

Are Your Students Safe?

By Jay Younts

It seems each day brings new fears, new worries for parents regarding the safety of their student children. This is especially true for parents of college students who live away from home. You ask, "How can I know my son will be safe?" Last week, my own daughter was robbed at gunpoint as she left a college library. By God's providence she was not harmed in the robbery. Today the TV channels and the Internet are overflowing with news of the tragic, horrific killing of at least 33 people on the Virginia Tech campus. Details of the shootings are still sketchy. But the questions of students and their parents are all too clear. *The college campus is supposed to be a place of safety; how can this happen? How can I know my children will be safe?*

Americans today, like President Bush, are struggling with what is and what ought to be. Here is a quote from the President: *"Schools should be places of safety, sanctuary and learning. When that sanctuary is violated, the impact is felt in every American classroom in every American community."* Virginia Tech was not a place of safety this day.

Will God keep your students safe from tragic rampages like the one in Blacksburg today? That depends upon how you understand safety. In Psalm 46 we read:

God is our refuge and strength,

an ever-present help in trouble.

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.*

*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.

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. NIV

God does promise that He will be with us. He does promise to be a refuge in time of trouble. This means that you and your students away from home are safe in God's providence. You will live and breathe as He has determined. No war or madman or drunk driver can change that.

From the perspective of God's providence, a student on a distant campus is as safe as you are sitting in your living room or in a church pew. God will keep his people safe to accomplish his purposes. What we, as God's people, must rest in is not our physical location but the care of our God, our Refuge.

Does this mean that the evil of this world may claim the lives of those we love? Yes, it may. But for those of us who love God, this loss is not senseless or useless.

Anyone's life may end at any time. Because a student is away from home does not mean that God has less control than He does in your living room. God will bring about what He has determined for your good, for your student's good. This is a hard thing to say, and yet it is comforting to hear. I still shudder to think what could have happened to my daughter, who also faced a gun pointed at her last week. I can only imagine the sharp pain and disorienting anguish of the parents who lost children at Virginia Tech today. Surely, for these families, *the earth did give way; the mountains did fall into the sea*. None of us knows what tomorrow will bring: tragedy, peace, joy, or sadness. No one on September 10, 2001, could have imagined what the next day would bring. We do know that God will do whatever He has determined to do for His glory and our good.

You have a message of comfort to give your children. This sort of tragic event is a part of life until Christ returns and makes all things new. Tragic loss of life hurts more the closer it gets to your home, your soil, and your life. When you see evil unfold in horrific scenes like the ones of this April day, remember the comforting care of God – God is our refuge and our strength. Earthly troubles, even ones that appear to bring an end to our world, are terrible but temporary. Christ has an unshakeable plan to wipe away all the tears of His people. This is why God is the God of all comfort. This is why he is your refuge.

Christian, tell your children that God is greater than we are. Tell your children God is in control of all the things you and they cannot understand. Things are not as they appear to be. Tell your children that Columbine, 9/11, and awful events like the one at Virginia Tech are not outside the control of God. These events are vivid reminders that this world does not compare with the one that is to come. As Christians we have access to

the healing comfort of our Redeemer. Yes, we may grieve. But it is not the grief of hopelessness. Our grief is temporary. Over against this grief we know that God does all things for His glory and our good. Tell your students and yourself that God is our help, our refuge, our joy, and our peace, even when the earth gives way.