

**THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF
SIDNEY EDWARD COX**

Psalm 46

God is Our Refuge and Our Strength
(Audio is poor but audible)

Editorial Note: It is my belief that this series on Psalms was recorded while Sidney and Violet Cox resided in retirement at The Eventide residence in Detroit, Michigan. This was during the period 1962 through 1972. Sidney Cox was 75 years of age in 1962.

At various points in the recordings, he states that he is meeting with this group weekly to lead this series; however, when listening to the recordings, there does not seem to be a live congregation. At another spot in the series, he explains that he has also been taping these messages for further distribution.

During this period in his life, Sidney Cox often preached and taught in various churches around the Detroit area, but for a variety of reasons, including the declining health of his beloved wife, Violet, he was increasingly unable to travel extensively. As a result, he began to experiment with tape-recording his messages and lessons in order to send them to interested groups.

Thus, it is impossible to know if he delivered this series in person to a church group, or whether he recorded the series for them to listen to in their Sunday School or other meetings. It was likely both.

The order in which he presented the weekly series was: Psalm 24, Psalm 40, Psalm 46, Psalm 91 and Psalm 117. In addition, there are two recordings made in two different settings of Psalm 29, which do not seem to be part of the formal series.

The audio quality of these recordings varies a great deal. Some are quite good while others are poor.

J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. July 30, 2010.

In our Bible class period today, I am suggesting that we continue the study of some of the well known psalms. Last week, as you may recall, we were talking together and I trust thinking together about Psalm 24. Today, I would like us to concentrate our thought on Psalm 46. Here is one of the most beautiful of all of our psalms. Psalm 46. Now, will you turn in your Bible to it please, and I want us to commence the class by reading it together. Psalm 46. Do you have the place? Well, here it is.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the City of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most high. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen 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. Selah.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.”¹

Now, there we have before us and in our ears, and I hope in our hearts, the sound of Psalm 46.

There are several things that we need to know and to note about the psalm immediately. First, its author is unknown. Now, you will discover in your reading and studying of the Psalms that quite a number of them are written by men whose names are not given. Quite frequently, as in the case of the psalms written by David, we know the author. But so many of them we do not know at all. It may remind us of the fact that the message is important, but the writer is not. Here is one of the psalms that we speak of as the anonymous psalms.

Now, the second thing we want to notice about it is this, that it has three paragraphs in it. And each one ends with that rather strange word Selah. Now, we have discussed this together before, because the word Selah has a use and it has a meaning. As you may remember, it marks the end of a Hebrew paragraph, so that we've got three paragraphs - three distinct sections in this psalm that we are considering, and each one ends with this verbal period, the word Selah.

Now, in addition to that, as we also remember, the word Selah is an exclamation of astonishment. Something very wonderful has been said. And those who are listening are saying within their hearts, if not with their voices, isn't that wonderful? Isn't that marvelous? Isn't that almost beyond belief?

In these days we have an expression that is almost a slang expression. We say sometimes when we hear something of great importance and something that is startling in its thought, we say, “Well can you beat that?” And that is exactly the thought that's here. Here something is being expressed that is so wonderful that the explanation of astonishment is there. And we're not surprised at it when we note what has been said.

Now, the third thing that we need to note is that in this particular psalm, you can notice that the writer's eyes are looking in three different directions. In the first paragraph, he is looking upward. In the second, he's looking onward. In the third, he is looking outward. Let me repeat those words again. Upward, onward, outward. Now, most of us are very interested in what lies before us and what lies around us. But we ought to remember that we're not qualified at all to look onward or outward until we have first looked upward. The upward look is the most important of all.

And so we've got this that we are noticing in connection with this particular psalm. Now, let us remind

¹ Psalm 46:1-11

ourselves when we're thinking of this man and the way in which his eyes are turned in three different directions, sometimes you can read the thoughts in the mind of a person if you can see the direction in which his eyes are looking. Now, this is a great principle. Let us remember, if you please, that God first must capture our eyes before he can capture our hearts. And when we turn to the Word of God we find abundant confirmation of this. "Behold, the Lamb of God." Take a good look at him. Fasten your eyes upon him. Turn your eyes toward him. "Behold, the Lamb of God." And it is amazing how many times this word behold, behold, behold appears. As if it is necessary to attract the attention and hold the direction of our eyes before our hearts can be captured and before our minds can think as God wants them to think.

There's a very lovely song that we sing sometimes. It was written by a woman who's named Helen Lemmel, and she wrote a song with these words in the chorus, "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." And so we find a man who is turning his eyes upward and onward and outward.

And when he turns his eyes upward, what did he see? Now, here we're thinking particularly about paragraph one. What did he see? What did he see when he turned those eyes of his up to the skies? First, he saw God was there. Remember the opening phrase, "God is our refuge and strength." And you can almost hear the sound of his utter amazement as he turns his eyes upwards and discovers the fact of God, the person of God, the nearness of God, the interest of God. God is there. Now, he would not have discovered that if his eyes had been looking in some other direction. We do not discover God like this, by turning our eyes down to the earth. We turn our eyes upward and when we do, as this man did, we find God is our refuge and our strength.

Notice those two things, our refuge. A hiding place. In those days, as in these days, one of the greatest necessities for all of us is a hiding place. All the way through the scripture you can hear the sound of God's gracious provision for a hiding place. A place for his people. A place for the individual. A place for the troubled soul. And you hear about them, and you read about them. And the picture of them comes before your eyes. There's the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me."² "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."³ The rest, the refuge. The place to which we can run in the moment of emergency and find ourselves safe.

There was never a time when folks were talking more about refuges than they are in these days. As a matter of fact, it's constantly in our thoughts and upon our hearts. You can go down any street you wish, in any city you care to think about, and you will find the sign outside some building or other that indicates that there in that building, probably down in the basement or something of the kind, there is a place of refuge in case of danger or emergency. You can see it everywhere. These are the days when we need, as perhaps we have not needed before, a refuge. And this man discovered God as his refuge.

Now, he found something else, that God was his strength. And you know, I'm quite sure that if we examine our own hearts, that we're not conscious of or thinking about how very strong we are. I'm not quite sure as to whom I may be talking to in this very moment, but I'm quite sure of one thing, my dear.

² Isaiah 49:2

³ Psalm 91:1

You are far more conscious of your weakness than you are of your strength. Only occasionally do we find some bombastic individual boasting about his strength. Most of us are very conscious of our weakness. But here was somebody who looked up and found that God was his strength. He knew quite well, this unknown writer, he knew quite well that his arm of flesh would fail. But God's arm never fails. Our strength is insufficient. His strength is all sufficient.

Now, in addition to that, he found that God was not only his refuge and strength, but he found also that God was the present help in time of trouble. Now, I heard Crosley Morgan, the great son of the great Bible teacher of yesterday, Dr. Campbell Morgan, dealing with a similar subject on one occasion.⁴ And he used this very phrase. He said that the words, "A present help in time of trouble" can be translated into words that bring the thought nearer to us by saying, "Someone who comes running to you when you get into a tight place." Now, dear, you let me repeat that first verse and put that thought in, in the place of the more prosaic word, "A very present help in trouble." We seldom use a phrase like that. But you listen to what it sounds like when we get this other thought in. "God is our refuge and strength. And He comes running to us when we get into a tight place." Did you hear it? Did you hear that?

Because unless I've missed the point all together, life is just one tight place after another. Have you ever noticed that? Because, my dear, you won't mind me saying that if you haven't, you don't know very much about life, not at all. Some of these words are picture words. You can easily make it into an illustration of your own. Supposing I went into a home and here on one side of the hallway was a room in which a mother was busy at work. And on the other side, another room with the open door between them. And here in the second room a little child is playing on the carpet with her toys. Mother busy, the child happy with her toys. Now, here's the situation. And mother is very busy as mothers always are. But suddenly in the midst of her busyness, she hears a cry of distress from this other room. Something's wrong over there. There's a cry of pain from that other room. Now dear, what does mother do? What does she do? Does she say, "Oh, let her get out of the mess herself. That's the only way she'll ever learn. I've tried to teach her not to do these things. When I get good and ready I'll go and help her." Is that the way she talks? Oh, no. You know quite well what mother does under those circumstances. She will drop anything she's doing, anything she's handling, and run to that child who's in a tight place.

Do you see, my dear? But do you see something more? God is like that. That is the great vision of God that comes to us when we turn our trusting eyes and our needy hearts upward. That's the thing we discover. God, like that. Not merely God running the universe. We're quite aware of that. But God

⁴ Born on a farm in England in 1863, Dr. G. Campbell Morgan was brought up in a strict Puritanical home where he amused himself by preaching to his sisters' dolls. Although his first sermon before a responsive audience was delivered in a Wesleyan schoolroom at the age of thirteen, he was engulfed in doubt and confusion concerning his faith after preparing for the ministry. Ordained a minister of the Congregational Church in 1889, the young man became the leading preacher in England, holding several pastorates. Later he became widely known in the United States and Canada as a Bible conference speaker, lecturer, pastor and teacher before returning to England in 1935 to become the pastor of Westminster Congregational Church in London. Dr. Morgan was a prolific but profound writer of books, booklets, tracts and articles. Among his best-known books are Parables of the Kingdom; the eleven volumes of the Westminster Pulpit; The Crises of the Christ; the ten-volume work, The Analysed Bible; the Triumphs of Faith series; and An Exposition of the Whole Bible. His earthly life of testimony and ministry came to a close in May, 1945.

running to the side of somebody like you when the need is there and when the emergency arises.

Now, this man goes on and he says, therefore, because God is like that, “Therefore we will not fear.”⁵ Isn't it wonderful? Now, there's the answer to fear is to find God like that. Not to make slogans about it, and not to put our feeble little minds to explanations that don't explain. Not at all. We find God is our refuge and strength, and because of that we will not fear.

You know there is more fear in the world today than ever before. You can find it everywhere, mens hearts are failing because of fear. And the only people in the world who are not afraid tonight or today are those who have looked upward and found God, their refuge and their strength. Only those who have looked into the face of God have found the answer to this ever present haunting problem of fear. Here was a man who said, “Therefore we will not fear.” Safe, no matter what.

And in order to illustrate, he gives the greatest illustrations that could possibly come to his mind - though the earth seems to be moving. And it does in these days, doesn't it? The world in which we live is not the world in which our grandfathers and our great grandfathers lived. That was one world. The world in which we live is another world all together. The world has moved and brought with it its haunting fears. “The earth is moved. The mountains are carried into the midst of the sea.”⁶ And you don't need me to remind you that in the imagery of the scriptures, mountains always represent governments. And the sea is always a picture of the restless peoples of the world. And governments topple into the restless waves of the peoples of the earth.

As a matter of fact, in the century in which we live, in the first fifty years of it, more than fifty governments, and some of them looked as if they would last forever, toppled from their mountain tops and went down out of sight in the restless waves of the peoples of the earth.

Here is a man who says, “God is our refuge and strength.” And it isn't surprising, is it, that at the end of a moment like that there is the exclamation of astonishment. Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it marvelous that God is like that.

I don't wonder that this man could look on with exultation and say, “There is a city the river thereof will make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early.”⁷ But the wonderful thing for us is, that in the midst of whatever circumstances may surround your life, my dear, you too can look up and find God like that.

Now, we started out by saying, God is our refuge and strength. And I think it would be nice if in the closing moments of this little class period, we said the first two verses together. The first paragraph of the 46th Psalm. Turn your eyes down there on your Bible. If you can say it from memory all the better. But let's say it together. And here it is. This will be our benediction.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the

5 Psalm 46:2

6 Psalms 46:2

7 Psalms 46:4,5

earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”

Isn't that wonderful? Hallelujah! And God bless you. (audio ends)