Facing Personal Weakness

In today's world of health clubs, racquetball courts and aerobic exercising, it might seem strange to talk about personal weakness. But we have all known it at one time or another. Confronted with a series of overwhelming odds, we have felt weak, unable to stand against the onslaught of opposition.

My children love to sing, *"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong. They are weak, but He is strong."* We need to be reminded of that often.

Psalm 46 is a song about personal weakness. The background to that Psalm is found in 2 Kings 18:13-19:37. It was the invasion of Israel by Sennacherib during the reign of King Hezekiah. As the sons of Korah wrote this Psalm, they must have reflected on their personal weakness in the midst of this invading force.

Psalm 46 describes three overwhelming situations that the nation was facing at that time. After each one is written the Hebrew word, *selah,* which means to pause and think it over.

The outline is as follows:

Situation #1: Nature...in upheaval - v.1-3

Reaction: I will not fear! *Selah!*

Situation #2: Jerusalem...under attack - v.4-7

Reaction: I will not be moved! *Selah!*

Situation #3: Battlefield...after war - v.8-11

Reaction: I will not strive! *Selah!*

It is as though the psalmist is saying, *"Take some time and meditate on what I am saying! God is significant enough to be your strength in the midst of personal weakness."*

I. Analysis of the Psalm

Let's take some time to read this great Psalm.

[1]God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. [2] Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, [3] though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah [4] There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High

dwells. [5] God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. [6] Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. [7] The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah. [8] Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. [9] He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. [10] "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." [11] The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah (NIV)

In verse 1, God is pictured in three ways. What are they? What is the significance of each?

According to verse one, how near is God when we are in trouble?

You could say, *"God is an immediate source of help when we are in a tight squeeze."* That is the intent of verse one.

What is pictured as happening in verse 2-3?

How does the psalmist respond?

Read verses 4-7. What was it that gave Jerusalem her safety?

The word "moved" in verse 5 means to be shaken or rocked, to be completely turned around. Why should we remain unshaken?

Read verses 8-11. What are we commanded to do? What does that mean to you?

Read again those eight words, *"Cease striving and know that I am God."* Commit them to memory. Put them on a three by five card and place it strategically in your office, in your car, or on the bathroom mirror - someplace where you will see it every day. Continue to remind yourself that He is God and that He will be strong when you are weak.

II. Claiming the "Victory Verses"

Read the following "*victory verses*." Record any specific insights you have, asking the Lord to replace your fear with His calm, victorious presence in your life.

Genesis 15:1 *After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." (NIV)*

Joshua 1:9 *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." (NIV)*

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (NIV)*

Isaiah 40:31 *But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (NIV)*

Matthew 11:28-30 *28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (NIV)*

Hebrews 13:5-6 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (NIV)*

2 Timothy 1:7 *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (NIV)*

1 Corinthians 15:57-58 *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (NIV)*

Ephesians 6:10-18 *[10] Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. [11] Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. [12] For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. [13] Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. [14] Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, [15] and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. [16] In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. [17] Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. [18] And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (NIV)*

1 Peter 5:6-8 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (NIV)*

Suggested Reading

Pray With Your Eyes Open, Richard Pratt (P&R Publishing Company)
The Spirit of the Disciplines, Dallas Willard (Harper and Row)