

Today as we begin another new year we turn to the Word of God in the forty-sixth Psalm:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth move, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of day. The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Text: Psalm 46 SS 1/1/12 Responsive Reading from Psalm 90 Preservice Psalm: 66
Hymns: 738, 785, 764, 755, 800

GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH

Help us, O Lord! Behold, we enter upon another year today;
In Thee our hopes and thoughts now center, renew our courage for the way.
New life, new strength, new happiness, we ask of Thee – oh, hear and bless!

(TLH #120:1)

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Our text begins, *“God is our refuge.”* A medieval castle and a wilderness fort were a **refuge** for the people who lived near them. If the people were under attack, they could run into their castle or fort and be safe. But if they failed to go into their refuge, they had to fight their enemies on their own. THREE TIMES in our short text we’re told, *“God is our refuge.”* Don’t try to solve your problems and bear your burdens by yourself. Bring them to God.

“God is our refuge and strength.” Our source of strength is not from within ourselves. GOD is our source of strength. We don’t have to be afraid or discouraged because of our weaknesses. Come to the Lord for help. Rely on Him whose *“strength is made perfect in [our] weakness”* (2 Cor. 12:9). We were taught to sing as children, *“We are weak, but He is strong.”* Our Lord promises us that He *“gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. ... Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint”* (Is. 40:29, 31).

“God is our ... ever-present help in trouble.” Sometimes we don’t feel God’s presence. We’re tempted to ask, *“God, where are You when I need You the most?”* Jesus promises us, *“I am with you always”* (Mt. 28:20). Sometimes we feel God’s presence, and sometimes we don’t. It doesn’t change the fact that God is always with us. God’s presence doesn’t depend on our feelings. God’s presence depends on His Word: *“God is our ... ever-present help in trouble.”* The psalmist says, *“The Lord is near to all*

who call upon Him” (Ps. 145:18). Our Lord assures us, *“I will not forget you”* (Is. 49:15). *“Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me”* (Ps. 50:15).

“Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth move, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” We’re human. Sometimes we’re anxious and afraid about things that are happening in the world, and in our own lives, and about the future. Sometimes *“the earth [is moved], and ... the mountains ... [are] carried into the midst of the sea.”* Sometimes our whole world can change and seem to fall apart. But *“GOD is our refuge and strength.”* Don’t be stressed or worried or afraid. Go to the Lord who is our *“ever-present help in trouble.”* He assures His Church, *“GOD is in the midst of her, she shall NOT be moved.”* *“I will not fail you, or forsake you”* (Dt. 31:6, 8). God will see us through whatever life brings us.

We’re told, *“There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.”* The Lord is using figurative language here. As we must have water to live, so we must have the Gospel of Jesus Christ to give us eternal life. Jesus says, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled”* (Mt. 5:6). *“Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst; but the water that I will give him will be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life”* (Jn. 4:14).

Sometimes problems we have and suffering we’re going through can seem more than we can bear. God will not let that happen: *“God shall help her, just at the break of day.”* The Bible promises us, *“No trial has overtaken you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tested beyond what you can bear. But when you are tested, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it”* (1 Cor. 10:13). *“And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast”* (1 Pet. 5:10).

“The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.” The unbelievers have great power and influence in the world. But GOD is in control. The Bible says, *“All the nations are as nothing before [the Lord]. ... He it is who reduces rulers to nothing”* (Is. 40:17, 23). *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Ro. 8:31). The Lord God Almighty is still on His throne. The *“King of kings”* and *“Lord of lords”* is our Rock and our Deliverer!

“Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.” GOD controls people, rulers, and nations. With them or in spite of them, His will is always and ultimately done. Even better, the Lord has given us the victory, and peace, in our battle against the devil. Jesus won this for us on the cross when He declared, *“It is finished!”* (Jn. 19:30). *“Comfort, yes, comfort My people! Says your God. ... Cry out to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned”* (Is. 40:1-2).

“The Lord of hosts is with us.” God and His good angels already defeated Satan and his evil angels. And God and all of His heavenly angels are helping us and fighting for us in all of our spiritual battles. The Bible says, *“Greater is [Christ] who is in you than [Satan] who is in the world”* (1 Jn. 4:4b). *“He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in ALL your ways”* (Ps. 91:11).

“The God of Jacob is our refuge.” Sometimes the Old Testament believer Jacob did foolish things, and wrong things. But he repented of his sins and placed his trust in the Lord. And the Lord forgave Jacob’s sins. He remained faithful to Jacob, saw him through the difficult times, and blessed him. *“The God of Jacob is OUR refuge.”* Like Jacob, we too sometimes do foolish things, and we sin every day. But by God’s grace we repent, and God forgives us. By God’s grace we place our trust in Him, and He remains faithful to us and sees us through the difficult times and blesses us.

Our Heavenly Father tells us, *“Be still and know that I am God.”* Stop worrying and fussing. Jesus asks us, *“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? ... Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”* (Mt. 6:27, 34). Do we think that if we worry hard enough we’re we going to fix a problem or change anything for the better? Worry just wastes our time. If anything, worry makes things worse, not better. *“Cast all your care on Him, for He cares for you”* (1 Pet. 5:7). *“Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, ... rest for your souls”* (Mt. 11:28-29).

Dear Christian friends, entrust the new year and all the years ahead to **GOD** who **IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH.**

Jesus, be with me and direct me; Jesus, my plans and hopes inspire;
 Jesus, from tempting thoughts protect me; Jesus, be all my heart’s Desire;
 Jesus, be in my thoughts all day nor allow me to fall away.

And grant, Lord, when the year is over, that it for me in peace may close;
 In all things care for me and cover my head in time of fear and woes.
 So may I when my years are gone appear with joy before Thy throne. Amen.

(TLH #120:5-6)