

"A Very Present Help"

The phrase "*A Song upon Alamo*" most likely indicates a musical direction – that this psalm was intended to be sung in a high, clear register, perhaps by sopranos or young voices. This is a fitting contrast to the imagery of roaring waters and shaking earth found in the content of the psalm. In the midst of chaos, the song of God's people rises clear and strong – declaring that *God is our refuge and strength*.

At times, when things get tough, or we feel we don't know what to do, we might wonder, "Where is God?" The answer is found in this psalm – **God is there**. Wherever "there" is for us, **God is there**. He is forever watching over His children, and is always willing to help us – we just have to be willing to ask and follow Him.

This psalm is divided into three parts – each part looks adds insight into the principle that "God is there."

I. GOD'S POWER IS THERE – VS. 1-3

The psalmist doesn't begin with the problem – he begins with the presence and power of God.

A. Statement of help – vs. 1

1. "God is our refuge" – He's our place of safety.
2. "God is our...strength" – He's our ability to endure.
3. "God is...a very present help in trouble"
 - a) The word used for "present" (נִפְגַּע) means to find, to be discovered, to appear. It's in a form (passive participle) that means not just "He can be found," but "**He is found**," or "**He is surely there**."

- b) Combined with the word for “very” (מְאֹד) – meaning *exceedingly, greatly* – it intensifies the presence: **“He is exceedingly present”** or **“always found”** in times of trouble.
- c) “A very present help” doesn’t merely mean that God is close by – it emphasizes that **He is immediately accessible and reliably found in trouble.**
- d) There’s a similar text in the New Testament, in Philippians 4:5 where the Apostle Paul makes the simple statement, “The Lord is at hand.” Paul is reminding the Philippians: **The Lord is close by** – not far off, not distracted. His proximity is both **a comfort and a motivation**: you don’t need to panic (v.6), because the Lord is near.

B. Statement of confidence – vs. 2-3

“Therefore will not we fear...” – because He is “a very present help in trouble,” we need not fear.

1. “Though the earth be removed” – even if the very ground beneath us gives way, **we will not fear.**

The idea is that even if what we’ve always counted on begins to shift or disappear, God remains the same and unmoved.

2. “Thought the mountains be carried into the sea” – mountains in Scripture often symbolize **strength, stability, and permanence.** The sea, especially in Hebrew thought, represented **chaos and danger.**

Even if the seemingly unshakable parts of life fall apart and are swallowed up in confusion, **we will not fear.**

3. "Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled" – the storm intensifies with the sea (chaos) becoming loud, violent, and unrelenting.

Sometimes trouble doesn't come quietly. It comes in waves – health, finances, relationships, fears. But even then – **we will not fear.**

4. "Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof" – even the strongest, most stable, most permanent things begin to tremble – there's no more human confidence left to cling to.

But when the world shakes, the people of God stand – **not because the storm isn't real, but because God is more real.**

The psalmist is saying: **"Even if the worst happens, God's power is enough. We will not fear – because God is there."**

II. GOD'S PRESENCE IS THERE – VS. 4-7

After the violent, chaotic imagery of verses 2-3, verse 4 introduces a dramatic contrast:

A. "There is a river..."

Not roaring waves or shaking earth – but **a river**, gentle and life-giving. This river symbolizes the **blessing and sustaining presence of God** (Ezekiel 47 and Revelation 22 speak of this river.)

Revelation 22:1-2

¹ And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the midst of the street of it, and on either

side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

In a dry land like ancient Israel, a river was **a sign of refreshment, joy, and life** – especially when it flowed into a city under siege.

B. “The streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High”

The **city of God** – Jerusalem – is the place where God dwells among His people. But this also points forward to the **heavenly Jerusalem** (Heb. 12:22) and even the Church (Eph. 2:22), where God dwells by His Spirit.

What makes the city glad is not its walls or armies – it’s the **presence of God flowing through it**.

C. “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved...”

Unlike the kingdoms in verse 6, the city stands firm because **God dwells within her**.

This is the **key** to the entire section: **the reason for her stability is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God**.

This truth doesn’t end with Old Testament Jerusalem. According to **Ephesians 2:22 (vs. 19-22)**, we – the Church – are now being “builted together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” The Church is God’s “temple” today (1 Cor. 3:16-17 – that is not to say that the church is Israel, or the church building is the temple, but it is to say that the local church is the place of meeting with

the Lord). The joy and security of God's people has never come from structures or strength, but from the **Spirit who dwells among us**. Just as Psalm 46 says, "*God is in the midst of her...*" – so the Church stands firm because **God is with us**.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

¹⁶ Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ¹⁷ If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.

D. **"God shall help her, and that right early"**

literally, "*at the break of dawn.*" Just when the night seems darkest, **God steps in**.

E. **Verse 6 shifts back to the chaos in the world around us referenced in verses 2 and 3.**

1. "*The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved...*" – while God is in the midst of His people – giving joy and stability – the nations outside are raging, and the kingdoms are crumbling.
2. "*He uttered His voice, the earth melted.*" – One word from God silences all opposition.

F. **Verse 7 (and 11) are a refrain.**

This reinforces that God's presence is not theoretical – **He is with us**. He's not just "the Lord of hosts" (angelic army) in heaven – He is **our** refuge.

III. GOD'S PEACE IS THERE - VS. 8-11

A. **"Come, behold the works of the LORD..."**

The psalmist now invites us to **look back and see**

what God has done – and trust Him in the present. The “desolations” in verse 8 refer to **God’s judgment on wickedness**, clearing the way for **peace**.

B. “He maketh wars to cease...”

No human plan can do this. Only God can break the bow, shatter the spear, and burn the chariot.

C. “Be still and know that I am God...”

1. This is the **heartbeat** of the psalm – the command that speaks to the soul in the storm.
2. “Be still” (הִרְפָּה) – means **to loosen, let go, abandon, stop holding on**. Literally, “let your hands hang down,” i.e., **stop your frantic effort**.
3. “And know that I am God” – not just intellectually, but experientially, relationally.
 - a) Not simply “acknowledge this fact,” but **Recognize through experience and submission who He truly is**.
 - b) The first imperative (“Be still”) sets the condition for the second (“and know”) – **Only when we stop relying on our own strength can we truly “know” who God is**.

Exodus 6:7

⁷ And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

²³ Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man*

glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: ²⁴ But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.

Hosea 6:3

³ Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter *and* former rain unto the earth.

D. “I will be exalted among the heathen...” – He will reign.

The uproar of the world will one day give way to **universal recognition of His glory.**

Isaiah 2:2-4

² And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. ³ And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Revelation 11:15

¹⁵ And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

God's peace doesn't come because the world calms down – it comes because God steps in. He makes wars cease, He breaks the weapons, and He commands: *'Be still and know that I am God.'* And when we do – when we release our grip and look up – we find that peace isn't the absence of trouble; it's the presence of God reigning in the midst of it.

Conclusion: As we come to the close of this psalm, we hear a refrain repeated – almost as if the psalmist wanted to make sure we didn't miss it:

"The Lord of hosts is with **us**; the God of Jacob is **our** refuge." (vv. 7, 11)

It's not just that **God is powerful** in our storms...

Not just that **He is present** in the chaos...

Not only that **He brings peace** where there is war...

It's that **He is with us – personally.**

The Lord of hosts – the God who commands angel armies – is not distant. He is with **us**. Right now. In whatever trial, fear, or uncertainty we face. And not just as "the God of Abraham" or "the God of Israel" – but **the God of Jacob**. The God who stays with strugglers, wrestlers, and wanderers.

He is our refuge.

He is our strength.

He is our very present help in trouble.

So be still.

And know – not just in theory, but in faith – **that He is God... and He is there.**

Her mother was startled to find seven-year-old Karen going through a new Bible storybook and circling the word God wherever

it appeared on the page. Stifling her urge to reprimand the child for defacing the book, the mother quietly asked, "Why are you doing that?"

Karen answered matter-of-factly, "So that I will know where to find God when I need Him."

Actually, Karen may have the right idea. In times of need it would be helpful to know where to look in the Bible to find the Lord's help.