

EARTHQUAKE, BUT NOT HEARTQUAKE

NO. 1950

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27, 1887,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“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.”
Psalm 46:1-3.*

THIS psalm is a song for all Israel, for all who are truly the chosen of God, called to be His own people, should exhibit a fearless courage. The peace of God which passes all understanding should keep the hearts and minds of all who rest in God. If, indeed, the Lord BE our refuge and strength, we are entitled to seek after a spirit which shall bear us above the dreads of common men. It is not every man that can sing this psalm. He must belong to the believing company, he must have God to be his God, and he must, like Israel, have learned the art of prevailing prayer, or else he cannot sing the song of peace amid commotion and calamity. No man can truly sing this psalm but those who are redeemed from the earth.

While this is a psalm for all Israel, it is specially marked as committed to the charge of the sons of Korah. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram perished because of their presumption. They went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them. They and all that appertained unto them were swallowed up, only we are astonished to read, “Notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not.” I attribute their singular escape to the sovereign grace of God, who spared them when their kinsmen were destroyed.

They were made singers in the courts of the Lord, and surely they would sing with peculiar emphasis these words, “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed.” They saw the earth open her mouth and swallow up the offenders of their household while they were preserved by sovereign grace. Surely the tears must have stood in their eyes when they sang this verse, and thought of the opening gulf at their feet.

The circumstance under which a man is saved will influence the rest of his life. To be saved of God from between the teeth of judgment is a rescue so special and vivid that the subject of it learns henceforth to sing aloud unto the preserving Lord. Delivered from so great a death, believers learn to trust that the Lord will yet deliver them. When conversion is especially remarkable, the music of gratitude is pitched in a high key, and the converts reach notes which are impossible to others. It is for sons of Korah to sing, “Therefore will not we fear.”

It is significant, also, that this psalm was to be sung “upon Alamothe,” which in all probability means that it was to be set to music suitable for virgin voices. The hallelujah at the Red Sea was chiefly in the hands of Miriam and the maidens of Israel. She took her timbrel, and the daughters of Israel followed after her, singing unto the Lord. This is a psalm of the same sort.

You virgin souls, arise and sing unto God, your refuge and strength. Awake, you hearts that follow the Lord fully in the fervor of your first love, and lift your voices to the Lord. Come, you that have been kept pure and undefiled in your word and way, you whose hearts are chaste to the love of Jesus Christ, you are called upon above all others to sing, “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.”

It was because Luther's heart was chaste towards God, and his whole mind virgin towards divine truth, that he delighted to sing this psalm. In the days of the most furious opposition he was wont to say to Melancthon, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm, and let the devil do his worst." So, too, when Luther was dead, Melancthon heard a girl singing this psalm, and he said to her, "Sing on, dear daughter mine, you know not what comfort you bring to my heart." We read of the armies of Gustavus Adolphus singing this psalm before their victory at Leipsic. So, you see, the young, the simple, the guileless may sing that which nerves warriors for the battle.

***"God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid;
Therefore, although the earth remove,
We will not be afraid."***

This morning, as I shall be enabled, I shall say a little, first, upon *the confidence of the saints*, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Then I will speak upon *the courage which grows out of it*, "Therefore will not we fear." We shall close with a brief survey of *the conflicts to which that courage will be sure to be exposed*, "Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

I. First, then, let us carefully consider THE CONFIDENCE OF THE SAINTS.

God's people have a sure confidence. Other men build as best they may, but true believers rest upon the Rock of ages. *Their confidence is altogether beyond themselves*. In this song there is nothing about their own virtue, valor, or wisdom. The heathen moralist boasted that if the globe itself should break, his integrity would make him stand fearless amid the wreck.

But the believer has a humbler though a truer reliance. Though the earth be removed he is undismayed, and this does not arise from his own personal self-sufficiency, but from God, who is his refuge and strength. He is fearless, not because of his original stoutness of heart and natural firmness of will, but because he has a God to shelter and uphold him. If he does not fear calamity, it is because he fears God and God alone. Our psalm begins with God, and with God it ends—"The God of Jacob is our refuge."

We may be as timid by nature as the conies, but God is our refuge. We are as weak by nature as bruised reeds, but God is our strength. We never know what strength is till our own weakness drives us to trust omnipotence, never understand how safe our refuge is till all other refuges fail us. When the earth is removed, and the waters of the sea roar and are troubled, being driven both from land and sea, we hide ourselves in God.

You who are strong in yourselves imagine strength where only weakness can be found. You seek the living among the dead, and substantial confidences amid the "vanity of vanities." If we look to ourselves for courage we shall fail in the hour of trial. When the earth is removed, the mightiest men are the first to shudder—the greatest boasters become the worst cowards. For confidence and peace we must say unto the Lord, "All my fresh springs are in you."

This confidence is gained by an appropriating faith. Peace comes to me, not only by what God is, but by what God is *to me*. "God is *our* refuge and strength." "This God is *our* God." You never enjoy the goodness and greatness of God if you view them in an abstract manner—you must grasp them as your own. It seems a daring act for a man to appropriate God, and yet the Lord invites us to do it, He says, "Let him take hold of my strength."

Why hesitate to make the appropriation? Look at the men of the world—they would appropriate the whole earth if they could—continents are not too wide. It is no fault of theirs if they do not hedge in the stars, and monopolize the sun. And shall not the Christian appropriate those heavenly things of which he is made the heir—an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ Jesus?

Let us join with the prophet Jeremiah in his comfortable soliloquy, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him.” As with Thomas we behold the print of the nails, let us say unto our blessed Redeemer—“*My Lord and my God.*” The deep peace which is our right and privilege will not be ours unless, with assured faith, we take the Lord to be ours in all the fullness of His love. Come, let us now say—“God is our refuge and strength.”

This confidence will be greatly sustained by a clear knowledge of God. “Acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto you.” If we were greater students of God, how much happier we should be! Pope said, “The proper study of mankind is man.” It is a deplorably barren subject. Say, rather, “The proper study of mankind is God.” When men of God make God their study, then they discover in Him those things which make Him a refuge for their hours of danger, a strength for days of labor, and a help for emergencies of every kind.

We ought to be able to say more of God today than we could a few years ago. Our general notion should now branch out into instructive particulars. We ought to now see the varied blessings which come to us from God, and to speak of Him under a threefold description as “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

We notice under the Old Testament dispensation that certain sacrifices, like the doves and pigeons which were brought by poor Israelites, were simply cut in two, and were laid on the altar. But other offerings which were brought by richer Israelites were more carefully divided. Take the offering of the rich to represent, as a type, the ideas of those who are well-taught in knowledge and have a greater experience of the things of God, and then you see how matters of detail were mentioned.

When bullocks were presented we read of the fat, and the head, and the legs, and the inwards. So here we read of refuge, and strength, and help. The more we know the Lord, the more shall we perceive that He is full of blessings to us. “They that know your name will put their trust in you.” You shall be saved by the little knowledge which trusts God, but your peace shall be far fuller and deeper if you know the deep things of God and understand His secrets thereof, for then you shall not be afraid of evil tidings, since your heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

If you are as yet a timid believer, seek to grow in the knowledge of God, for thus shall you learn to say, “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed.” Half our fears are the result of ignorance. Truth as yet unknown would greatly encourage us if we did but perceive it. If we knew more of God we would be bold as lions. Wherefore I exhort all true believers here to dwell much in the presence of God, and ask to be instructed in the nature, the character, the attributes of God. Yea, the purpose, the promise, and the providence of the covenant God of Israel. To know Him is life eternal. Solid peace, which no calamity can destroy, must come from God—from God appropriated—and from God growingly known.

All this will be certified to us by our experience. This psalm is best sung by men and women who know what they are singing, because they have felt the preserving and delivering grace of God. I shall put it to you this morning, you that know the Lord, can you not say by experience, “God is our refuge”? You have fled to Him—have you not found a shelter in Him? There have been times of trial so severe that you could not endure its force, but were compelled to flee from it. You fled to God—was His door closed against you? Did He bid you go elsewhere? Did He upbraid you for your presumption?

And when you have hidden yourself in God, let me ask you, has He not afforded you a very blessed retreat? When you have entered into your chamber, shut your door, and hidden yourself with God, have you not been at perfect peace? Yes, you have been as safe and as happy as Noah when the Lord shut him in.

Look at the little chicks yonder, under the hen! See how they bury their little heads in the feathers of her warm bosom! Hear their little chirps of perfect happiness, as they nestle beneath the mother’s wings! “He shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings shall you trust; his truth shall be your shield and buckler.” Have you not found it so? My happiest hours have not been in the days of my mirth, but in the nights of my sorrow. When all waters are bitter, the cup of divine consolation is all the sweeter.

For brightness, give me not the sunlight, but that superior glory with which the Lord lights up the darkness of affliction. It is not necessary to happiness that a man should be prosperous in business, or applauded by mankind. It is only necessary that the Lord should smile on him. It is not essential to happiness that he should be in good health, or even that he should be naturally of cheerful spirit. God gives us the truest health in sickness, and the tenderest joy amid depression.

Brethren, "God is our refuge." It is many a day since first we went to Him, and we have been many times since, but He has never failed us once. I appeal to the aged and the experienced here, and I know that the older they are and the more tried they have been, the more steadfastly will they bear their witness that "God is a refuge for us."

We can also say that God has been our strength. When we have not been afflicted, but have had arduous labor to perform for God, we have been made to feel and mourn our weakness, and then the Lord has made us to glory in infirmity, because His power has rested on us. What multiform shapes that strength has taken! Many of you have had strength for the daily battle of business life, others for domestic life. Under fierce temptations you remain unconquered, under stern duties you remain unwearied. You have had strength for exhausting service or crushing suffering. Had you been left to your own wit and wisdom, they alone could never have sufficed you. Strength of mind has been given from above.

See the widow, left penniless, who has brought up a family of children! Can she tell how she did it? See the girl placed amid coarse and brutal men of licentious character, she remains pure, but can she tell you how? God is our strength in ways unknown to ourselves. Our trials are all different. No two of us have proved the Lord in exactly the same way, but yet our testimony is uniform. The Lord has been all-sufficient, His strength is perfect. Thus far we find that promise good, "Your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as your days, so shall your strength be."

We have also proved another thing, namely, that God is "a very present help in trouble." We have had helpers after the flesh who have not been present when we needed them—perhaps they have studiously kept out of the way, at any rate, just at the pinch when we have said, "Oh, that so and so were here," our friend has been at the end of the earth.

But it has never been so with God. Has He not said, "Before they call I will answer them, and while they are yet speaking I will hear"? Just there where the burden pressed, God has been immediately present to lighten the load. He is not only present, but *very* present. More present than our nearest friend when most present. God's presence permeates us. He is not only by our side, but He is within us, in the heart of our thoughts, at the springs of our life.

Beloved, you have sometimes complained that God was absent from you. Because of your sin He has hidden His face from you, but let me ask you, did you ever find the Lord absent in your hour of trial? In the burning furnace, if ever anywhere, you shall see "one like unto the Son of God." He has said, "When you pass through the waters I will be with you." Wherever else He may be supposed to be absent, He will be sure to be present in trouble.

Now, this is matter of experience and because we have experienced it, therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed. Having already tried and tested God, we are not going to doubt Him now. We feel something of the mind of Sir Francis Drake, who, after he had sailed round the world, was buffeted with a storm in the Thames. "What?" he asked, "have we sailed round the world safely, and shall we be drowned in a ditch?" So do we say at this day. Helped so long, and helped so often! God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, why should we fear? How dare we fear?

Once more, dear friends, in order to realize the fearlessness of which this text so sweetly sings, we must not only have a past experience at our back, but *an immediate enjoyment of the divine help*. If you can truly sing in your soul, "God is my refuge and my strength," then it will be impossible for you to be afraid. A sense of the nearness and graciousness of God will be an antidote to fear. I know that it is so in alarms and distresses which come under my observation.

I have stood often at the bedsides of dear brethren and sisters, members of this church, when they have come to die, and I have, without exception, always found them perfectly restful and free from fear. It is a sorrow to see friends full of pain, and to know that they are dying, but the various interviews that I have had with the departing have left no impression of gloom on my mind, but the very reverse.

I came this week out of a quiet bedchamber where I saw a Sunday school teacher passing away. It was a little sanctuary. Everything so quiet, peaceful, happy. Death cast no shadow over the sweet face. Heaven lighted the features. It seemed more like a marriage day than a death day. Why are these dying beds so happy? Because these people have any goodness of their own? Far from it—without exception they disown it. Because they are strong and self-contained? No. I might speak of young and old believers, greatly emaciated by long sickness, and yet as greatly strong in faith. What brings this peace? Truly, the Lord was there. His presence realized makes death a small matter. Do we not sing—

*“Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death’s iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she pass’d”?*

The presence of God with the soul of a believer swallows up death in victory, and aught else that is terrible in time or in eternity loses its terror in the presence of the mighty God of Jacob. Thus have I shown you where the confidence of the Christian really lies.

II. I come, secondly, to notice THE COURAGE WHICH GROWS OUT OF IT.

This courage is very full and complete. “Therefore will not we fear.” It does not say, “Therefore will not we run away,” but, “Therefore will not we fear.” It does not even say, “Therefore will not we faint and swoon in dread,” but, “Therefore will not we fear.” The presence of God does so stay the soul and quiet the heart, that fear, which has torment, is driven away.

Nature fears, it could not be otherwise, but through grace the heaven-born spirit triumphs over nature and its fear. God does not take away from us those natural fears which lead us to seek the preservation of life, but He masters them by a serene security of heart produced by His presence. We are perplexed, but not in despair. We see the position to be full of danger, and yet we know that we are in no danger, the Lord being near. “Therefore will not we fear.” It is a most delightful thing, when the heart is placid, because we believe in God and in His Christ. This peace is the peace of God which passes all understanding no pretence of peace, but a divine reality which the world can neither create nor destroy.

Then, further, *this courage is logically justifiable.* It is not the courage of nature, which may be a mere brute virtue, such as dogs and bulls possess. Neither does it grow out of want of feeling. The courage of the Christian is not the hardness of the stoic. The stoic boasts that he does not feel. The Christian does feel, feels as keenly as anybody and much more than most, and yet, for all that, the conscious love of God lifts him above fear. The believer’s fearlessness is founded upon argument, and so the Psalmist words it, “Therefore will not we fear.” Because God is present as the refuge of His people, it is unreasonable for them to fear.

Observe, then, dear friends, that whatever happens to the man who has God to be his God, he need not fear, because none of these things will affect the ground of his confidence. No calamity will change God’s love to us. Suppose we should witness an earthquake, a tempest, a famine, pestilence, a war—none of these would separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. These temporal calamities do not touch the vital matter; such things have no influence upon the unchangeable love of God, except to make it more clear.

Suppose again, that the most awful things were to occur, would they not occur according to God’s decree? We believe in a God who has arranged all things according to the counsel of His will. Do you believe that anything is left to chance? Is any event outside the circle of the divine predestination? No, my brethren, with God there are no contingencies. The mighty charioteer of Providence has gathered up

all the reins of all the horses, and He guides them all according to His infallible wisdom. There is a foreknowledge and predestination which concerns all things, from the motion of a grain of dust on the threshing floor to that of the flaming comet which blazes athwart the sky. Nothing can happen but what God ordains, and therefore, why should we fear?

Again, nothing happens without the divine power being in it. The Lord says, "Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire. I have created the waster to destroy." The most violent and wicked men could not move a finger if strength were not lent them by the Lord. As for the catastrophes of nature, is not the Lord distinctly in them? Who shakes the earth? Is it not God that looks on it and it trembles? When the mountains vomit fire, is it not because He touches the hills and they smoke? Our Father works all things, wherefore should His children be afraid?

Furthermore, do not you and I believe that God overrules everything, that even that which naturally might be called evil is turned to good account? The Lord's goodness extracts the viper's tooth, and supplies an antidote to the poison. Evil was it, but God transmuted it into good by the alchemy of His divine wisdom. Who is he that can harm you? "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn."

Furthermore, we know that nothing that can happen, however tremendous it may be, can shake the kingdom of God. Our chief possession lies in that kingdom, and if that is secure, all is safe. The gates of hell shall not prevail against that kingdom, therefore, whatever is imperiled, our highest, best, and most vital interests are safe beyond the shadow of harm.

Suppose an accident should take away our lives, I smile as I think that the worst thing that could happen would be the best thing that could happen. If we should die, we should but the sooner be "forever with the Lord." If in the quiver of God's providence there should lie an arrow which shall today bring us death, it would also bring us glory. So, if the very worst that can befall us is the best that can come, why should we fear? I think this is good reasoning, is it not? If you are a believer indeed, and if God be your refuge and your strength, there is a logical reason why you should not yield to alarm.

Now, *this fearlessness is exceedingly profitable*. If a man is able to contain himself, and possess his soul in patience through the presence of God, he will not do that which is foolish. Men when they are frightened are in hot haste, and hurry themselves into folly. As if they were turned to children, men in their alarm will act without reason. In fact, terror is a kind of madness. Many absurd actions have been performed under the influence of panic.

In times of danger the man who is calm is the most ready to use the proper means of escape. Presence of mind is invaluable, and the best way to secure presence of mind is to believe in the presence of God. In cases of sickness, the patient who does not fret is the most likely to be cured. We have had among us just now instances of dear friends in this church, who have been called to undergo most serious operations, and it has been a wonderful help to them that they have known no dread, but have been passive in the Lord's hands.

Our Lord Jesus was ever sweetly serene, and this was one element of the wisdom of His behavior. In the struggle of life a cheerful fearlessness is a grand assistance. Here is a man on the Exchange, and things are going heavily against him, prices are falling, and all that he can do appears to make bad worse. If that man gives way to fear he may plunge into utter ruin, but if he can step aside a minute or two, and breathe a prayer to God, he will pull himself together, and when he comes back he will coolly survey the situation, and act with discretion. Lose your head and you lose the battle. Lose your heart, and you have lost all. To him who knows no fear there is no fear, provided that his forgetfulness of fear arises out of his memory of God. For the prudent government of life, as well as for its enjoyment, the overcoming of fear is a great help.

Fearlessness also assists in keeping us from doing wrong. The man who can trust God with consequences will not do wrong in order to escape from losses. The man who yields to the fear of man is apt to conceal his convictions, and if he does not deny the faith, he is apt to attempt a compromise, and

that is the most dangerous operation which a Christian man can enter on. If faith in God lifts us up above the fear of losses and sufferings, we shall say to every form of temptation, "Get you behind me, Satan."

One thing more I desire to say about this fearlessness, namely, that *it brings great glory to God*. If you are enabled to rise above fear in times of alarm, then those who see you will say, "This is a man of God, and this is God's work upon his soul." I knew a youth, near forty years ago, who was staying with relations when a thunderstorm of unusual violence came on at nightfall. A stack was struck by lightning and set on fire, within sight of the door. The grown-up people in the house, both men and women, were utterly overcome with fright. The strong men seemed even more afraid than the women. All the inmates of the house sat huddled together. Only this youth was quietly happy.

There was a little child upstairs in bed, and the mother was anxious about it, but even her love could not give her courage enough to pass the staircase windows, to bring that child down. The babe cried, and this youth, whom I knew right well, who was then but newly converted, went upstairs alone, took the child, and without hurry or alarm, brought it down to its mother. He needed no candle, for the lightning was so continuous that he could see his way right well. He felt that the Lord was wonderfully near that night, and so no fear was possible to his heart. He sat down and read a psalm aloud to his trembling relatives, who looked on the lad with loving wonder. That night he was master of the situation, and those in the house believed that there was something in the religion which he had so lately professed.

I believe that if all of us can, by God's grace, get such a sense of God's nearness to us in times of danger and trouble that we will remain calm, we shall bring much honor to the cause of God and the name of Jesus. Holy confidence sings psalms by its spirit and acts. It is well to sing, in the language of David, "God is our refuge and strength," but it is better still so to act that all can see that we do not fear though the earth is removed.

III. Time has fled, and I must ask your patience while I now dwell for a little while upon the third point, THE CONFLICTS TO WHICH THIS FEARLESSNESS WILL BE EXPOSED. If you become fearless through the presence of God, that courage will be tested.

It will be tried in ways *novel and unusual*. "Though the earth be removed." This is a terrible novelty. Those who have been in earthquakes tell me that the feeling is most singular. It does not seem like a common shake, but as if everything had given way at once. You do not know what to do—the very foundations of everything have slipped from under you. Suppose that the Lord is about to try us in new and unheard of ways, yet, having the Lord to be our refuge, strength, and present help, we will not fear. New trials will bring new grace, and prove the value of old promises.

Certain trials are very *mysterious and threatening*. It would be a great mystery if we were to see "the mountains carried into the midst of the sea." There they have stood for ages, and should they take a leap, we should be at our wits' end to account for their motion. If some giant force plucked them up by their roots, and hurled them into the center of the ocean, we would be amazed.

But some afflictions are of that order—you cannot understand them. The sting of sorrow often lies in the unseen. What we cannot comprehend astounds and appalls us. Yet, my brethren, we need not fear if God be with us, though the mountains were hurled into the midst of the sea, the Lord could put them back into their places again. If all the devils in hell had a hand in your trouble, you need not therefore be alarmed, for one God is greater than millions of demons. If all the legions of the pit rushed forth in hosts innumerable as flying locusts, all armed to the teeth, and eager for your blood, yet the Lord of hosts being with you, you would march through them as a man goes through a field of grass. One lion does not fear a flock of sheep, and one man who trusts in God is master of armies of adversaries. Therefore, we will not fear, "though hills amid the seas be cast." Our God is mightier than all mysterious forces whatsoever.

Some trials also seem to be *utterly ungovernable*—"Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled." You cannot do anything with the sea when it rages. It hurls itself aloft in great masses. It yawns in fathomless abysses, it rushes, it whirls, it sinks. As for its noise, it drowns your thoughts. The water is here, there, everywhere, when the deep once begins to break loose, and certain troubles seem to be of

like nature, they rush upon you all of a sudden, they multiply like swelling waves, they drive furiously, they carry all before them, and yet even then we need not fear. If God be with us, He is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. There is no reason to fear noise, and none even to fear the sea, for “the LORD sits upon the flood; yea, the LORD sits King forever.” Let the sea roar, and let its waters thereof be troubled, our faith shall never yield to fear.

Sometimes we get afraid through *sympathy with the fear of others*. Observe, “Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof,” as though when the sea had taken to roaring and trembling, the mountains followed it in sympathy. So, when we see the strongest people giving way, and panic seizing upon them, we are apt to yield, but if God be with us, and we can hold firm to the truth that He is our refuge and our strength, we shall not fear.

“Well,” says one, “what is the practical run of all this?” Why, just this. There may come to you and to me trouble great and unexpected and it will then be well to rise out of the reach of fear. War may soon burst upon us. The political atmosphere is charged with war, and we may be surrounded by it before the year grows old. We have enjoyed, as a nation, so much of rest within our own island that we have grown somewhat secure, but even if war were at our gates, those who have made the Most High their refuge need not fear.

Something worse than war is threatening. Anarchy seeks to make havoc in the streets. There are plenty of signs and tokens that a breakup of social order is desired by not a few. Fierce spirits are eager to repeat among us the horrors of the French Revolution. To break down, divide, destroy, disintegrate, is the policy of many. The earthquake of society is more to be dreaded than the quaking of the globe, and we are within measurable distance of such a catastrophe.

Shall we lie down and die? Nay, verily, we will not fear, though the earth be removed. If God is our confidence we need not be afraid, though the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing. The unloosing of the bond of society is a thing to be dreaded more than an incursion of wild beasts, but the Lord reigns, and therefore right will prevail.

Perhaps some of you feel this sad depression of trade weighing upon your spirits. “I do not know what is coming of it,” says one, “I do not think I shall long be able to provide for my family.” Yes, but if God is your refuge and strength, I beseech you, do not lose heart. “Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” This depression is to you what the earthquake has been to the Riviera, but yet you must not be buried in despair. Hope on, hope ever.

“Ah!” says one, “but I fear the return of persecution. Popery is making rapid strides, and may come into power again.” I am not quite so much alarmed about that as some are, but even if it were so, we must not show the white feather. Do not be afraid. He that helps His people is stronger than their adversaries. He can deliver from the jaws of the lion, and He will deliver without fail.

As for myself, I am often sadly tossed about because of the heresies and false doctrines of this present age. It grieves me to the heart to see the want of spirituality among ministers, and of holiness among professing Christians. It cuts me to the quick to see the utter rubbish and poison which is preached instead of Christianity. At times it looks as if all things were going wrong. The men to whom one looked as pillars forsake the faith, and the staunchest give way for the sake of peace. We are apt to cry, “What will become of us?”

But if God is our refuge and strength, we need not be afraid, even amid general apostasy. While God lives, truth is in the ascendant. I remember years ago meeting with that blessed servant of God, the late Earl of Shaftesbury. He was at Mentone with a dying daughter, and he happened that day to be very much downcast, as, indeed, I have frequently seen him, and as, I am sorry to confess, he has also frequently seen me.

That day he was particularly cast down about the general state of society. He thought that the powers of darkness in this country were having it all their own way, and that, before long, the worst elements of society would gain power, and trample out all virtue. Looking up into his face, I said to him, “And is God dead? Do you believe that while God lives the devil will conquer Him?” He smiled, and we walked

along by the Mediterranean communing together in a far more hopeful tone. The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock. As long as the Lord lives our hope lives also. Gospel truth will yet prevail. We shall live to see the old faith to the front again. The church, like Noah's dove, will come back to her rest again, and bring something with her which shall prophesy eternal peace.

Now, my beloved friend, think about yourself a minute, and all the trials which may yet beset you. If you are to be afflicted with incurable sickness, and gradually to pine away amid multiplied pains, yet you need not fear. If you are to be an invalid from this time forth to the end of your days, yet, be not greatly depressed in spirit, for the Lord's presence will sustain you. If heart and flesh both fail, God will be the strength of your heart, and your portion forever. By and by you and I will have to die, unless the Lord should suddenly come. What then? Then will the earth be removed, so far as we are concerned, and then, as far as our experience goes, our mountain will be carried into the midst of the sea, but since God is our refuge and strength we ought not to dread the day.

Look into the Book of Revelation and you will see that tremendous events are foretold. All things shall be shaken—all the glories of earth shall melt away. Confusion, like the first chaos, shall cover all things. The earth shall rock and reel, and the stars shall fall from heaven. But even then will not we fear, since God will be our very present help.

Some people dine on horrors, they are not content unless a future is set before them spiced with dread. I confess that I am not of their mind. The Lord Jesus has made an end of horrors for me. Whether we live or die we shall be "forever with the Lord," and to be where He is, is to be far away from fear. There will come a day when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise, but we fear not resurrection. There shall be a day of days, for which all other days were made, with its great white throne, and pomp of angels, and judgment of quick and dead.

But beloved, though that day shall burn as an oven, we will not fear, because we are secure in Christ Jesus. Wherefore let us stand at the window and look out at the storm, and see the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds without a trace of fear.

I thought as I read my text what an awful case the ungodly must be in, for the very things which men most dread, namely, the falling of mountains and the gaping open of the earth, will become the desire of terrified sinners at the last. How great must be that horror which will altogether eclipse the horror which sends myriads flying in panic from their homes!

When sinners shall see the face of Christ in His glory, they will entreat the mountains to fall upon them, and the rocks to cover them, to hide them from the dreadful vision. The face of love is terrible to those who have rejected it. Oh sinners, what will be your anguish when you shall seek death, and not find it! What will be your dismay when even a tottering mountain, reeling with earthquake, shall be regarded as a friend! Oh, that you would escape from the wrath to come! Oh, that you would by faith take Jesus to be your refuge and your strength!

*"You sinners, seek His grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His cross,
And find salvation there."*

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 46, 47, 48

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—46 (VERSION 1), 673, 686

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.