

Place: Lurgan Baptist 9:4:2006

OUR MIGHTY FORTRESS

Reading: Psalm 46:1-11

3. OUR MIGHTY GOD OF SOVEREIGNTY

The story is told of 2 boys who were sitting in their sandbox talking about God. One of the boys asked, “*How many Gods are there ?*” His friend replied, “*There is One !*” The boy, appearing not to be satisfied with that answer, asked, “*How do you know there is only one God ?*” His friend quickly replied, “*Because there is only room for one, for He fills heaven and earth !*” You see, from the very opening course of scripture, God has made it extremely clear that He is to be, not only God, but, He is to be the only God ! Thus, while we may, or may not, acknowledge his unequalled, unmatched, and unparalleled position of authority, He is still the Supreme One, the Superb One, the Superior One, and, He is “*Our Mighty God Of Sovereignty,*” Have you ever considered the vastness of this universe ? If you could bore a hole in the sun and somehow put in 1.2 million earths, you would still have room for 4.3 million moons. The sun is 865,000 miles in diameter and 93 million miles away from earth. Its light, which travels about six trillion miles a year, reaches us in 8 minutes. But, light from the next nearest star, Alpha Centuri, which is five times larger than the sun takes 40

years to reach us, in spite of its phantom speed. Have you considered the function of this body ? Think of our physical bodies, and, in particular, the small muscle, about the size of our fist, which lies behind our fence of ribs, a little left of centre. *It is called the heart.* It is our body pump, and it is a medical marvel in itself. This little muscle pumps 5,000 gallons of blood every 24 hours. It is possible, doctors report, for the heart to pump 50 tons of blood, between one sunrise to the next. If we live to the age of seventy, this muscle, which weighs a little more than a pound, will have pumped 150 million gallons of blood. However, the wonder of it, is that, it is so constructed that it can rest without ever stopping, due to the law of rhythm by which it operates. Thus, in a lifetime of 70 years, our heart will spend nearly 40 years resting.

Now who is it that would be able to monitor the vastness of our world, the operation of our universe, and, the function of our physical bodies ? Who could control everything that is, and, yet, still have time to be mindful of us ? There can be only one, and He is our Sovereign God ! And is this wonderful attribute of God, not brought out in the closing verses of this Psalm ? Now don't forget the setting, the scene, and the situation behind these verses. The Assyrian army had surrounded, and besieged the city of Jerusalem, and were planning on taking the city. However, encouraged by the wise counsel of Isaiah, Hezekiah refused to open the gate of the city, and submit to the Assyrian forces. As a result, God intervened, and sent down one angel, who in one night killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. (2 Kings

19:35) To commemorate this victory this immortal psalm, was penned, and here the psalmist directs our mind to “ ***Our Mighty Fortress.***” He has spoken of “ *Our Mighty God of Security,*” “ *Our Mighty God of Stability,*” and now in these closing verses he speaks of “ *Our Mighty God of Sovereignty.*” As we look from (46:6-11) I want to give you three things this that I trust will encourage you as you face your adversity.

(1) A CONSIDERATION THAT IS USEFUL

God is for us ! Look if you will at (46:6,8, 9,) Now there is a past, present and prophetic application to all of that. You see, God is for us, in relation,

(a) TO PAST EVENTS:

The God of today, is the God of yesterday. If we want to know what we to expect from Him, we need only to review His record. *Does it help us when we put our minds to the task of remembering God's works ?* You see, the same God who sustained you in the past, who brought you victoriously through every previous crisis, is the God who stands with you, here and now, in the midst of this fresh testing of your faith. That's why God's deliverance of Judah was precious to God's people, it created a milestone for them. The dramatic mass destruction of the enemy became a kind of “ *memory monument,*” so tall it would never be forgotten. Parents would tell their children, children would tell their grandchildren, and of course the event was memorialised in God's Word to astound and inspire

countless generations to come. The people of God could always look back and say, “ *Remember how the angel of the Lord slew the Assyrians ? Surely He is among us, and surely He will protect us.*” My ... Hezekiah, gets up one morning, and looks down from the battlements of Jerusalem, and sees that, “ *they were all dead corpses.*” (2 Kings 19:35) I heard about a Chinese village that was set on fire many years ago. An old Christian woman went on the roof of her little home and cried out so that all could hear, “ *Jesus, please save my house.*” As everyone heard her, they began to laugh and ridicule her. They cried, “ *You, old fool, get off that roof. Jesus can't save your home.*” The night went on, and the fire raged, but when the morning came, amid the charred ruins and desolation there was only one home standing. It was the old woman's.

My as you look back through over your life can you not see the sovereign hand of God ? Protecting, preserving, providing ? Does it not encourage you to realise that the God who helped you then will help you now ? That the God who sustained you in the past will sustain you in the present ? (a)

(b) TO PROPHETIC EVENTS:

For (46:9) the Psalmist shifts his focus from the past to the future, when he says, “ *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.*” He is looking forward to that day, when the Lord Jesus comes to destroy the armies of the world, known as the Battle of Armageddon. At that day, Isaiah says “ *He shall beat their swords into plow*

*shares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (2:4 34:2) My this is the battle that will take place in the valley of Megiddo, at the end of the Great Tribulation period, before Christ’s second coming to set up His kingdom. Bless, God for us as believers there will be no Armageddon. For one, we will not be here while its taking place, and, two, when it’s over, we will come back, with Christ as our escort, and reign a 1000 years with Him ! (Col 3:5) **Will there ever be peace on this earth ?** Yes ! For a thousand years our Lord will reign on this earth which once rejected Him. Only a few hundred years from where He wore a crown of thorns He will wear a crown of glory. (a) (b)*

(c) TO PRESENT EVENTS:

Now keep in mind the background. Here were a place, a people, and a king who were under enemy attack. They were completely surrounded on the outside, and no escape on the inside. Their beloved city was besieged, and there was nothing else they could do. But then God stepped into the situation. My need I remind you to day that you and I are engaged in a battle not with Sennacherib and his hosts but with Satan and his hosts who are out to destroy our lives, our homes, our testimonies, but bless God “ *greater is He that is in you than He is that is the world.*” (1 Jn 4:4) My do you feel that you have a need to great for God to meet ? A loved one to hard for God to save ? A problem to complex for God to solve ? Have you forgot that God is for you and “ *If God be for us who can be against us ?*”

(Rom 8:31) I heard the story of 2 young boys on a hilltop, one of whom was up a tree stealing apples. The other boy, his friend, was standing guard, watching to make sure that no one was observing their activity, and what was going on. They went on, for several minutes, continuing to retrieve as many apples as they could. However, the tragedy was that, *they were completely unaware of the fact that several miles away was a man in a window, who had seen their every move, through a high powered telescope !*

When I heard that, I thought, there’s someone far, far greater, and far, far more powerful than a telescope who is watching what is going on. *The Lord is at the control panel, He is pushing the right buttons, and, thank God, He is still on the throne and He can do whatever He sees fit to do.* (1)

(2) A CONTEMPLATION THAT IS NEEDFUL

God is in us ! That’s why we need to “ *be still and know that He is God.*” Now look at,

(a) THE COMMAND HERE:

“ *Be still,*” (46:10) This is not a suggestion, or an opinion or mere advice. No, this phrase is in the imperative tense, which denotes an order, an assignment, a command. If we took these words from their present context, you would identify them as an exasperated parent shouting to his child, “ *Stop that ! Be still.*” And don’t you think that the Lord sees us as

wayward children sometimes ? Can't you imagine Him leaning over the banister of heaven and calling down, "*Be still.*" He is calling some important message to us but we can't hear Him. We're too busy squabbling, and playing games, and doing everything but listening ! So He cries for us to slow down, silence our voices and listen. Is this the reason why you don't know the Lord intimately ? You see, we cannot know God, with countless calls pulling us in various directions. We must learn to say an emphatic "*No,*" to some of the demands made upon us.

Do you know what one of Satan's traps is ? To get you so involved in activity that you've no time to be still in the presence of God ! My we must simplify. Downsize. Find time for devotions. Find time for devotional literature and prayer. Do you know something ? *When our calendars are under the Spirit's control, He always reserves time to be with Christ !* Are you "*taking time to be holy,*" ? To get to know your Lord as a person with whom you delight to spend time. "*Be still,*" (a)

(b) THE CONSEQUENCE HERE:

"*Be still and know that I am God,*" (46:10) Do you know what the Bible says ? "*the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits.*" (Dan 11:32) "*Hezekiah if you'll be still, take your hands off the situation, then you will know that I am God.*" My there will come a time, when your grandmothers God, your wife's God, your Sunday

School teacher's God will be of no use to you. For you will need your God to come personally on the scene, and come to your aid. The psalmist is speaking of knowing God personally, and intimately ! Do you know the Lord like that ? ***Do you have heart after God ?*** Sure you're saved, you've experienced the new birth, but has it stopped there ? ***Do you have a hunger for God ?*** Can you say with the psalmist, "*As the hart panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.*"

(42:1) Have a deep hunger for the things of God ? Do you have a heart after God ? Do you have a hunger for God ? If not, then there's a pretty good indication, that you don't know God ! *You see, its not that many professing Christians aren't hungry, its just that they're hungry for the wrong things.* They are more concerned about more power, more prestige, more popularity, more praise than they are about knowing God ! I think of Mary Slessor, a little red-haired girl who was born in Dundee in 1848. The daughter of an Aberdeen shoemaker, who beat his wife and six children, and left barely enough from his drinking habit to keep them alive. Mary was working in jute mills at the age of eleven. She was saved at an early age and remained faithful to the Lord, despite her horrible home life. In her early 20's Mary sensed that God was burdening her heart for the mission field, especially Africa.

She wanted to go speak of her Saviour, but she continued to help support her family, and when her father died, Mary had to continue working. Finally, as she came home from the factory one day, in 1874, she

was told the news that David Livingstone had died. Mary, now 26 years of age, decided that her time of breadwinning was over, and she left for Africa. When she arrived there, she immediately faced criticism, and ridicule, because she was a female missionary. Once, an African chief after listening to all her ideas and dreams said, “ *You’re going to do all this ? Why, you are only a woman ?* ” That little Scottish girl, looked back at the chief and said, “ *Yes, but you have forgotten the woman’s God.* ” Mary Slessor knew God ! Do you truly know Him ? Was this not Paul’s life’s goal ? “ *that I might know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death.* ” (Phil 3:10) My is this your desire ? To know God ? To know God, His attributes, His activity, His authority ? To know God, His power, His presence, His person ? To know God, His beauty, His blessing, His being ? (1) (2)

(3) A CONSOLATION THAT IS HELPFUL

God is with us ! There is,

(a) A PERSONAL PRESENCE WITH US:

“ *The Lord of Hosts is with us.* ” That is such good news the psalmist writes it twice ! *Who is the Lord of hosts ?* In the Hebrew it is the Lord of Sabaoth, the Lord of the angels, the Lord of the hosts of heaven. Now why is this worthy of note ? Well, think about the story again ! The angel of the Lord one angel of the Lord was despatched from heaven to defend the city of Jerusalem.

That angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrians who were bent on the destruction of God’s people. The people of Judah needed only one angel, but the Scriptures promise us, we’re not limited to one angel. We have the Lord of them all with us. The word for “ *with us,* ” is Immanu from which comes the great Messianic title Immanuel, God with us. Think of it this ! The Lord of hosts is with us. The mighty Jehovah of all the serried ranks of the angels is our strength. One angel in one night could smite all Sennacherib’s host ! All the angels of God are mustered around His throne, to do His bidding, they are sent to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. But the good news is better than that. It does not say that these hosts are with us. My its says that the Lord of hosts is with us. I mean, what more could we ask than that ? Can we really believe that with ten thousand times ten thousand angels to occupy His mind, He could be with us. ***To think that He is with us with me at the kitchen sink with me driving through rush hour traffic to face an impossible boss with me in my desperate domestic need right now with me in this financial crisis with me in my illness with me in my loneliness and weakness with me despite my failings and faults with me ! “ The Lord of hosts is with us.* ”** Have you grasp that ? Are you living in the good of it ? (a)

(b) A PROTECTIVE PRESENCE FOR US:

“ *the God of Jacob is our refuge,* ” (46:11) I wonder why the psalmist did not refer to him, as the God of Abraham ? Why did he not say that the God of Abraham

is our refuge ? After all, Abraham was a great man of faith. We would expect the Lord to help him, but Jacob. He was a “ *trickster, a schemer, a conniver, and a sinner.*” My it encourages me to think of my God as the God of Jacob, for do we not often act more like Jacob than like Abraham ? But even when we fail God and try to do things on our own, the Lord promises to be with us and protect us. In 1947, missionaries Dick and Margaret Hillis settled with their four children by the Mule River, in the Honan province of China. Nearby, a mission church swelled with nearly a thousand Chinese every Sunday. It would have been a happy time but for the impending war between Chiang-kai Shek and the forces of Maq Tse-tung. One terrible night the Hillis family, found themselves caught in the crossfire. The bombing reached a crescendo as each shell dropped closer to the Hillis home. The house next door exploded, killing all the inhabitants, and it appeared the Hillis home would be next.

The family huddled in the corner as another shell exploded, sending dirt, glass and bricks through windows and walls. The house quaked, the children screamed, momentarily deafened. The family prepared for death. But the shelling abruptly stopped, and the Hillis family cautiously emerged from their corner. The room was filled with debris, but no one was hurt. By and by, as Dick tucked each child into bed, he knelt beside Margaret Ann and noticed a dirty scrap of paper stuffed under her pillow. On it was printed in big, childlike letters these words, “ *God is our refuge and strength, a very present in trouble.*” (b) Do you recall

that I said that this was Martin Luther’s psalm ? By the time of his death on 18th February 1546, Luther was already recognised as a major reformer and one of the leading figures in the history of the church. As he lay on his deathbed in Eisleben, Germany his last words were these, “ *Our God is the God from whom comes salvation, God is the Lord by whom we escape death.*” Firm until the end, Luther remained strong in his faith in the Lord. God was His mighty fortress, a bulwark never failing, both in life and death. My will it not be the same with us ? For God will guide us in life and guard us in death. *The fact is that God is sufficient !* Our God is in control. He holds the destinies of the galaxies in His hands, all the while knowing the precise number of hairs on your head. He has preserved His people time and again, performed miracles in battlefields and in cattle fields, among prophets, priests and plumbers.

My above all else He loves and He chose to measure that love out not in words but in blood. Would such a love allow you to be tested without a purpose ? Would such a love neglect to have a wonderfully happy ending for you ? My run to Him for He is “ **Your Mighty Fortress.**”