

March 29th, 2020

God Is Our Sovereign in Troubled Times

Psalm 46:8-11

The Psalm for the darkest of times

Psalm 46 was Martin Luther's favorite Psalm. He wrote "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"—which was based off Psalm 46—when he was on his way to face Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in 1521. Many thought he would be captured and executed. Even Luther himself was afraid. Later he would tell his friends whenever they faced dark times:

"Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm, and let them do their worst. 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 the gates of hell, against the implacable hatred of devil, and against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and sin."¹

Why is Psalm 46 especially for the darkest of times? Because Psalm 46 emphasizes three particular aspects of God's relationship to us when we find ourselves in danger. In **v.1-3** we saw how the Psalmist emphasizes *God's protecting us*—"God is our refuge." In **v.4-7** we saw how the Psalmist emphasizes *God's presence with us*—"God is in the *midst* of her." This morning we in **v.8-11** the Psalmist is emphasizing *God's providence over us*—"Be still, and know that I am God."

¹ W.S. Plumer, *Geneva Series of Commentaries: Psalms*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2016), pg. 522-523

God's providence over us

We are not to understand God's providence merely in general terms. As if God governs all people equally. It's true *in one sense* that God rules over all equally. **Psalm 103:19** says "The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over *all*." In this sense, no one is outside of God's care. But it's not true that God rules over all in the *same manner*.² **1 Timothy 4:10** says "...we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior [*the preserver*] of all people, *especially* of those who believe."³ The WCF 5.7 says it like this "As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures; so, after *a most special manner*, it taketh care of his church, and disposeth all things to [her] good thereof."⁴

God has appointed this present trouble for *all men*. But for His church and only for His church, will it be for our good.⁵ In future ages, we will look back at 2020 and we will see how God providentially strengthened, increased,

² God doesn't work all things together for good for those who don't love God but "...for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28) The gates of hell will prevail against the unbelieving world, but Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. The roaring sea of God's wrath regularly swallows up the wicked when they perish from this earth, but to the church God says in Isaiah 43:2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you..."

³ also cf. Amos 9:8-9; Isaiah 43:3-5, 14

⁴ John Owen says it like this: "Wherein chiefly consists the outward providence of God towards his church? A. In three things: 1) in causing all things to work together for their good; 2) in ruling and disposing of kingdoms, nations, and persons, for their benefit; 3) in avenging them of their adversaries." John Owen, *The Works of John Owens Vol. 1*, Ed. William H. Goold, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 10th Printing, 2017), pg. 475

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The Heidelberg Catechism says it like this: "Q.27 What do you understand by the providence of God? A. Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God by which God upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand."

⁵ "...all these troubles will end well for the church...the church will survive the world, and be in bliss when that is in ruins." Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary in One Volume: Genesis to Revelation*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), pg. 625 Our heavenly Father "...knows how rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement" (2 Peter 2:9)

purified, preserved, and protected His people. And we will praise Him for it. We will thank God that He acted according to His wisdom and not ours. *Until that day*, when we will not longer see through a glass dimly⁶ we only need to be still and know that He is God.

The Big Idea...

God appoints trouble for all men, but He does especially uphold Heaven and Earth and all creatures so that our troubles work for our good and His glory

☆ The Perfect Providence of God (v.8-9)

☆ The Profound Purpose of God (v.10)

☆ The Precious People of God (v.11)

I. The Perfect Providence of God

God's sovereignty vs. God's providence

There is a difference between God's *sovereignty* and God's *providence*. God's sovereignty describes who God *is*, while God's providence describes what God *does*. One author defined God's sovereignty in this way:

“To say that God is sovereign is to declare that God *is* God...To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purpose or resist His will (**Psalm 115:3**)...To say that God is

⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:12

sovereign is to declare that He is the “Only [Emperor]⁷, the King of kings, and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15).”⁸

Now God’s providence is His sovereignty *applied* to the governance of all things. “He does according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Daniel 4:35). He “...works all things according to the counsel of *his will*” (Ephesians 1:11). He declares “...the end from the beginning...saying, “My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all *my purpose*” (Isaiah 46:10). In other words, everything that moves in this cosmos moves because God is governing it exactly as He determines. The Puritan John Owen puts it like this:

Q. “Does the providence of God extend itself to every small thing?” A. The least grass of the field, hair on our heads, or worm of the earth, is not exempted from his knowledge and care.”⁹

The desolations of God

Why do men lose heart in troubled times? Because they forget that this world is not falling out according to chance, but according to God’s sovereign design. Please look with me at v.8. The Psalmist says Come, behold *the works of the Lord*, how he has brought desolations on the earth.” *Works* is in the plural. God has vast innumerable *works*. There are two main categories of the works of God: 1) **Creation**—which is God’s making all things out of nothing; and 2) **Providence**—which is God’s governing all His creatures and all their actions.¹⁰ The Psalmist is not talking about God’s creative works here. He’s talking about God’s providences. But not just God’s ‘ordinary’ providences, His most frightening ones—v.8 “...he has brought *desolations* on the earth.” A desolation is when a place or a people is devoted to destruction, to horror, to ruin to waste.

⁷ original “Potentate”

⁸ A.W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Baker Books, 2002), pg. 19

⁹ Owen, pg. 476

¹⁰ SCQ. 11

The earth suffered *desolation* when God sent the flood in Noah's day. **Genesis 7:22-23** says "Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. [God] blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark."

That's just *one* desolation. **v.8** says "*desolations*"—plural. Not just some desolations, *all of them*. The "...desolations *on the earth*." What about them? God is the One who *brought them*. Again **v.8** says "...he [God] has *brought* desolations..." Shocking. All *desolations*—all ruin, all horrors—are part of God's works of providence. He *brought* them, meaning—He produced them, He executed them, He performed them, He *called* them into being. **Isaiah 45:6-7** "I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and *create calamity*; I am the Lord, who does all these things."¹¹

Come, behold the works of the LORD!

Why do we lose heart in troubled times? Because we forget that God is bringing the trouble. Dear congregation—in this most extraordinary day—don't you realize that the God of Heaven is communicating with humanity on the earth? The Psalmist is screaming at us to see this: **v.8** "Come, behold..." these things. 'Come, behold these desolations.' Notice that this is the first imperative in this Psalm. He commands us with two separate verbs 1) "*Come*" and 2) "*behold*." To come means *to draw near* to something. It's aimed at exciting our attention: "come *let us go*." It indicates a leaving of one thing, and arriving at another thing. When the Psalmist uses it here, he's saying '*Come out* from the way the world sees these things; *come to* the way God Almighty sees these things.'

¹¹ God brought the *desolation* of the coronavirus, just like He brought the *desolation* of the Spanish flu, and the *desolation* of the Black Death. These are not accidents. It can be seen in a simple syllogism.

God appoints all things

Coronavirus is a thing

Therefore God appointed Coronavirus

The second command is to *behold*. It means to contemplate. But not in a detached way. He's saying '...contemplate with pleasure and delight, behold with the eyes of your heart, and enjoy what you see.' You can hear the pleasure behind this verb when David uses it. **Psalm 17:15** "...I shall *behold* your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be *satisfied*."

To sum up: the Psalmist is calling us *to come*—to draw near to how God views things; and *to behold*—to contemplate with delight these works and desolations that God is bringing on the earth.

God's preserves His people *through* desolations

Why? Why should the church find rest and satisfaction in times of great calamity? Because beloved, God is working these things *for our sake*. The desolations that God is bringing are not random or arbitrary. They are meant to preserve and purify His church. Consider the desolations that God wrought in Biblical history.

In **Exodus 10:7**, Pharaoh's servants said to him, "Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?" Why did God bring desolations on Egypt? To deliver His people.¹²

In **Joshua 10:11**, we read that "...the Lord threw down large stones from heaven on them [the Amorites]...and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword." Why did God desolate the Amorites? To rid the promised land of Israel's enemies.¹³

But we even see how God works desolations *within* His own visible people. In **Numbers 25:9** God sent a plague in the camp of Israel that killed 24,000 people.

¹² also cf. Exodus 12:30; 14:30-31

¹³ In 2 Chronicles 20:22-23 when Jehoshaphat was defending Judah against the Moabites, we read that "...the LORD set an ambush against [them]...who had come against Judah...[they] rose against [each other]...they all helped to destroy one another." Why did God desolate these men? To rescue His people.

Why? Because they had started to worship the gods of Moab and sacrifice to them. All of Israel was in danger because of the evil of forsaking the LORD. God desolated some of them before they desolated the whole nation.¹⁴

The same is true when Judah went into captivity by Babylon. Judah had become so corrupt that **2 Chronicles 33:9** says that they did "...more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel." What happened? God sent Babylon to crush them—**Habakkuk 1:6** "...behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans..." But He spared and preserved His remnant—**Jeremiah 29:7** "...I have sent you into exile...pray to the LORD...you will find your welfare."

That's *why* the Psalmist is commanding us to behold and delight *in* God's strange work of desolations. He does these things for the sake of His people. As William Plumer has said: "God's past mercies clearly show that no weapon formed against Zion shall prosper, and that rather than let his church perish he will fill the earth with desolations."¹⁵

He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth

The Psalmist reinforces this by pointing to the last desolation at the end of this age. **v.9**: "*He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire.*" The Hebrew here is potent with a quick fire combination of noun-verb non-verb.

Wars cease.

Bows break.

Spears shatter.

Chariots burn.

¹⁴ "His name was of old a terror to millions that rebelled against him." Plumer, pg. 525

¹⁵ "All the truth and mercy shown to the saints of old will certainly be shown to God's people to the end of time." Plumer, pg. 526

The *agent* in all of these actions is *not* men. It's God. He *makes*. He *breaks*. He *shatters*. He *burns*. The weapons of war are not only broken but burned. The burning of chariots is explicitly tied to the end of war. When Israel defeated the Canaanites in **Joshua 11:6**, God told them to “hamstring their horses and *burn their chariots with fire*.”¹⁶ But the Psalmist doesn't have merely one war in view here. He has all wars in view. God will make all wars to cease—literally “*wars sabbath*.” And then he quickly adds “...*to the end of the earth*.” Meaning, to the extremity of the earth, the borders, the outskirts, the very brink, the whole. Very soon, the LORD Jesus Christ will return, and with the breath of His mouth (**2 Thessalonians 2:8**) and with fire from Heaven (**Revelation 20:9**) will finally and decisively end all war.

But ask yourself: *who* does Christ end wars *for*? Who does God exercise this special providence *for*? Not for the wicked. There is no peace for the wicked says the LORD (**Isaiah 48:22**). No. This final end of all calamity and war and pestilence and plague is only for *the people of God*.¹⁷

God's exercises His providence *distinctly* for His people

This is what you need to see. When we talk about God's providence in the world, we should never talk about it in a general way. As if all were saying is that God is governing all things. Period. No. Psalm 46 is showing us that God is governing all things for *our sake*. The Puritan Thomas Brooks says it like this: “God's providence extends to all His creatures; it is like the sun, of universal influence, but in a special manner it is operative for the safety of the saints.”¹⁸ God in His providence is always making a *distinction* between His people and everyone else. In **Malachi 3:17-18** “I will spare *them* as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see *the distinction* between the

¹⁶ “The total destruction of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 39:9-10) is prophetically described by the burning of their weapons of war.” Henry, pg. 625. Also see Plumer, pg. 525

¹⁷ cf. Isaiah 2:4; 9:7; 60:18

¹⁸ Brooks, pg. 547

righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.” If your house were on fire and your roof was caving in, would you not make a *distinction* between saving your son and saving your dog? Does *not* God have a greater care for His own children?¹⁹ Jesus prayed in **John 17:23** “...you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” If the Father loves us as He loves Christ, will He not have a special eye towards His people *just as* He does towards Christ? Beloved, don’t you know that in these troubled times, the Father has a greater concern for you *than* the world?

Sovereign Ruler of the Skies

In 1777, an English Baptist minister John Ryland, penned these truths in song when the world was on fire with war.²⁰

Sovereign Ruler of the skies!
 Ever gracious, ever wise!
 All my times are in Thy hand,
 All events at Thy command.

His decree, who formed the earth,
 Fixed my first and second birth...

He that formed me in the womb,
 He shall guide me to the tomb;
 All my times shall ever be
 Ordered by His wise decree.

Times of sickness, times of health,
 Times of penury and wealth;

¹⁹ Hebrews 3:6 says that we are his God’s house. “Will *not* God take care of his house?” Brooks, pg. 547

²⁰ Source: <https://founders.org/2016/01/26/sovereign-ruler-of-the-skies/> Accessed March 26, 2019

Times of trial and of grief,
Time of triumph and relief.

...

All must come, and last and end,
As shall please my heavenly Friend.

Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He bids I cannot die:
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love thinks fit.

O Thou Gracious, Wise and Just,
In Thy hands my life I trust:

...

May I always own Thy hand
Still to the surrender stand;
Know that Thou art God alone,
I and mine are all Thine own.

Thee, at all times, will I bless;
Having Thee, I all possess;
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with Thee?

That's our **first point**. God is working His perfect providence with a special eye towards His people, therefore we can resign all to His Fatherly care.

II. The Profound Purpose of God

“Be still and know that I am God”

Please look with me at **v.10**. What are we to do in troubled times? **v.10** “Be still, and know that I am God.” Notice the quotation marks. This is God *speaking*. He breaks into this song with two imperatives. The first command: “*Be still...*” I think the NASB’s translation is better here. “Cease striving...” That’s the right sense of the Hebrew. It means to leave off your own attempts; to stop them, to abandon them, to put them off, to refrain from them.²¹ The word is used in **Jeremiah 50:43** when the King of Babylon had heard about Babylon’s destruction, it says that “his hands hung limp.” His strength left him. That’s the sense here. *Be still* means to empty yourself of your own strength, of your own striving, of your own wisdom, of your own power. Essentially it means shut your mouth. If you’re in troubled times, this is the first thing that God commands of you dear saint: cease striving, shut your mouth, be still.

Then God gives the second command “...and *know* that I am God.” There are two types of knowledge. There is theoretical knowledge where you acknowledge the truth of something. Theoretical knowledge will allow you to say “I *know* that boat will take me safely down the river.” That’s not the kind of *knowing* that God is commanding of us here. He’s *not* simply saying “... *acknowledge* that I am God Almighty, Lord of Heaven and Earth.” Demons do that. When Jesus was casting an unclean spirit in **Mark 1:24** it cried out to Him, “I *know* who you are—the Holy One of God.” No the kind of knowing that God means here is *experiential* knowing. It’s transferring the theoretical knowledge from your head down to your heart. It’s *not simply* saying “I know that boat will take me safely down the river” —*it’s getting in the boat*.

²¹ A good illustration for this word comes from 1 Samuel 15:11. King Saul had disobeyed God by not killing all the Amalekites. God wanted to judge the Amalekites because they had attacked Israel when they came up out of Egypt. But King Saul and his men decided they would keep some of the plunder for themselves. Then Samuel shows up. Saul says “I have performed the commandment of the LORD.” Samuel responds “What then is this bleeping of the sheep in my ears?” Saul plays the politician and says “the people spared the best...to sacrifice to the LORD your God...” and Samuel cuts him off “*Stop!*” he says. Or be still. Cease striving.

Be still and know that I am sufficient

To know God experientially *means* to regard Him *as He regards* Himself. It means to receive Him *as He offers Himself to us*. How does He offer Himself to us? We could sum it up in one word: *sufficient*. ‘Be still and know that I am sufficient. I am all you need. I’m enough.’ Your striving will not get you through these troubled times—God will.²² **Psalm 27:1** “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?...Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.” The trouble you face in this life is like a flickering match, but God is the sea. The danger you face is like a paper kite, and God is the hurricane. The distress that comes upon you is like a worm, and God is a volcano. “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Don’t you see beloved? God is already *enough* for you in troubled times *regardless* whether you acknowledge it or not. He doesn’t start to be sufficient for you when you believe it. He already is sufficient through all your worry, through all your fretting. “Be still and know that I am God.”

“I will be exalted...!”

v.10 continues “I will be *exalted* among the nations, I will be *exalted* in the earth!” To be *exalted* means to be lifted up high above all other things. In **Genesis 7:17** we read that when “the flood...waters increased and bore up the ark, it rose high above the earth.” It was exalted. This is what it means for God to be exalted. **Psalm 57:5** “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!” For God to be *exalted* means that He will be supremely celebrated and praised and worshipped. And this will happen universally. v.10 says “among the nations [*and*] in the earth.” Meaning, not only will all of God’s enemies one day acknowledge that He is King of kings and Lord

²² "The strength of the church stands in renouncing her own and fleeing unto God's strength... Let us understand that he is the Fountain of power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth." Plumer, pg. 527

of Lords, but that the whole universe will—whether they be in heaven or on earth, visible or invisible, thrones or dominions or rulers authorities—ALL will exalt in the God of Heaven and Earth.

God's aim in all things: His exaltation

Clearly God's exaltation—His *glory*—is why He has does everything He does.

God revealed His name and His Word *in order* to exalt it. **Psalm 138:2** “...*you have exalted* above all things your name and your word.”

God shows mercy *so that* He would be exalted. **Isaiah 30:18** “...the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and *therefore he exalts himself* to show mercy to you.”

God sent His Son into the world *in order* to be exalted. **Isaiah 52:13** “Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be *exalted*.”²³

God's foremost, strongest, deepest motive for everything that He does is to exalt His name—to *bring Himself glory*.

The question of this passage

Now here's the rub with v.10: how does this last part of v.10—“I will be *exalted* among the nations, I will be *exalted* in the earth!” fit into the rest of this Psalm? Remember the entire context of Psalm 46 is troubled times. v.1 “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” So wouldn't you expect to find something similar in v.10? Something like ‘Be still and know that I am God. I will rescue you. I will defend you?’ But no. He says “I will be *exalted* among the nations, I will be *exalted* in the earth!” This seems like a non-sequitur. It's like “when someone asks “how is the weather?” and you reply “It's 2:00 in

²³ Also cf. Psalm 148:13; Isaiah 2:11, 17; Acts 2:33; Acts 5:31; Phil. 2:9

the afternoon.” The last statement doesn’t follow from the first. It’s a non-sequitur.²⁴ Is that what is happening here in v.10?

The strongest possible argument

No. God is making the strongest possible argument for *why* He will certainly deliver us through troubled times. *Because* delivering us in our greatest trouble *exalts Him* more than any other act. God *never* gets more honor and more glory than by helping His people when they are in peril.²⁵ Why? Because when we have faced with an incurable wound that no physical can heal, an invincible army beset against us that no flesh can defeat; when are beyond all hope of human rescue; God *exalts* Himself by showing that He, and He alone is able to rescue us. **Psalm 50:15** “...call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”

A history of deliverance and exaltation

Recall the children of Israel in Exodus 14. In front of them lay the treacherous Red Sea, behind them were the furious Egyptians ready to cut them down with their chariots. God delivered them precisely when all human hope was lost. What happened? They broke out in exaltation. “I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name” (**Exodus 15:1-2**). God was *especially* exalted when He rescued His people.

Or consider Job. It is true that Job exalted God before he underwent His great trouble. But when God finally showed up, what did Job say? “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see you” (**Job 42:5**). He especially exalted in His God when He rescued him.

²⁴ Source: <https://www.yourdictionary.com/non-sequitur> Accessed March 28, 2020

²⁵ Brooks, pg. 529

Or the consider the greatest rescue of all time. We were dead in our trespasses and sins, children of wrath by nature, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.²⁶ And then Christ Jesus, the Dayspring from on high, the Son of God put on flesh and died for our sins, and was buried and rose again the third day. And what is the song of every redeemed heart? “Worthy are you...for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (**Revelation 5:9**). God has highly exalted Jesus and has bestowed on Him a name above every other name *precisely* because He helped God’s people in their greatest danger.²⁷

God glorified in deliverance more than anything else

Don’t you see dear congregation? God is *especially* delights in rescuing you in your greatest danger precisely because it brings Him the most glory. When is a wife most prized by her husband? When he mows the lawn, or when he rescues her from the intruder in the middle of the night? When is a father most treasured by his son? When he helps him with his spelling, or when he scoops him out of the way of a mac truck? When is a doctor most valued by his patient? When he gives him a routine physical or when he performs life-saving cancer surgery?²⁸

What will become of the troubled time that we live in? How many people will come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior through COVID-19? How many people will exalt Him and praise Him *because* He used Coronavirus to make them aware of their desperate need for Him? God will be exalted through this trial. And He will be exalted *precisely* because we will be delivered *through it*. Not because we are guaranteed tomorrow. But rather because though we may succumb to death tomorrow or 50 years from now, not a hair of our head will perish (**Luke 21:18**).

²⁶ Ephesians 2:1, 3, 12

²⁷ Philipians 2:9

²⁸ Much help here from Brooks, pg. 529 & 534

That's our **second point**. God's profound purpose in troubled times is that He is never more exalted in the earth than when He delivers His people. God has joined together His deepest commitment to His glory and our deepest need for rescue into one.²⁹

III. The Precious People of God

"I gotcha you, I gotcha you"

Please look with me at **v.11** "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selab*" Now this is exact repetition of **v.7**. Why does the Psalmist repeat himself? I would suggest simply for the reason of giving us a greater assurance. Don't we do this with our little children when we are trying to give them courage? Teaching one of my sons to ride his bike, I would *repeat* myself as I was running behind him with one hand holding his seat "I gotcha you, I gotcha you..." Why did he need to hear me say again and again? For courage. For assurance. That's the purpose of **v.11**. God is telling us "I gotcha you, I gotcha you."

The Lord of Hosts is with us! Matthew Henry says here "Hosts may be against us, but we need not fear them if the Lord of hosts be with us."³⁰ The God of Jacob is our fortress! Again Henry says "He is the God of Jacob, not only Jacob the person, but Jacob the people."³¹

Jacob the people

That's where I want to focus. Jacob the people. That's who we are—the covenant people of God. We saw this last week, that whenever God refers to

²⁹ "Thou delightest in the dependence of Thy creatures, that Thou mayest supply their need"
Source: <http://ia800904.us.archive.org/19/items/dailyprayerbook00praygoog/dailyprayerbook00praygoog.pdf> pg. 24

³⁰ Henry, pg. 625

³¹ *ibid*

Himself as the God of Abraham, or Isaac or Jacob, He wants us to remember that He is in covenant with *a people*. And this covenant is not merely for OT Hebrews, but also for NT Gentiles. **Galatians 3:29** tells us that we are a part of the covenant if we belong to Jesus Christ. “And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring [*just like Jacob*] heirs according to promise”—heirs according to the covenant. We are the covenant people of God and His Christ. What does that mean?

The apple of God's eye

Consider one verse. **Deuteronomy 32:9-10** But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. “He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.” Have you ever wondered what the phrase means—the apple of his eye? Our son Jonathan has had multiple eye injuries. 3 out of 4 years in a row, he damaged his eye such that he had to go to the doctors. The first time was when we were up camping, all the way up at Boiling Springs like 2 hours away. He stumbled with his eye open and plunged face first into a branch. We tried to wash it out, and settle him down, but his pain was so intense and prolonged that we had to pack up all our things and head down the mountain to the emergency room. The doctor told us that he lacerated his cornea. Apparently this is the most tender part of your eye. It heals fairly quickly, but any damage done to it cause intense pain. Jonathan had damaged the apple of his eye. “The apple of the eye is the tenderest piece of the tenderest part.”³² When God says that he cares for us, and keeps us like the apple of His eye, He means that he prizes us above all other creatures.

God prizes His people as His treasured possession (**Exodus 19:5³³**); as His portion (**Deuteronomy 32:9**); as His pleasant portion (**Jeremiah 12:10**); as His jewels

³² Brooks, 473

³³ The apostle Peter uses this exact language and applies it to the church. Compare Exodus 19:5-6 with 1 Peter 2:9

(**Malachi 3:17**³⁴); as His own house (**Hebrews 3:6**); as His own body (**Ephesians 1:23**); as His own children (**Romans 8:15**); as His very bride (**Revelation 21:2**). God prizes and esteems and treasures His people above all the world itself (**Hebrews 11:38**).

Dear congregation, what more could God possibly offer to assure you that He will deliver you through these present troubles?

He's promised protection *for you*: God is our refuge and strength.

He's provided His presence *for you*: God is in the midst of her

He's performed His providence *for you*: Be still and know that I am God

He picked *you* to be His precious people: The God of Jacob is our fortress.

And as if this was not enough, God has given you His son, His only begotten Son. Can you say with Paul that Christ "loved me and gave himself for me?"³⁵ Then how can anything separate you from His love?

Can you say with the Apostle Peter that you have been redeemed not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ?³⁶ Then how can poverty ever harm you?

Can you say with Jude that He is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy?³⁷ Then how can the world stumbling to it's knees ever shake you?

³⁴ KJV

³⁵ Galatians 2:20

³⁶ 1 Peter 1:18-19

³⁷ Jude 24

Can you say with the John that because you have been born of God you have overcome the world?³⁸ Then how can you ever become overcome in this life?

That's our **third point**. Beloved, you are the precious, blood bought, covenant people of God. And nothing can take that away from you, not COVID-19, not an economic fallout, not even death itself.

Application

To those who don't know Christ

In times of trouble, God simply commands us to "Be still and know that I am God." How can we know God most clearly? Only *through* Jesus Christ. **John 1:18** says "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God [*He*] *has made him known.*" If you don't know Jesus Christ, you don't know God. And this is your greatest trouble. Your trouble is not what will happen tomorrow. Your trouble is that your sin has separated you from a holy God. And there is only one remedy: the gospel. And the gospel of Jesus Christ is simply this: Christ died for sinners. You are a sinner. Believe in Christ and you shall be saved.

To those who do know Christ

What does "Be still, and know that I am God" mean for Christians? Essentially the same thing. You can only be still and know God in these troubled time *through* Christ. Jesus *alone* has made God known. So consider how does Jesus make Himself known to us? What is Christ compared to all others we could hope in during these troubled times?

³⁸ 1 John 1:4

What is human governments compared to Christ? The governments of this world are in a panic. They are tottering on the very brink of collapse. But **Isaiah 9:6** says “Of the increase of His government (Christ’s) and of peace there will be no end.”

What are the hope of vaccines compared to Christ? At best they can make you immune from one disease, at best they can save you from one death. But Christ has saved us from the second death. **John 11:25-26** “I am the resurrection and the life.[d] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”

What are bank accounts compared to Christ? At best they can supply our needs for this life. At best they can provide for us food for our physical bodies. But Christ has provided spiritual food for us, food that will feed us for eternity. **John 6:58** “Whoever feeds on me will live forever.”

Beloved during these troubled times— be still, and know God.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
 Look full in His wonderful face
 And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
 In the light of His glory and grace

Turn your eyes to the morning
 And see Christ the Lion awake
 What a glorious dawn, fear of death is gone
 For we carry His life in our veins

Turn your eyes to the heavens
 Our King will return for His own
 Every knee will bow, every tongue will shout,
 ‘All glory to Jesus alone!’³⁹

³⁹ Source: <https://sovereigngracemusic.org/music/songs/turn-your-eyes/>