

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Sovereign Grace Baptist Church

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SBSS

526

A sure stronghold our God is He,
A trusty shield and weapon;
Our help He'll be and set us free
From ev'ry ill can happen.
That old malicious foe
Means us deadly woe;
Arm'd with might from hell
And deepest craft as well,
On earth is not his fellow.

Through our own force we nothing can,
Straight were we lost for ever;
But for us fights the proper Man,
By God sent to deliver.
Ask ye who this may be?
Jesus Christ is He,
Of Sabaoth Lord,
Sole God to be adored—
'Tis He must win the battle.

And were the world with devils fill'd,
All eager to devour us,
Our souls to fear should little yield,
They cannot overpower us.
Their dreaded Prince no more
Harms us as of yore;
Look grim as he may,
Doom'd is his ancient sway,
A word can overthrow him.

Still shall they leave that Word His might,
And yet no thanks shall merit;
Still is He with us in the fight
By His good gifts and Spirit.
E'en should they take our life,
Wealth, name, child, or wife—
Though all these be gone,

Yet nothing have they won,
God's kingdom ours abideth!

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

The Majesty of God's Protection

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

Psalm 46:1-2

Psalm 46 has been a source of comfort to thousands of the Lord's people through the years. It was certainly made famous during the Reformation. This was Martin Luther's favorite Psalm. His famous hymn that was written on the way to the Diet at Worms, begins, “A sure stronghold our God is He, A trusty shield and weapon; Our help He'll be and set us free From ev'ry ill can happen,” this was based on this Psalm. Luther went through some very trying times and in the darkest of those times he would say, “Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm, and let them do their worst.” He said, “We sing this Psalm to the praise of God, because God is with us, and powerfully and miraculously preserves and defends His church and His Word, against all fanatical spirits, against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and sin.”

Everything our God does is majestic, even the protection of His people. There are three things for us to consider in this majestic protection: How it is provided. How it is presented. How it is pictured.

First, consider how this protection is provided! The Hebrew uses “God” in the emphatic. God personally provides the protection. Not only is God almighty but He exercises this power in our behalf when He created and redeemed us. “Elohim” is plural and is always used with singular verbs. The name at root means “to swear, and represents the Trinity as engaged in an eternal covenant, which was ratified betwixt them by the solemnity of an oath....” This, I think, is the real import of the name—the Trinity in covenant for man's redemption.... He is God the Creator, that He may be also God the Redeemer” [J. H. Thornwell]. We know He saves His people from their sins and protects them.

Second, consider how this protection is presented. There are three elements. “God is our refuge.” The word “refuge” has the sense of providing protective shelter from a storm or danger. Our God is our incomparable, unfailing and perfect refuge for He made us and redeems us and protects those He redeemed in order to present them faultless. None can be plucked out of His preserving and protecting hand being kept by His power! As our refuge our God's providence is with us the storms that life foments. “God is our ... strength.” God is our source of a majestic kind of strength insuring our preservation. He

is the guarantee of stability. “Honour and majesty are before Him: strength and beauty are in His sanctuary” (Ps. 96:6). “If God be for us, who can be against us.” “God is ... a very present help in trouble.” Literally, “God is found exceedingly a Help in trouble” or “God is a help most readily to be found in troubles” [T. Scott]. The word “present” in the original text means a proved help in time of trouble, which ensures that it is a help provided whenever and wherever it is needed. This great God promises to be an exceedingly present form of help “in trouble.” If you have some form of trouble child of God, He is there as one who sticks closer than a brother and He never leaves nor forsakes. “He is more present than friend or relative can be, yea, more nearly present than even the trouble itself” [Spurgeon]. Here we learn that when evil and viciousness pursue, God is your refuge; when you sense your weakness, God is your strength; and when you are fearful, God is your imminent help in trouble.

Third, consider how this protection is pictured. This protection is productive of encouragement: “Therefore will not we fear.” Yes, the redeemed should be unfearing. To what extent? “Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” To earthly people the two most stable things are the earth and the mountains on it “If our faith were as strong as our security is good, we need fear no combinations of enemies, no revolution in kingdoms, and no convulsions in nature; but, in the most tremendous dangers, might triumph in the fullest assurance of security and victory” [Scott]. Thus, when things on earth seem out of control God is still our protection, He changes not.

“I thought as I read my text what an awful case the ungodly must be in; for the very things which men most dread, namely, the falling of mountains and the gaping open of the earth, will become the desire of terrified sinners at the last. How great must that horror which will altogether eclipse the horror which sends myriads flying in panic from their homes! When sinners shall see the face of Christ in his glory, they will entreat the mountains to fall upon them, and the rocks to cover them, to hide them from the dreadful vision” [Spurgeon].

John Knox, the celebrated Scottish reformer, had many surprising escapes from the malicious designs of his enemies. He was accustomed to sitting at the head of the table in his own house, with his back to the window; on one particular evening, however, he would neither himself sit in his chair, nor allow anyone else to do so. That very night a bullet was shot in at the window purposely to kill him; it grazed the chair in which he usually sat, and made a hole in the foot of the candlestick. God protects as His perfect providence purposes.

