

A Time to be Still

2016 Mark Beard

Text: Psalm 46 (NIV)

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
- 3 though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.
- 5 God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.
- 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
- 7 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
- 8 Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.
- 9 He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
- 10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."
- 11 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Introduction

Difficult times produce a restlessness in human beings. In some instances, if it provokes us to positive action it can be positive. If it provokes anxiety in us it is a negative. We live in what feels like chaotic and restless times. Some are trying to take positive action, but most appear to be caught up in anxiety and hopelessness. Sadly, God is sometimes 2nd, 3rd, 4th or lower down the list for people as a source of hope. When we are driven by fear and chaos, many tend to look to self or others before God. But, not those who truly know the power and comfort of God.

Here in Psalm 46:10, where the psalmist writes, "Be still and know that I am God," the Hebrew definition of "being still" means to stop striving, to let go, surrender—not to surrender to the enemy, but to surrender ourselves to God in an act of trust.

Theologian Ivor Powell noted, "Obeying this command does not infer that one has to be lazy. Being motionless does not necessarily mean doing nothing. To remain still in the face of advancing danger takes more courage than is natural among men and women. It means ceasing to rely upon self, and trusting implicitly in the promises of God."

Note the comfort in the *admonitions* found here as we look as surrendering more to God in a trusting manner. The Psalmist is telling us to...

I. Be Still—Don't Rush Ahead—Keep in Mind Who You Serve.

A. Instead of becoming wrapped up in what is happening around us, focus on what He has done for us and hearing what He has to say.

In a book entitled in Pursuit of Silence the author said, “People are accustomed to noise. Jackhammers, car alarms, ringtone, earphone, television, etc.... But silence focuses us, brings us closer to people around us, improves our health, and is a key to lasting peace and contentment. In deaf communities, attentiveness is heightened in almost every aspect of life. If two deaf people are walking together, using sign language, they constantly watched out for each other holding the other in their gaze. They are connected yet keenly aware of their surroundings.

B. We don't have to live in denial of problems, we only need to see beyond the present circumstances.

II. Be Still—Don't Allow Anger, Fear or Impatience to Grow—Keep Your Mind on the Lord.

A. Keep your mind on the One who brings peace, not on the uproar, chaos or upset (v.10).

God is:

- Omniscient – all knowing
- Omnipresent – universal presence at the same time
- Omnipotent – all powerful
- Holy, Faithful, and Sovereign
- Infinite – without measure, forever

B. Stay in His presence, know His power and feel His peace (v.11).

Conclusion

The *admonitions* found here about surrendering to God in a trusting manner require us to slow down and spend time with God with open ears and an open heart.

Pastor Eugene Peterson, in his book Earth and Altar, writes, “Two commands direct us from the small-minded world of self-help to the large world of God's help. First, "Come, behold the works of the Lord." Take a long, scrutinizing look at what God is doing. This requires patient attentiveness and energetic concentration. Everybody else is noisier than God. The headlines and neon lights and amplifying systems of the world announce human works. But what of God's works? They are unadvertised but also inescapable, if we simply look.

They are everywhere. They are marvelous. But God has no public relations agency. He mounts no publicity campaign to get our attention. He simply invites us to look ...

The second command is "Be still, and know that I am God." Be still. Quit rushing through the streets long enough to become aware that there is more to life than your little self-help enterprises. When we are noisy and when we are hurried, we are incapable of intimacy—deep, complex, personal relationships. If God is the living center of redemption, it is essential that we be in touch with and responsive to that personal will. If God has a will for this world and we want to be in on it, we must be still long enough to find out what it is (for we certainly are not going to learn by watching the evening news). Baron von Hugel, who had a wise word on most subjects, always held out that "nothing was ever accomplished in a stampede."

—Author and pastor Eugene Peterson -- *Eugene Peterson, Earth and Altar (InterVarsity Press, 1985), pp. 77-79*