



# SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

## CONFIDENCE IN THE MIDST OF DISTRESS

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 46:1-11 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Genesis 1:1 | Psalm 18:1-2; 68:19 | John 10:10; 14:27

### ► SUMMARY

#### Everyone has stress in life.

We may be facing a time of great chaos, such as war, natural disaster, or a personal crisis. Or we may simply be dealing with the pressures of modern life. Regardless of the situation, we can choose to continue striving on our own and let stress consume us, or we can determine to put our trust in the Lord. He desires to empower us to walk confidently through distressing times.

### ► SERMON POINTS

Psalm 46 describes the Father's character and His willingness to help in time of trouble: "God is our refuge and strength, a very ready help in trouble. ... The LORD of armies is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. ... Stop striving and know that I am God" (vv. 1, 7, 10).

Let's define some important terms. Stress is "pressure that we feel against us or pulling us in more than one direction." Distress is similar but more serious. It's "intense pressure that has brought on great anxiety of soul and emotional pain." In response to both of these, our natural response is not to trust in God, but to strive, which means "to contend with; to fight against; or put forth strong effort toward something."

The psalmist uses natural disaster as an example of a tragedy we might face. Though its effects can be long-lasting and terrible, they are never as powerful as God. Psalm 46:2 describes earthquakes that cause mountains to fall into the ocean and tidal waves that rock the shoreline. Verse 6 says, "The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth quaked."

The message of the passage is clear: Whether we are suffering a major calamity or struggling with common problems, God is sovereign and will take care of us.

#### What are some sources of stress?

- The pressure of our modern environment.
- Consequences of wrong decisions.
- Striving against God.
- Contending with circumstances.
- Other people's unrealistic expectations.
- Vocational stress.
- Criticism from others.

#### How can we overcome distress?

No matter what the external pressures are, the real battle takes place internally. Our mind tells us what we should do, but our emotions pull us a different way. It's tempting to simply walk away from stressful circumstances, and certainly sometimes God leads us out of situations—especially abusive or dangerous ones. But in other circumstances, we won't fully escape pressure by walking away, because the striving and contending are an internal civil war that we take with us wherever we go.

Psalm 46:10 says, "Stop striving and know that I am God." In other words, stop attempting to fight life's battles on your own. Instead, choose to rest by trusting the Lord, "who daily bears our burden" (Ps. 68:19). Jesus spoke of giving us this kind of supernatural peace in John 14:27.

In most cases, we are called to persevere and rely on Him to strengthen us. No matter what the cause, God can enable you to walk through stress victoriously and peacefully.

## The key is to know God.

Most Christians would say they know God. And in a sense, they do. They have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior, and they have received His forgiveness for their sins. They will go to heaven when they die. But to truly experience peace in the midst of distress takes a relationship with God that goes deeper. We must know Him not just as Savior but as Lord. We need to experience an intimate, obedient relationship with Him because we trust that He is a loving, all-powerful, good Father who wants the best for us.

## Who is the God of the Bible?

Psalm 46 gives us a powerful picture of the Lord. He's our refuge—a place we can run to. He's our strength when we are weak. He's "a very ready help in trouble" (v. 1). He's "the God of Jacob" who is "our stronghold" (vv. 7, 11). In these two verses, we also see the name LORD with small capitals, which indicates the name *Yahweh* or Jehovah, meaning "absolute in faithfulness." He's also called "the LORD of [angel] armies" (vv. 7, 11). He wants to walk with each of us in a personal way, ready to fight our battles. In those same verses, the word translated God is Elohim, which means "infinite in power" and is used in Genesis 1:1 for the Creator. In other words, we can depend on the One who not only made us, but made the entire universe.

Psalm 18 has similar images: "I love You, LORD, my strength.' The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my savior. ... My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (v. 1-2). The message of both these passages is, "Trust Me, rest in Me; you don't have to fight or struggle." We can trust the Father to be whatever we need in every situation.

## How can we know God in a personal way?

- Spend time with Him.
- Find out what He thinks by reading the Bible.
- Observe God's ways regarding your circumstances and those of others.

- Reflect on how He worked in the lives of biblical figures.
- Consider how Jesus walked with inner peace despite the difficulties of His life.
- Be transparent with the Father regarding how you really think and feel.
- Take time to listen to His voice speaking to your spirit.
- Watch how the Lord maneuvers victory for you in the trials you face.
- Understand His ways as He corrects you in love and redirection to His will.
- Be sure your idea of God aligns with the Bible's description of Him.

There is no friend like Jesus. No one can quiet our spirits or lift us out of distress like He can. When you know Him, you can thrive in any situation. There is an exception: No one should tolerate abusive behavior or treatment, or any other situation that the Lord tells you to leave.

## When do we get our best glimpses of God?

A windswept lake doesn't reflect anything, but a calm lake mirrors the heavens. It's vitally important to quiet ourselves before our Creator and ask Him to reveal Himself. If you want to get out of a state of inner turmoil, seek to rest in the Lord and trust Him to handle the situation for you. Our heavenly Father will enable you to face anything confidently and victoriously. Not only that, but you will come out of the trial knowing Him better and loving Him more.

### ► RESPONSE

- We have two choices: Either continue to strive internally against our challenges, or choose to rest in the Lord and trust Him. This doesn't mean we do nothing, but that we trust God to guide us and, ultimately, to resolve the situation. Where are you in the process of learning to trust the Lord with stressful situations?
- Would you say you know God in the way Dr. Stanley describes in the sermon? Out of the list of ways to know Him better, which one or two things speak to your heart?

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