

Surviving the Storms of Life

Full of Sound and Fury

Psalms 46:1-46:11

We have been talking over the last two weeks about surviving and even thriving amidst the storms of life. Last week we looked at the April showers of the storm world. Those storms that make life difficult, that increase the stress of living but don't really threaten life. We talked about not blowing everyday storms out of proportion.

Every day is not really a crisis. We talked about not giving in to fear and not giving up. This week I want to look at a storm of a little bit higher intensity. These are the severe storms of summer. The ones with dangerous lighting and damaging hail. These storms have several identifying features:

These storms are usually of greater intensity but shorter duration than the Spring Showers. With these storms there is a threat of damage in our lives. As long as they are handled properly life is not usually on the line but these storms can blow off the loose shingles and flood the basement.

There is real fear involved with these storms because of their intensity. This is not blowing things out of proportion these storms carry a real if limited threat to our safety and well being.

In these storms there is usually more sound and fury than real danger. In other words their bark is worse than their bite. Lighting strikes and thunder rolls, we jump and startle but remain safe through it all.

Let's look at a Biblical model for surviving and thriving in the midst of these storms. As we look at Psalm 46 we find the nation of Israel in the midst of storm. The nation of Israel was being invaded by the King of Assyria. It was a storm to reckon with yet in reality the God of Israel stands with them. Let's read **Psalm 46:1-11**:

1 God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. 2 So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. 3 Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! 4 A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High. 5 God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it. 6 The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumble! God's voice thunders, and the earth melts! 7 The Lord of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. 8 Come, see the glorious works of the Lord: See how he brings destruction upon the world. 9 He causes wars to end throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear; he burns the shields with fire. 10 "Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world." 11 The Lord of Heaven's Armies*

is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.

In this passage we find the heart of dealing with these intensifying storms of life.

1) Find a place of refuge (v.1-4)

If you remember last week when we talked about spring showers there was no retreat to a shelter or refuge - the strategy for getting through the spring shower is to keep rowing till you get there; weather the storm and keep at the oars. Here the strategy changes - when these larger storms approach you need to find shelter till the storm blows over.

I am not talking about a hunker down, bunker mentality that quits life and living when the storm comes. **Find a safe vantage point, a place to gain perspective, a place where you can ride out the storm.** The psalmist draws a picture of the majestic mountains standing steadfast and immovable. (Alaska: Hills vs. Mountains) Of all earth's landmarks the mountains seem the most unchangeable. The sands of the seashore change with the tides. The seasons bring life, death, and rebirth. Empires, nations, and political manifesto's come and go, but the mountains seem never to change.

Planted there firmly rooted in the foundations of the earth they boast of permanence and security as the world changes around them. Yet the psalmist says even if they shake and fall into the midst of the sea there is still a refuge which cannot be shaken. Our God is that refuge. This is what I want you to think about -**all the things that we trust in and put our faith in to help us through the storm are vulnerable and impermanent. They change with storm and tide. But God never changes.** When the storm comes there is but one refuge that has the permanence to keep us through- and that is God. **Malachi 3:6** tells us:

6 "I am the Lord, and I do not change."

There is a story of a man by the name of Horatia Spafford. Horatio had a successful legal practice in Chicago. He was a Christian as was described as a noted gospel musician, a man of unusual intelligence and refinement, deeply spiritual, and a devoted student of the Scriptures. Some months before the Chicago fire in 1871, Spafford had invested heavily in real estate on the shore of Lake Michigan, and his holdings were wiped out by this disaster.

Just before this he had experienced the death of his son. Desiring a rest for his wife and four daughters, as well as wishing to join and assist D.L. Moody and other evangelical leaders, Spafford planned a European trip for his family in 1873. In November of that year, due to unexpected last minute business developments, he had to remain in Chicago, but he sent his wife and four daughters on ahead as scheduled on the S.S Ville Du Havre. He expected to follow in a couple of days.

On November 22 the ship was struck by the Lockhearn, an English vessel, and sank in twelve minutes. Several days later the survivors were finally landed in Wales and Mrs.

Spafford cabled her husband, "Saved alone." On his way to meet his bereaved wife, Spafford penned the words to the song "It is well with my soul." Even in the midst of such great tragedies and sorrows Spafford was able to find peace in God. Listen to the words of this song:

1. When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll. Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, "it is well, it is well with my soul.
2. Tho Satan should buffet, tho trials should come, Let this blest assurance control, That Christ has regarded my helpless state, And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
3. My sin – O the bliss of this glorious tho't, My sin, not in part, but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord O My soul.
4. And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled back as a scroll, The trumpet shall resound and the Lord shall descend, "Even so" it is well with my soul.

Horatio was able to find peace in the midst of turmoil. His security was found in the unchangeable character of God. Sometimes, when we face the same kind of storms, and it feels like there is nothing we can do, all we can do is find our refuge in the presence of God. (Devotions, study, radio). Another way we can make it through these intensifying storms is to:

2) Find the source of strength to bring you through (v.4-9)

The psalmist says that in the storm there is a river whose streams bring joy to the city of God. Flowing water has always been a symbol of the purity, and the life sustaining power of God. Water in the desert regions is life itself. **There is a river, a spiritual force flowing in the life of a believer, that pours into the soul a peace that is beyond comprehension.** The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit alive in us, works in us and brings peace. **Philippians 4:6** tells us:

6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

There is a river that flows into the life of a believer that provides strength when our strength is gone. In **Philippians 4:11-12** Paul tells us:

11 Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. 12 I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned

the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.

Paul found a source, a river flowing, that was constant and deep. It's flow bringing life, and joy and strength. What I am trying to tell you this morning is that there is a source of strength and peace in the storm that is available whether we know it or not - whether we use it or not. There is the power to be truly happy - and it doesn't come from what you have, it comes from who God is.

There once was a King who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The King looked at all the pictures, but there were only two he really liked and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror, for peaceful towering mountains were all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky from which rain fell and in which lightening played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all. But when the King looked, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest... perfect peace.

Which picture do you think won the prize?

The King chose the second picture. "Because," explained the King, "peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace."

Christians should be some of the most peace-filled people on the face of the planet. Not because we live lives that are easy, sometimes it is tougher for us to live in this world. It is only because we have a place to rest in the midst of the storm. But how many of us know it is hard to rest – when you have a ton of things to do, and people expecting things from you, it is hard to rest. But God waits for us to come to him for peace. Another way that we can deal with these intensifying storms is to:

3) Seek the counsel of the one who brings victory (v.10-11)

Cease striving and "Be Still" and know that I am God. There is a feeling of helplessness when storms strike. One of the things that scares us the most is that we have no control. We cannot stop the wind from blowing, the rain from falling, or the lightning from striking. We are at the mercy of the storm's power.

The psalmist though reminds us that there is one who has power to control the storm. The Lord of Hosts is with us. **There is a power and peace that flows from knowing the one who commands the winds and the waves.** Who is at the mercy of nothing, who is overcome by nothing - but who controls the world with but a word.

We find refuge amidst the storms of life in the palm of the hand of our creator God. The one who has all the world in the palm of His hand. **You might not know how to get through your storm but God knows.** Cease striving, "Be Still" and know that I am God. Seek His counsel - seek His direction.

Israel was stuck between a rock and a hard place. Stuck between the Red Sea and the armies of Pharaoh. Yet God spoke through his servant Moses saying to the people "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." God can do what no one else can do - He will make a way where there seems to be no way.

So when you are going through a storm in your life that is scary, with insecurities and uncertainties turn your eyes to God, find your refuge in him and allow him to bring perspective into your circumstances – but don't just stay there the whole time, get out and live as he shows you and leads you.

When you are going through the storm of life understand that you have the Spirit of God living in you and who wants to help you and lead you. Allow him to make you strong and confident in the Lord.

And when the storms of life come turn to God and let him be God in your life (not many people do that). Only When we surrender ourselves to God can he become our peace, our comfort and our strength. Let's pray!