

1. We Will Not Fear Anything Because God is Strong (vv1-3)
  - a. Our soul fears when tragedy breaks into our normal feelings of safety
    - i. Am I safe?
    - ii. Where can I find security?
    - iii. Who will rescue me from my greatest fears?
  - b. God is our *refuge* and our *strength* an ever-present *help* in trouble
    - i. Refuge: Place of hiding from threat, a place to hide.
      1. This is talk of our weakness, our powerlessness against threats that are far greater than us to which we must fly from, run away, in desperation for rescue and help and protection.
    - ii. Strength: God Himself is our strength of protection, our answer to dangers.
      1. It is not that God strengthens us to fight for ourselves. He is our actual refuge, our actual strength, the power that moves and enables and fights for His people.
      2. He performs wonders. He performs the normal things strongly. He alone is our hope.
    - iii. Ever-present help: He is always found and never removed.
      1. His power is super-sufficient and super-present.
      2. He is always near to the fleeing child, for He cannot be shaken. He doesn't hide from His child, but wraps them up in His strength and power.
      3. He can always be cried to, appealed to, opening the doors of His sovereign gates to His child's cry.
    - iv. In Trouble: Threat, danger, vexation, confusion, fear
  - c. Therefore: "Upon this foundation"
    - i. i.e. God's strength, willingness, nearness to protect us, keep us,
  - d. We will not fear
    - i. Some people say that the only way not to be afraid is to ignore the reality of evil. To flee from its presence, from darkness, from reality – but we can't.
    - ii. We all know that evil exists. G.K. Chesterton commented on how fairy tales, as an art of imaginative teaching, do not introduce us to evil, for we already know at an early age that evil exists. Rather, their value lies in the fact that they teach us that there is something greater than our fears.

*The timidity of the child...is entirely reasonable; they are alarmed at this world, because this world is a very alarming place. They dislike being alone because it is verily and indeed an awful idea to be alone. Barbarians fear the unknown for the same reason that Agnostics worship it—because it is a fact. Fairy tales, then, are not responsible for producing in children fear, or any of the shapes of fear; fairy tales do not give the child the idea of the evil or the ugly; that is in the child already, because it is in the world already....The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon.*

*Exactly what the fairy tale does is this: it accustoms him for a series of clear pictures to the idea that these limitless terrors had a limit, that these shapeless enemies have enemies in the knights of God, that there is something in the universe more mystical than darkness, and stronger than strong fear.*

-G.K. Chesterton, *Tremendous Trifles*, ch. XVII “The Red Angel”, 1909

- iii. Even if the most solid foundations of my life, the earth or the mountains, the unchangeable “always theres” were to be shaken and fall away, like the very earth falling away under my feet, I will not fear.
  1. You didn't look over the edge of the bed this morning to verify that the floor was still there.

2. What former foothold is quaking, what loss or danger or anxiety overwhelms the balance of my soul and threatens to drop me into the abyss of hopelessness?
3. Where shall run when terror strikes my soul and the formerly consistent things quake with the unexpected mutability of disaster and tragedy?
- iv. Though these seemingly immutable footholds were cast into the raging constantly changing sea, foaming and rolling and boiling, that which swallows up into darkness, even death, I will not fear.
  1. This language is a disordering of the creative acts of God – from chaos of the deep waters God gathered the lands and heaped them up in firmness – but here we see the opposite
  2. Thus, even if the curse of creation with all its brokenness and alienation, whether from the created order of Nature or from the brokenness of the relational order of Society or Family, God is our refuge
- e. The primary point of this stanza is this phrase in v2 - "We will not fear no matter the cosmic cataclysm"
  - i. Because God is our refuge, *and He is God*, we will not be afraid even if the very ground beneath us gives way, even if that ground that quakes is a mountain shifted and thrown into the deepest parts of the seas, and even if that deep should surge forth to make the other mountains tremble at their deeps surging upwards.
  - ii. He is the only immutable and unchanging One, always faithful and never falling away and nobody can throw Him into chaos
  - iii. In fact, when He speaks, the mountains melt, for He is the eternal, unchanging, infinite God

## 2. We Will Not Fear Anything Because God is Present (4-7)

- a. Move from a roaring sea which takes life to a streaming river which gives life
  - i. Life and gladness where God gathers a people to Himself and sets them before Him as His own
- b. God Dwells With His People in an Eternal City: No Authority is Greater Than God
  - i. City of God – Holy Tabernacle of the Most High
    1. Juxtaposition of the Most High/Holy Dwelling City and the raging nations and tottering kingdoms
    2. God's power and strength are immutable while all other kingdoms quake, shudder, totter, fall, and change
      - a. What Kingdom is your functional hope?
      - b. Of what people do you identify with, first and foremost, and is this kingdom unshakable, secure?
  - ii. When the LORD speaks, the earth itself dissolves before His awesome authority and power
    1. If you have placed your trust in Christ Jesus, then you have been drawn into the tabernacle of God by Him alone;
      - a. those who have been "transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:13-15),
      - b. are "citizens of heaven" (Phil 3:20)
    2. If God is the King of eternity, and you are in His city, then no raging government or authority can ultimately shake you
- c. Because the Life-Giving God is With His People FOREVER
  - i. "The LORD of hosts" – "The Lord Sabaoth"
    1. Power – YHWH over armies
  - ii. This God over all powers "is with us"

1. The Relational God
    - a. God protects His people
    - b. God dwells with His people
    - c. He is the King over a citizenship; a General protecting His city, a fortress from assault
  2. The Promising God - "God of Jacob"
    - a. God covenants with His people FOREVER – promises them His presence
      - i. The mention of Jacob is emphasizing God's covenanting grace (Gen 28) and promises not yet fulfilled (died in Egypt, not in the Promised Land)
      - ii. That seed of Jacob is Christ, and that land is the City of God, the people of God gathered to worship Him as those redeemed by the blood of His Son, where God's presence dwells
      - iii. These promises were not given because Jacob was a good man, in fact he was a deceiver, a cheat, a liar, and a coward, but because God is the faithful never-failing God
    - b. He chose His people according to His own will and purpose, for His own delight and joy, that He might forever make glad this citizenry *with His presence*
      - a. This promise is what enabled the Church to lay down their lives rather than take others' lives
      - b. Their hope was not in this kingdom, these comforts, this power, but in the greater kingdom where God dwells – the hope to come
  - iii. It is God's presence with His people that gives them aid, defense, protection, in the time of even cataclysmic upheaval
    1. Every other authority totters and reels, but God remains the same
    2. His power exceeds all powers, for He is the only unchanging, uncreated, unsubsistent One
    3. And He binds Himself to a weak and powerless people!! Whoa!!
      - a. She will not be moved!
      - b. God brings help in morning light
        - i. We may be in battle, even take some losses
        - ii. But God will rescue His people at dawn
        - iii. We live in the night, awaiting still the dawn of the eternal age at the return of the King to make all things new
        - iv. Yet we hope because of His first coming, the gift of His Holy Spirit, the transformation of new birth and the down payment of our inheritance in Him
3. God Invites Us to Behold Him to Rest Our Souls (8-11)
  - a. No weapon that is raised against God's people will prosper
    - i. From the smallest to the largest weapon, increasing in threat and strength, God wins
    - ii. No cosmic power (vv1-3), no social authority (vv4-7), and now no particular threat (vv8-11) will be able to stand before the God who brings peace by His sovereign might
    - iii. He *breaks, shatters, and burns* them – utterly destroys the threats against His people
  - b. Drawing Near (Coming close) to the LORD is the power to Be Still
    - i. Hebrew parallelism – "Come and See" is related to "Be still and Know"
    - ii. It is as we draw near to the Lord, to see His works and to know Him and His power and His goodness towards His children according to His sovereign grace, that we are stilled
      1. "Hush!" – The calming whisper of a powerful father soothing the trembling soul of a frightened child

2. It is His character drawn upon our hearts, the symbols of his mighty works etched into the stony floors of the foundations of our trusts, we will rest and not fear
  - c. Seeing His works is the means to knowing Him so that we are still and without fear
    - i. We see His most glorious work at the cross of Christ Jesus, His sovereign Son sent to save siblings by sacrifice we see the Darkness Defeater
      1. Many people asked “where was God?” last week when two dozen of our brothers and sisters were viciously murdered by the hands of a wicked man.
        - a. God was with them – the suffering God – the God who takes our bullets and bears our pains and shares our shames
        - b. Immanuel – “God is with us”, which is why Jesus was named Jesus (Matt 1:20-23)
4. Where is God When Tragedy Strikes? IMMANUEL – The Holy God is With Us
- a. What good is a refuge if you can be killed or harmed in this life?
    - i. There is a much greater fear than death of this life – and there is a much stronger salvation than a life saved from such death
  - b. Jesus said, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matt 10:28)
    - i. Our greatest fear is not that a violent man may break into our normalcy and take our lives from us or from those whom we love.
    - ii. The thing to really fear is the looming threat of the One so holy, so pure, so blazing in His glory that it will consume anything which is not pure and perfect and *eternal*
    - iii. “Our God is a consuming fire” – Do we recognize this threat?
      1. In the light of the abundance of His mercies, we tend to forget what lies behind the curtain
      2. No thunderstorm can compare, no earthquake, no raging fire or weapon of war
    - iv. What earth quaking is like that reality? What woe upon us can compare to the Holy One’s sight of our mutiny which runs to the core of our heart? What hope is there for enemies of God?
  - c. God has stepped into our tragedy and suffered with us!
    - i. There is JESUS, the suffering God
      1. He is God with us, ever-present and always faithful to His covenant of grace, never fleeing and always pursuing us for our good
      2. God is not absent or careless about our suffering, but rather He takes His own medicine for *our* curse
    - ii. He took the greater bullets, the greater guillotine, the greater cross, AND DEFEATED IT so that our deaths are not final, but temporal.
      1. He defeated our greatest threat: death and the wrath of God
      2. He is our refuge and our strength, our solid foundation for all provision no matter the mutability and ever-changing world around us or within us
    - iii. He is our champion!
      1. Death and Satan have been defeated by the suffering savior, raised from the dead
      2. They have been shattered, broken, burned by the power of His Life
  - d. Come! – you come at His invitation. He wants you to know Him.
    - i. Particularly when the earth totters and your world comes undone – Come to Him as Your refuge!
    - ii. You come at His invitation
      1. Maybe you never have flown to God as your ultimate rescuer, as an absolute needy one
      2. Maybe you have never flown to God to rescue you from His own wrath against your sin

3. You can fly to Him for mercy – He has sent Jesus to purchase your pardon
- e. See! - behold His holiness, His authority, His love, His mercy, His goodness, all expressed through the works that He has worked within history
    - i. See the Cross of Christ Jesus
      1. He is so holy that Jesus had to die to deal with your sin!
      2. He is so loving that He sent Jesus to die to deal with your sins!
      3. He is so faithful that He has united Himself to those in Christ so that He suffers with them for their sins!
      4. As you what God has done through Jesus, triumphing over death, you can exchange your fearful terrors, filled with anxiety, and take up His light yoke of rest
  - f. Be still!
    - i. Knowing who is sovereign and the heart of that Sovereign one whom loves you so greatly that He bore up the greatest suffering for you, so that you might have hope in spite of the curse
    - ii. It makes you rest your soul's head upon His chest, like a weaned baby that has everything she needs – safe and secure from all alarm
  - g. Know that I am God!
    - i. He will be exalted because of His sovereign power and gracious binding of Himself to His people
    - ii. He will be exalted because of His holy compassion and sovereign grace of the cross of Jesus Christ, where God bound Himself to sinners who close to Him by faith, so that He might be their refuge by dwelling with them forever and ever
    - iii. It is His power and His presence for us and with us that gives our hearts the encouragement to be fearless – We will not fear *whatever* happens, for our God is sovereign and He is with us for our good – He even gave His only Son that we might receive eternal life

Brothers and sisters who have come to Christ Jesus for your salvation, I don't know what particular loss threatens your peace this morning, what fear has assaulted your heart to plant its flag upon the hill of your greatest gladness, but I know the feeling of the earth reeling, that terror of my world being flung into the heart of the deep, dark sea of doom. And I hear from the Spirit through the lips of this Psalmist the secret to courage, the power to hope for the dawn's light out of such true and tangible darkness.

Fly to Christ your Refuge! Fly to the One who had all honor and power and dominion before Him in the presence of His Father and laid it aside to meet you in the horrors and filth of this cursed world and redeem it! Where there is true evil there is also true good, where true sin, true mercy. He delights in you! He loves you! He has drawn near, so near as to swallow your deserved death. Will He hold anything back? The Father sent Him by His grace, so do not fear, O beloved child. Listen to the Father's "hush, my child" and see that nobody and nothing can pull you from the eternal embrace of the arms which created all that exists and rescued you from sin's horror by the loving self-sacrifice of Immanuel, our Lord, Jesus.