause and rest. Why? Because it is to be quiet for a time, to meditate upon what has been sung before, and to gather up everything of the past and strive to strike a higher note as you begin. So it is not a passive pause, it is a very active rest.

The first part is from verse one through verse three. It speaks of the tempest. The second part is from verse four through verse seven, it speaks of the secret.

And the last part from verse eight through verse eleven, it speaks of the calm of victory. When the virgins begin to sing this psalm, they begin with a decoration. It is a decoration of their faith, of their full confidence in God.

Verse one says God is our refuge and strength, a help in distresses very readily found. God is our refuge. Now in order to understand this, we have to go back to that historical background.

You know, before the children of Israel arrived at the promised land, God commanded Moses that after the children of Israel arrived in Canaan, they should set apart cities of refuge. Three cities on the east side of Jordan and three cities on the west side of Jordan, all together six cities of refuge. And these cities of refuge were taken from those cities that were given to the Levites because they had no inheritance among their brethren.

The Lord was their inheritance. But they were given these cities and fields so that they could live in and they could till the ground and make their living. Now out of the cities given to the Levites, six were taken out as cities of refuge.

If you read Numbers chapter thirty-five, you will find that these cities of refuge were set apart for those who might kill people unintentionally. You know, if a person should kill another person with intention, according to the law, eye for an eye, life for life. But sometimes there were accidents.

For instance, a person may be trying to cut a tree. And as he was cutting the tree, maybe the axe will fly off and kill somebody. Now he didn't do that intentionally, with intention.

And because of that, God said, such people could flee to these cities of refuge before the avenger of blood caught up with him. Now when he fled into the city of refuge, then the assembly would judge him between him and the avenger. And if it was proven that it was without intention, then his life was to be saved.

He was to remain in the city of refuge until the high priest died. Then he could go back to his own inheritance. Now if before the high priest died and he left the city of refuge and was met by the avenger of blood, he would be killed.

So that was the ordinance of the Old Testament. Now here, the psalmist said, God is our refuge. You know, in a sense, we are chased by our enemies.

The world, Satan, the God of this world, sins, our flesh, all these are as our enemies. They are trying to devour us. They are trying to defile us as virgins.

Now when we are surrounded by all these evil forces, they try to ensnare us, try to tempt us, try to lead us astray, try to defile us, try to make us impure towards our Lord. What can we do? We do not have the strength to resist these temptations. We do not have the power to fight against the world.

We do not have the power to fight against Satan, the God of this world. How can we keep our chastity before God? There is one way, and that is we must flee to the city of refuge. Our city of refuge is Christ.

We must flee to Christ, because if we flee to Christ, then we are safe, we are secure, we are protected. Now Colossians chapter 3 says, verse 4, our life is hid with Christ in God. So far as God is concerned, so far as the redemptive work of Christ is concerned, we are in Christ.

Our life is hid with Christ in God. We are in Christ. And because we are in Christ, we are protected.

But, so far as our experience is concerned, sometimes we are abiding in Christ, sometimes we do not abide in Christ. You know brothers and sisters, we need to see that truth has two sides. On the one side is the objective truth, that which Christ has accomplished for us on Calvary's cross.

It is done. It never changes. It is eternal.

We are in Christ. By God we are in Christ. Our life is hit with Christ in God, therefore nothing can touch us.

This is our position. But then truth has another side, which is our subjective experience. So far as our subjective experience is concerned, there is always that word if.

We are in Christ positionally, but conditionally we can either abide in Christ or sometimes we may not abide in Him. Now abide simply means make home in Him. Sometimes we make our home in Christ.

Sometimes we wander. And when we wander, then we lose the protection. When we wander away from Christ, then we find temptations will ensnare us.

The world will entice us. And we find even Satan, the enemy, will attack us and hurt us. So it is very essential for us believers, as virgins, to abide in Christ, to stay in the city of refuge.

As long as we stay in the city of refuge, we are preserved. This is the preservation of the saints. We are preserved.

Now in the Old Testament, the high priests will die, because they were human beings. But in the New Testament, our high priest never dies. You know, the Bible says Christ is our high priest.

He ever liveth, making intercession for us, and He is able to save us to the uttermost. Now thank God for that. We have a city of refuge.

And we have a high priest who never dies. Therefore it behoves us that we never leave the city of refuge. We shall stay in the city of refuge forever.

We should abide in Christ and never for a moment leave there. And if we do so, then we find we are saved from the hands of the enemy. And this is the way to keep our virginity, our chastity towards that one man, Christ.

And this is the only way. But here it says God is our refuge and strength. He is not only our refuge, but He is also our strength.

Refuge in a sense is negative. To keep us safe, protect us from evil. But strength is positive.

In other words, He is not only our refuge, but He is also our strength. Not only we can hide in Christ and be protected, but in Him and by Him we have the strength to overcome our enemies. And this is what you find in Romans chapter 8. You find Paul says, in all these things, we more than conquer us.

And if you read Romans chapter 8, what do you find there? You will find, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? According as it is written, for thy sake we are put to death all the day long. We have been reckoned as sheep for slaughter. But in all these things we more than conquer through Him that has loved us.

It is true that in this world we have tribulation, but the Lord said, I have overcome the world. So through Him who has loved us, we are more than conquerors. And then in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, Paul said, verse 14, for thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in the Christ, and makes manifest the order of His knowledge through us in every place.

Always leads us in triumph in the Christ. Philippians chapter 4 says, I can do all things through Him who empowers me. So brothers and sisters, here we find that not only our Lord Jesus is our refuge.

We can hide in Him and be protected, but we find that our Lord Jesus is also our strength. And through Him who empowers us, we can do all things. You know, on the one hand we need to learn the lesson that without Him we can do nothing.

I think it is a lesson we have to learn. Sometimes we think we can do many things, and we try to do them until we are defeated. Until we learn the lesson and come to see that without Him we can do nothing.

But you know brothers and sisters, this is only half of the lesson. Without Him we can do nothing. But if we only learn half lesson, then we will tend to be very passive.

Well we can do nothing, so do nothing. You know, we just sit there and be passive. But there is the other half of the lesson.

I can do all things through Him who empowers me. Because He is my strength. So we need to learn the other side of the lesson.

I can do all things through Him. He is my strength. A help in distress is very readily found.

God has not promised us that we can go through this world without any distress, without any problem. But He does promise to be a help in distress. You know, a sister, A.J. Flink, wrote a beautiful hymn.

I will quote you one verse only. It has three verses, I think. But I will quote you one verse and just show you what he wrote.

He said, God has not promised skies always blue. Flowers strewn pathways all our lives through. God has not promised sun without rain.

Joy without sorrow. Peace without pain. But God has promised strength for the day.

Rest for the labor. Light for the way. Grace for the trials.

Helps from above. Unfailing sympathy. Undying love.

You know, God has not promised us skies always blue. Flowers strewn all the way of your life. Or sun without rain.

Or joy without sorrow. Or peace without pain. He has not promised that.

He has not promised that we have no trouble. No problem. But He does promise strength for the day.

Every day. He promised to give us strength for the day. Not for tomorrow, but for the day.

Rest for the labor. Light for the way. Grace for the trials.

He has not promised there will be no trials. But He said, My grace is sufficient for thee. Helps from above.

A help in distress. Unfailing sympathy. We have a high priest who sympathizes with us.

Undying love. Undying love. So here we find in our Lord Jesus, a help in distresses.

Very readily found. Whenever you need Him, He is there. He is truly our friend.

A friend in need is a friend in need. And He is truly our friend. Now this is a declaration of the virgins.

They declare that they found fine in their lives. This is the truth. They declare that in all their distresses, they find in God their refuge and their strength.

Their help and readily found. Now what a declaration it is. And then following it, they describe the tempest.

What they have gone through. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the heart of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and foam, though the mountains shake with the squall. But there is no need to fear.

Because if we know He is our refuge and strength. So how important it is that in our life experience, that when we go through all these things, we may learn to know Him as our refuge and strength. Or to put it in another way, we will never learn to appreciate Him as our refuge and strength until we have gone through all these distresses.

So thank God for all these distresses. Because through them all, we are able to experience Christ in a way that we will never experience or know if we do not have these things. Then you find the thought begins to change.

From verse 4 to verse 7, it tells us of a secret. Why is it, when the sea is rolling and the waves are rising, Why is it, when the mountains are shaking, you can have such strength and such peace? It says, There is a river. The streams thereof make glad the city of God, the sanctuary of the habitations of the Most High.

God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved. God shall help her at the dawn of the morning.

Now for the contrast. Outside you find the sea foaming and rolling. Now if you are in the sea, and when the sea is foaming and rolling, why is a terrible thing? I don't know if you get seasick, but I have to confess that I got seasick when I think of going on ship.

And this literally happened. Once I was in England, you know, and that morning we were to cross the English Channel to go to Switzerland for a conference. And at breakfast, when I was thinking of crossing the English Channel, I got seasick.

Cold sweat. And I was so ashamed of myself, I didn't dare to tell anybody. After the breakfast, I slipped out, I went to a drug store and bought some seasick pills and had them.

And of course we had to take the train from London to Dover. And after the train, we got on the ship and it was so calm, there was nothing to it. But I got seasick whenever I think of the sea.

But anyway, you find the sea roll and foam, you know, such turbulence around you. And yet, in the city, there is a river. Now there's a contrast.

The river is to contrast with the sea. The sea speaks of turbulence, of foaming, of rolling. But the river speaks of a steady, quiet flow.

There is a river thereof. The streams thereof make glad the city of God. Now of course, this river runs from Genesis to Revelation.

In the book of Genesis, you'll find after God planted the garden of Eden, that out of Eden came a river to water the garden. And this river divided into four branches and they literally cover the earth. This is the river of God.

And then you'll find when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, there was no water. But a river came out of the smitten rock. And that river followed them all the way through the wilderness for 40 years.

Then you remember in the book of Ezekiel, 47, the prophet Ezekiel saw in a vision the holy city, a Jerusalem, a temple. And out from the throne came a river. It flew out from the throne, by the side of the altar, underneath the threshold of the east gate, and the water began to flow out.

And the prophet began to measure the water. A thousand cubits. And the water came to the ankle.

Another thousand cubits, it came to the knee. And another thousand cubits, it became a water to swim in. And this water flowed into the Dead Sea and healed the Dead Sea.

And in the Dead Sea came all kinds of fishes. And along where the water flows, all kinds of trees came up. In other words, it is a river of life.

Then you remember our Lord Jesus said in the gospel according to John, if anyone is thirsty, let him come and drink of me. As the scripture says, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Then you come to the book of Revelation, chapter 22, and you'll find in that new Jerusalem, the holy city, a river of life flows, comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

And it flows through all the city. All over the city. And wherever the river of water flows, you'll find a tree of life in the middle of the water as well as on the two sides of the river.

Now this speaks of the spirit of life. The spirit of life. Dear brothers and sisters, you'll find that metaphor changes.

In the first stanza, you'll find that God is our refuge. In other words, we are in Christ. We are in Christ.

And we learn to abide in Christ in order to keep our chastity towards Christ. But in the second stanza, you'll find the metaphor changes. It is not only we are in Christ, it is Christ in us.

The river is in the city. Now of course that speaks collectively now. But whether it is collective or individually, it is the same.

So here you'll find the virgins all like the city of God. But here you'll find a river in the city. There is a river may glad the city of God.

The stream may glad the city of God. It is in the city. So it is not only we in Christ, but it is also Christ in us.

It is not only we abide in Christ, but He abides in us. If we abide in Him and He abides in us, then we bear much fruit. Now thank God the Spirit of God is in us.

And the Spirit of God is that river of life. It is always flowing. There is no end to its flow.

It is never exhausted. And how satisfying its water is. So dear brothers and sisters, we find a secret.

And the secret is the Spirit of life is in us. Individually and collectively. And because the Spirit of life is in us, Christ abides in us.

Christ abides in us by His Spirit. And as He abides in us, you find there is an inexhaustible supply of life. Life swallows up all death.

Life overcomes everything. Because it is resurrection life. God is in the midst of her.

She shall not be moved. If God is for us, who can be against us? If She is in us, He is in us, and He is in us, then life overcomes everything. So that's why it said God shall help her at the dawn of the morning.

It is true He allows the evening, even the dark night to come. It is true that sometimes we have to go through life experience as death. But out of death comes resurrection.

The night is far gone and the dawn is coming. In other words, the dawn speaks of resurrection. At the dawn of the morning, out of death, you will experience the resurrection life of the Lord.

And that is the secret of overcoming everything. Then in the last stanza, the calm. Calm behold the works of Jehovah.

What desolation He has made in the earth, He has made wars to cease until the end of the earth. He breaketh the bow, bow, and cutteth the spear in thunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire.

Be still and know that I am God. When we are in the tempest, we learn the secret of the abiding spirit of life in us. And when we learn that secret, we enter into stillness.

We be still and know that He is God. You know, whenever a temptation comes, whenever a distress comes, whenever a problem comes, we tend to go out and try to fight against all these things. Because we know these things are tempting us to lead us away from Christ.

And in order to keep our virginity, our chastity towards God, we do not want to lose it. So we fight against it. And as we go out to meet all the distresses and the temptations and all these problems, you find we are strained and stressed and there is unrest within us.

And even if we fight with all our strength, oftentimes we find we are no match. We fail. In other words, when the tempest is raging outside, we are raging within too.

Not until we learn the secret, not until we learn to hide in Christ, not until we draw upon the river of life within us, and when we realize it, then what will be our attitude? We will be still. In other words, instead of striving and struggling, we will rest in faith. We will be still and watch God.

Be still and know that I am God. God is God. And He is well able to cope, not only to cope, but to overcome all these situations.

He will bring glory out of these problems if only we be still. Instead of doing it ourselves, if only we be still and watch Him do it. That's all we need to do.

And then there will be calmness. So in Isaiah chapter 30, verse 15, we are told, Isaiah chapter 30, verse 15, For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved. In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

By returning and rest, shall ye be saved in quietness and confidence. This quietness is a confidence. We have perfect confidence in God.

He is our refuge. He is our strength. We have confidence in Him.

And because we have confidence in Him, we shall overcome. So this is the secret. Jehovah of hosts is with us.

The God of Jacob is our fortress. We are told that when John Wesley died, was dying, it was a Tuesday, and he was dying, he didn't even have the strength to speak. And we are told that he tried to speak, but he couldn't.

But finally, he seemed as if he gathered up all his strength, and he said, the best of all is God is with us. Then after a while he raised his hand and shouted aloud, the best of all is God is with us. This may sum up his life.

The life of Wesley can be summed up just with this. The best of all is God is with us. Dear brothers and sisters, do remember this.

God is with us. We are in Him. He is in us.

Nothing can separate us. Nothing. Nothing can separate us from the love of God because it is in Christ.

Nothing in us, it is in Christ. And if God is with us, who can be against us? He is well able to keep us until that day. But the thing is, do we commit ourselves to His keeping? Do we flee to the city of refuge? Do we draw upon His inexhaustible resources of resurrection life? If we do, then we will find He will keep us blameless and pure until the day of Christ.

You know, this is what Paul often says in Epistles. That we may be kept pure and without blamish until the day of Christ. That means at the time when we shall appear before Him at the judgment seat.

We are not able to keep ourselves but He is able to. If we commit ourselves to His keeping and if we commit ourselves to His keeping, you will find He is fully committed to us to keep us. So may the Lord help us as we walk through this life.

Shall we pray? Instead of trying to strive and struggle to overcome by ourselves, which we cannot do, Lord, we ask that Thou would teach us the lesson of abiding in Thee, of hiding in Thee, of drawing upon Thee as our resources, of being still and know that Thou art God. Oh, how we praise and thank Thee that if we are committed to Thee for keeping, Thou are faithful, Thou are able to keep us to that day. So may, may we learn this lesson and may Thy name be glorified.

We want to be kept pure for Thyself. In the name of our Lord Jesus, Amen.

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