

## PUNLA STUDENTS, I ADMIRE YOU (PSALM 46)

Hello my friends. Thank you for joining me today at the PUNLA Coffee Table. So, get comfortable, get your coffee or tea or water. And let's settle in for a quick talk.

I am so thankful for all of you. I want to talk about and to the students that are part of our PUNLA College program in the Philippines today.

My hope is to post at least one message a week, specifically intended to encourage you Our PUNLA Scholars. If you are part of our program, I consider you one of my kids.

I want you to know how much I admire you. Over the course of the last year you have faced COVID, lockdowns which made it impossible to move around, a complete upheaval of the way you go to school, Typhoon after Typhoon and on and on and on. So, yes, I admire your ability to fight through all these adversities time and time again. And your still getting your Classes done despite all these complications and tragedies.

For those of you watching that might not know what I'm talking about. PUNLA Christian Ministries primarily works in the Philippines. Specifically the Bicol region of the Philippines shown here is red. Bicol is the southernmost region of the Philippine island of Luzon. The capital Manila is also on Luzon about 8 hours by car north of Central Bicol.

In April 2020 the Philippines went on lockdown. Meaning if you did not have government pass, you could not leave your home. If you did leave your home, then you might be arrested and put in cages on the street. This literally happened. For many of the poor we work with this meant no work, no money, no food. This was a real crisis. There were forced Quarantines for anyone who was thought to have COVID. And I can go on and on.

After all the craziness of 2020 with COVID and the upheaval of life with lockdown, College shifted to online classes only etc. Bicol just got hammered by typhoons in 2020. I've highlighted Bicol in red. Actually, Bicol gets hammered by typhoons a lot but 2020 was just one of those years. In less than a month, Bicol got smashed by 5 storms including 3 super typhoons. October 13 it started with Ofel, October 16 came Saudel. October 25 super typhoon Quinta. then on November 2 beyond super typhoon Rolly made landfall. This was a monster storm with wind speed reach 250mph as it came on shore in the barrier islands. This storm leveled homes, destroyed crops and loss of life. It was devastating but by God's grace. This storm moved quickly or the devastation would have been worse. then came Ulysses. This storm was not as powerful but it was a prolific rain maker and it just would not go away. Day after day of trenchal rain in an area that was already saturated by the previous storms. Then came more tragedy in the form of flash floods, mudslides. Many we work with lost everything. In fact, the flooding washed homes and land away. I mean the land were the home once stood was just gone. consumed by the river near it. The topography of some area permanently changed.

In the middle of this, the schools shutdown and tried to convert to online or module based learning. The students had never learned this way. It was a drastic contrast to what anyone was used to.

But to make things even worse, internet connections are poor if you can afford it. Most of the students did not have devices to connect to the internet. What a mess. Think about it.

You expected to in person teaching and suddenly they tell you it's all online. But you don't have a computer or any way to connect to the internet. The students scrambled and borrowed devices. Or Using mobile phones. And even if you can get on-line the speeds are very very slow. Plus now there are suddenly thousands of students needing to a very limited bandwidth for classes. Recipe for disaster and it was. But these student found away and fought throw it and succeeded.

I cannot even begin to tell the PUNLA scholars how much I admire you. You just keep fighting and fighting. Fighting through so many roadblocks and trials. And you keep fighting. I'm so proud of you.

For those of you not familiar with the remote areas of the Philippines. Now, It's not like here in the US, the infrastructure for internet was not good in Bicol. In fact, when we are there, we struggle to find connections so we can communicate. And we can afford it. But our students don't have the money to afford these kind of luxuries but now it is a necessity if they wanted to continue their studies.

So yes, I admire every single one of you, my kids in the Bicol. What you have dealt with would have pounded me into submission. But you my friends are fighters. You keep going. I'm so proud of you. You inspire me. Thank you.

I want to look at Psalm 46 today. God is Our Refuge and Strength. God just seemed to be pointing me to this Psalm. So, I want to share it with I want to share it with you.

Before we get started. I want to tell you at little about how I study the bible. I think it is very important to understand what you are about to read,

You need to understand the BOOK. What type of literature is it what was the purpose of the author who wrote it?

You need to understand who wrote the book or chapter. Who are they, and what was inspiring them to write?

You need to understand the History that was happened when it was written  
What was going on when it was written which is influencing the writer. The bible is the inspired word of God revealed through real people who are going through real world events. There is a reason they are writing these things down.

The bible should be read in context. I never want to look at just one verse without understanding the full context of its intend meaning and contextual use.

And lastly, Read the bible as a child. With no preconceived notions. So before you dig for deeper meaning, try to grasp and understand the writer intention for the words they wrote.

So Psalm 46. The book of Psalms is a compilation of poems and songs compiled for Israel. It was most likely compiled in the fifth century BC but the Psalms were written over more than 5 centuries at least.

Psalms often use metaphors and very flowery language. We need to remember, the words are not necessarily literal but instead are meant to invoke images in the readers minds.

The book of Psalm is actually grouped into five section, each section is focused on a time in history. I encourage everyone to listen to The Bible Project overview of the book of Psalms. It will give you a great high level understand of how Psalms is organized and how and why it was written. I'll put a link on our website so you can find it easily.

Also, remember unless you are reading in Hebrew. You are not reading the original words. Meaning is often lost in translation from language to language. I like to used many different translations to see the different words chosen by different translators. And occasionally I use internet tools and sights to look at the word in the original language and see what that word means. I use many sources and one I often use is BibleHub. You can find lots of translations in many languages, they have the original language text and many other resources. In a future video I'll share more of the online tools I personally use, that might be helpful to you. Back to Psalm 46

Psalm 46 is recorded as a Psalm of the sons of Korah or more specifically a descendant of Korah. 1 Chronicles 6:31-38 gives us a genealogy of the last Judge of Israel, Samuel who was also a descendant of Korah. So we may not know the specific identity of the author of Psalm 46 but we know their family lineage. So, when was this written? Most like during the early reign of King David.

Now let's READ Psalm 46 together. I'm going to read from the NLT or new living translation. But before we start, I want you to notice this poem is broken into three sections. These sections are like verses in a song. The author wants to encourage us to hope and trust in God. The one true God. Trust in His power and providence. In His gracious presence with us, no matter what we are facing in our lives.

Let's read Section 1, Psalm 46:1-3. *1God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. 2So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. 3Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!*

I think verse 1 is very powerful. *"God is our refuge and strength. God is always ready to help us in times of trouble."* Afterall, God is our Father in heaven. Now, please understand "help" does not necessarily mean rescue. God has a plan for each of us. And like it or not, Hard times, trials and troubles are part of it. Its life here in the broken world. Sometimes, God will get our attention with a rescue. Other times He will help us by giving us the strength when we need to endure our troubles. So Help comes in many forms. But we can face anything this world puts in front of us because we have the assurance that God is for us. Whom can possibly be against us?

Let's read Section 2, Psalm 46:4-7. *4A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High. 5God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it. 6The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumble! God's voice thunders, and the earth melts! 7The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israelb is our fortress.*

These Vivid images. Many of these pictures we see in other parts of the Bible. Many believe this section is referring to the Millennium period we read about in Revelation. I don't know about the parallel but you can see how the author is encouraging us that God is with us. He lives within us if we are followers of "THE WAY". I really like Verse 7 *"The Lord.... Is here among us....God... is our fortress.* The word translated

to fortress in Hebrew is Mis-Gab. Sorry for if my pronunciation is not quite correct. But the word could mean. high place, refuge, secure height, a high tower, a stronghold. I believe the author knows a lot about war. During the Time of King David, having a secure place of safety was paramount. But our true place of refuge and protection is not a physical place, Our security is in the Lord and the Lord God alone. Nothing we can build or save on earth will ever truly give you assurance or security

Let's read the final section, Psalm 46:8-11. *8Come, see the glorious works of the LORD: See how he brings destruction upon the world. 9He causes wars to end throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear; he burns the shields with fire. 10"Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world." 11The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.*

I really like how the writer vividly shows how fragile the working of man really is. They are nothing before God. And verse 10 puts us in our rightful place *"Be still, and know that I am God!"* Be still. We need to understand our place in this story. God is God and we are not. God is in control and we are not. We need to take time and "Be still" meditate on who God is. When we study the Bible, we need to revere the words God has given to us. Be Still. **(SLIDE 17)** The word translated as still is the Hebrew word Harpu which is pronounced as which comes from the word Raphah Raphah means to let go, to relax or to drop... So when it says be still, think about it more like, Stop what you are doing and focus on God. No multi-tasking. Stop and listen. Focus on God so you can hear what He is trying to tell you. And I promise God is speaking to you, your job is to Stop, look and listen. Then do.

Let's Pray.

Father God. I am so thankful to you for the students in our program. I am amazed at their reliance despite all their hardships. It inspires me.

I pray for their studies, their families and especially for each and every one of them. I love them as my own Kids. Protect them from the temptations this world puts in front of them. Give them the strength to resist the evil one. I pray that none of them or family face illness like COVID. But your will be done Lord, not ours. And if they face illness or other hardship, give them peace and assurance that you are God. You Lord God are in control. We can trust You Father with the outcome, no matter what that will be. We trust you and love you Lord Jesus. And we pray in your name, Jesus. Amen.

Next week I'm going to start a Bible study on 1, 2 and 3 John. These letters from John opened my eyes to the importance of service to others. Please Read 1 John for next week.

If you liked the message, please click like. Please subscribe to our channel this really helps us. Leave comments here, on our website or email me at [kip@punla.org](mailto:kip@punla.org). Your feedback is appreciated. Thank you for joining me at the PUNLA Coffee Table. If you liked the message, please click like. And Please Subscribe to our channel. Leave comments here, or our website or mail me at [kip@punla.org](mailto:kip@punla.org). Your feedback is appreciated.

See you next time at the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.