

Though trouble invade our life, it need not invade our hearts  
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I have found myself almost obsessed with concern for and inspiration by the Ukrainian people. The Russian invasion of Ukraine holds the world's attention. The siege not only threatens personal and national freedom of the people, their very lives are unjustly being taken before our eyes. My heart aches with powerlessness as the Ukrainian people cry out for help and world powers stand on the perimeter, paralyzed by Putin's nuclear threat.

Yet, through the smoke and the siege works of injustice, the light of courage of the Ukrainian people shines boldly for the world to see. Their courage in the face of horrific injustice is inspiring. In fact, it causes us to pause and examine ourselves. How do we respond when troubles lay siege to our lives?

Wars and atrocities like this bring a certain sober realism to our worldview. This world, this life will never be rid of hardship, evil or injustice because it is broken by our sin. I am not being pessimistic. I am establishing reality, so we are not crippled by false expectations. As Jesus expressed to his disciples, "In this life you will have trouble, but take heart I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Like our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, Psalm 46 shows us that though troubles invade our lives they don't have to invade our hearts.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. God's promise is to keep us from being overcome by trouble, not keep us from trouble. Conflicts, hardship, trauma, injustice or the loss of a loved one will happen in this life because this world is broken. God likens himself to a cave of refuge that keeps you secure while the storm rages outside, and as a stronghold, a high fortress tower, that keeps us out of reach of the fierce battle.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea;

though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. A cave of refuge and a stronghold are only beneficial if you are inside. You must trust them and enter into them to receive protection. Similarly, hope and courage in the face of trouble become options, instead of fear, when we trust that God has made us overcomers through Jesus Christ. There is more than this life, and THIS life is not your best life. Jesus' death and resurrection guarantee there is more than this life and therefore there is more to how we live this life. When we trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we enter his cave of refuge and his stronghold. His victory is our victory. Courage and hope in the midst of trouble are possible when you know the battle has already been won. Trouble and trauma will invade our lives, but they do not have to invade our hearts. Our world can literally be falling apart around us right now, like our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, but we can have courage and hope in the face of fear because we know God keeps us in the trouble. Trouble in this life cannot ultimately take anything from us because we have everything we need in Christ.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. When a city is under siege, an enemy will try to cut off supply lines of food and water. Yet when we are besieged by troubles, Jesus

offers himself as living water that satisfies us in such a way that we will thirst no more. Much of siege warfare takes place at night when enemies take advantage of the fatigue and cloak of darkness. Therefore, the break of dawn means relief from the siege of trouble. Just as we are guaranteed morning will come and the sun will rise, Jesus is the light of the world and he will raise you up and give you his own strength to stand firm.

Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. Not only will God keep us in the midst of trouble, but he will fight our battles for us. When we know God is fighting our battles, we are freed from trying to control the people and problems in our life. The Lord fighting our battles means we can take responsibility for ourselves and not react out of survival, but resiliently respond with faith, hope and love from the safety of Christ.

“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” When we cease from our anxious worry or striving to control the trouble in our lives and trust that God has the best in mind, we receive front row seats to the divine display of his unexpected power and glory. We move from anxiety to anticipation and awe, seeing God move in our lives and more importantly inside us.

The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. How would things change if you believed the Almighty God is with you in your trouble, that he has the best in mind for you, and he has the power to accomplish what is best for you in the midst of trouble? How would your outlook and your daily actions change if you entered into the Fortress of God ... if you believed there will be trouble in the world, but God will keep you in the midst of the trouble?

As our Ukrainian brothers and sisters have shown us, troubles will invade our lives, but they need not invade our hearts.

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