

Be Still, And Know That I Am God

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Preacher: Rev. Kenneth Ferguson

[0 : 0 0] Now for a short while and as the Lord enables us, let us turn back and consider words we have in this scripture we've read from the book of Psalms and Psalm 46. Again reading from verse 8, Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth, he makes war cease to the end of the earth, he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the chariots with 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 fortress. Now we live in a world where conflict exists at various levels. Ever since Satan tempted

Adam and Eve and they fell in the temptation, conflict has continued in the world. Even in Adam and Eve's family we find the first murder where Cain slew his brother Abel and in the present day conflict is a reality in our world. You only have to turn your TV or radio on or read a newspaper and you find reports about conflict in the Middle East, conflict in Syria, conflict in Yemen and when you look at our cities you think of London and the number of stabbings that take place even over the past week and you listen to the radio reports about the shootings in California, there's conflict in the world all around us and of course the Christian has a conflict within.

When you read what the Apostle Paul says about his own experience he puts it like this, he says I find a law that is fighting against the law of my mind and bringing me into subjection to the law of sin which is in my members. It's as if there is a constant wrestling, a constant attack being made upon the soul of the man of God. There is this warfare and that's what Paul said at the very end of his life when he writes to Timothy that very last letter he has sent he says I have fought the good fight, I have run my race, I have kept the faith. He's talking about his experience as a Christian man fighting the fight of faith so the believer has a fight within, he has a fight with sin round about him and the world which lies in wickedness is full of conflict and full of warfare of various kinds. Now it's difficult for us from the text here to understand what situation lay behind the Psalmist, penning of this Psalm. There are some Psalms and there may be an indication that the title of the Psalm or throughout the Psalm what the occasion was that brought the Psalm or the

Psalmist to write the sentiment but this one there is nothing really and some of the commentators suggest that what may have been at the back of the mind of the Psalmist to put this together was the situation with the king Hezekiah. When Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrian armies Sennacherib at their head and Hezekiah and the population of Jerusalem they were in terrible straits didn't know what to do but the Lord sent one angel one night and that one angel slew put to death a hundred and eighty five thousand of the host of the Assyrians and little wonder then if that indeed is the background to this Psalm little wonder he bursts forth and he says at the beginning of the Psalm God is our refuge and our strength a very present help in trouble we will not fear though the earth gives way and so on that is assume that a situation like that at least is behind the Psalmist's mind as he brings these words before us and under four headings I'd like just to say a few words first of all the expression of faith that we have at the very beginning of the Psalm verses one to three God is our refuge and our strength secondly the Psalmist explains the ground or the basis of his confidence you find this in verses four to seven there is a river whose streams made glad the city of God this is the basis of the Psalmist's confident expression of faith

God is in the midst of us and thirdly we see as we go on that the Psalmist exalts us to come and behold the works of God and in the verses 10 to the end we find similar exhortations and encouragements to focus upon the Lord as our strength and our encouragement in trial firstly then one or two words under this first heading the faith confident confidence of the Psalmist in verse one he says God is our refuge and our strength he is our hiding place he is the one who affords us shelter when situations come to threaten us and it's the exact same sentiment we have in

[7 : 15] Isaiah 32 when Isaiah points us I believe to Christ when he says a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind and as a cover from the tempest as rivers of water in a dry place and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land Christ Jesus who is the sinner savior he is the one who affords shelter and safety in times of trial and times of trouble God is our hiding place he is also our strength our strong one he is the one who affords us security he is the one who protects and sustains us and then it says he is a very present help in trouble I think the emphasis in that particular phrase is that he is a very present help he is only shall we say a prayer away in the depths the Psalmist had in Psalm 130 see where he was Lord from the depths to you I cried and the Lord was ever present with him and the Psalmist goes through the psalm and at last he ends in joyous victory and he commends God's mercy and grace and salvation to others because he himself has found him to be a very present help to him in his time of trouble and then he goes on in verse two therefore we will not fear and he gives an imaginably awful scenario of things that may happen in one's life he says even although the earth be removed the word there even if the earth be altered or disposed of as it might be translated from the original language though mountains be carried into the sea what a scenario that is though the water thereof grow and be troubled though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof say that he says the word say that really consider this take this on board consider it deeply around forces down through the years knew something of that as if the earth were removed it's as if two artillery shells or torpedoes or bombs it's as if the earth was not only shaken but the whole landscape landscape was completely remodeled if you see pictures of the psalm and areas like that where the world conflict took place it's as if the whole place was completely reshaped the topography was remodeled through the work of artillery and bombs recently with my daughter and grandsons we visited Fort George and I would recommend it to any of you to go there so lovely museum there and it's very very well kept and stuff is well presented and at one particular level I think it's probably the highest level of

that museum you go up I think a couple of stairs there is one eye-catching painting of two soldiers and the ground is white with newly fallen snow and one soldier on his knees holding a book like this and the other soldier on his knees I think as well as far as I can remember he is holding his arms up like this and the explanatory leaflet behind beside the picture says that this was at the Battle of Arras World War one and an overhead shell exploded and when people came to the particular area where the shell had exploded they found these two soldiers in this posture dead and it says that the book held in the hand of one of them was the New Testament and whether they were conducting worship at the time or not it's not clear but one wonders what exactly happened in that split second when the bomb exploded above them it's as if they were frozen in time the earth was removed the mountains were carried away as it were and the whole landscape was changed and their life came to an end and eternity opened right in front of them and one can maybe it be encouraged that they were in an act of worship calling upon the Lord who helped them at that time he didn't save their lives but who knows but he brought them safely into his presence their soul being made perfect at the point of death in any case this is the confidence of this psalmist here he says we will not fear whatever comes our way secondly the basis of this psalmist's confidence is wonderful isn't it verses 4 to 7 he says that there is a river whose streams make glad to the city of God the holy habitation of the most high he's talking there particularly about the church of

Christ he's talking about the individual Christian life the individual believer who is a member of the church of Christ and it says here that God is in the midst of it or in the midst of the heart or at the center of the life of those who are his people and whatever comes their way because God is in the midst of it there is a stream that makes glad the city of God what does this mean well if God is in the midst of the church if God is at the center of your heart as your God and savior it says here that God in three persons is present with you God the Father with all his love and power God the Son as your mediator and as your savior God the Holy Spirit as your

Comforter and Enabler and Friend and Strengtheners and the psalmist says this is my encouragement in the face of all kinds of trial that God in three persons is with me and he makes me glad she shall not be moved it says in verse 5 God will help her when morning dawns God will come at the right moment God will come at the time that he deems best sometimes the people of God pray and they long for an answer to their prayers and seemingly God is deaf he's not hearing us aren't we praying ourselves for the state of our nation for the state of the world and the next time you turn on the TV the same old story the same conflicts the same annuities the same hard hearted and hard-headedness but you see in the Lord's good time he will come and save us you see in

Psalm 36 at verse 8 the joy that the psalmist had there they feast on the abundance of your house and you give them drink from the river of your delights this is an amazing commitment by God to his people my grace is sufficient for you and my strength is made perfect in weakness and we so often feel overwhelmed and weakened and discouraged nevertheless one become a dirt house to him he will come when morning dawns the morning of his pre-planned purpose and he will not be a moment late in coming with his help and then in verse 6 the nations rage and the kingdoms taught up he uttered the voice and the earth melts the Lord of Hosts is with us the God of Jacob is our fortress

[17 : 39] Zilla the God of Jacob what's the significance of that phrase there when you remember the promises the covenant promises that God gave to Jacob when Jacob slept there on the wilderness with a stone for his pillow and the Lord appeared to him a ladder set up upon the earth and its talk reaching to heaven and the Lord above speaking to him and part of what he said to him was I am with you and I will keep you I will be with you and I will be I will keep you and that's the promise of the God of Jacob to everyone who trusts in him I will never leave you I will never ever forsake you I am with you always even to the end of the world our nation had this privilege of God being with us in past conflicts despite the fact that we're not perfect as a nation and we weren't perfect then God suffered to draw alongside us and give us liberty liberty from oppression and from war and we thank him profoundly for that but then going on the basis of his confidence leads us thirdly to the psalmist's exhortation to come and behold the works of God and says if he's going back in his mind thinking of conflicts and situations out of which he has brought the people of God think for example for a moment about the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea what an amazing thing that was Moses was pleading to the Lord you remember there in Exodus and the Lord says to him why are you calling to me say to the children of Israel to go forward and where were they going the sea was in front of them mountains on either side of them the Egyptian army pursuing them from behind but they went forward in faith because the Lord opened away for them it was the doing of the Lord and marvelous in their eyes think also as I mentioned a moment ago about the armies of Sennacherib in circling Jerusalem one angel in one night destroyed 185,000 think of the one man Samson the spirit of the Lord came upon him even having had both of his eyes put out and having been in prison for some time but his hair had begun to grow and he asked the young man who led him into this great temple of Dagon put your hands my hands upon the pillars that support this house and he called upon the Lord to strengthen him this one last time and he strengthened him and he brought down the whole building destroy 3,000 of the Lord's enemies it is only by the strength of the Lord that that was down and it is only by the strength of the

Lord that great deeds can still be done in that way he makes war to cease he breaks the bow so that they cannot shoot at us he cuts the spear and thunders the spear that was thrust to puncture and to wound and to maim he cuts the spear and thunders and he burns the chariots in fire what gave the enemies mobility and a fearsome way of attacking because according to historians cutting blades were put upon the outer rooms of these chariots so that when the horse and chariot went through the soldiers the cutting blades were liable to cut them in pieces but the Lord burns the chariot in fire and however much we make of these historical events is it not true that in the Persian of Jesus Christ our savior all our enemies were comforted the power of sin was broken the devil's head was crushed according to Genesis 3:15 from the seat of the woman one will come who will crush the serpent's head and Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary cried it is finished what was finished the power of sin was broken and he had paid the price for the sins of his people and of course on the morning of the third day when the women went to the sepulchre there was nobody there because the angel said he is not here he is risen just as he said come and see the place where the Lord lay and they saw the place where he had lain and then soon he appeared to them the risen savior because he had prevailed over every enemy including the last enemy which is death all power is now given to him in heaven and on earth what an amazing savior we have he is able to conquer all your enemies all my enemies if I yield myself to him in gracious and faithful submission and then finally adversity the Lord speaks be still and know that I am God you see we need to hear these words for disquiet of mind often arises within us from outward troubles why are we so disquieted so often why are we so burdened and afraid so often well maybe the first thing to be considered is that our focus is wrong that we need to focus more upon the Lord than upon the world and the next thing is we need to get to know the Lord better just like Job says agree with God and be at peace thereby good will come to you receive instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart if you keep him you keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you trust in the Lord forever for the Lord God

is an everlasting walk be still and know that I am God he is still God despite wars and rumors of war despite animosities despite all the conflicts he still reigns he is still God and he will be exalted among the heathen he will be exalted in here may the Lord bless to us these thoughts and give us the grace that the psalmist had to be confident in the Lord as our strength as our help and may we know his grace and power continuing in our lives as communities and may our communities continue to remember him not just on a day like this but on every day remember your creator in the days of your youth it's safe but every day give him the place that he requires

I mean let us pray we thank you Lord that we are in possession of your word of your own holy word give us to be sanctified by our involvement with the word of God and may the God of the word be precious to us as our own Lord and God and Savior we thank you for the kindness you have shown us as a nation down through the years and we remember those who gave their lives to secure the liberties that we enjoy bless these things to us this time in Jesus name we ask it amen now I've been asked to stop at five minutes two in order to give us the opportunity to observe the two minutes silence and shall we stop for the two minutes silence right now don't right then okay well at the very end of the worship after the two minutes silence we're going to read and sing from the Scottish Slaughter and Sam 124 the second version of that

Sam now Israel may say and that truly if that the Lord had not our cause maintained if that the Lord had not our right sustained when cruel men against us furiously rose up in wrath to make of us their prey then certainly they had devoured us all and swallowed quick for art that we could deem such was their rage as we might well esteem and as fierce floods before them all things down so had they brought our soul to death quite now the raging streams with their proud swelling waves he then our soul or well in the deep had then our soul or well in the deep but blessed be God who doth us safely keep and hath not given us for our living prey onto their teeth and bloody cruelty even as a bird out of the fowlers snare he escapes away so his soul set free broke all their nets and thus he escaped we therefore our help is in the Lord's great name who heaven and earth by his great power did free these are wonderful words written by the psalmist and so appropriate even up to the present day for ourselves and may we say these words for ourselves as individuals in the light of the difficulties and trials we may have may we know the strength and enabling of the Lord particularly in relation to our soul salvation we may come to him who is the great deliverer of his people from their sins well we may now sing to God's praise the Psalm we have just read Psalm 124 now Israel may say and not truly have had drum so how they brought our soul to them white down.

[33 : 09] The raging streams with their cross running waves, out there our soul nor gravity in the deep.

But let's be God, turn out our sin we keep, and have not given us for a living ray, unturned and blooded through gravity.

Even as our blood of the farmers near, his sins are raised so is our soul set free.

Proc are their nets and thus escape and win. Therefore our health is in the Lord's drinking room, and other by his great pardon free.

Amen.