

8/22/2021 - Psalms 46 - "God is Our Fortress"

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[0 : 00] I'm really glad to be here at Young's, excuse me, Church.

I've been here before. It was just called by another name. Congratulations to you guys on your new name, and I bring greetings from your brothers and sisters at Old North. If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Psalm 46.

Psalm 46. When you are there, I'm going to read it for us, and then we'll hear what God has to say for us, to us.

Psalm 46. It reads, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea. Though its waters roar and form, though the mountains tremble at its swelling, there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

[1 : 14] God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved. God will help her when the morning dawns. The nations rage. The kingdoms totter.

He utters his voice. The earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah.

Come, behold the works of the Lord. How he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots with fire. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.

I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah. Bow with me for a word of prayer.

[2 : 16] Lord, we humble ourselves as we come before you this morning, fully knowing how inadequate we are to even try to explain your words.

Father, thank you for the privilege and the opportunity that we have as your people to gather this morning around your word and hear from you. Lord, we pray, especially coming to this text at a time when so many things happening in the world, so many things probably happening in each of our lives here.

But Lord, we know that you have a word for us this morning, that you will encourage us. Father, that the things that trouble us will pale in comparison to your love and your presence and your power, which is as real as those troubles.

Lord, we love you. We thank you. It's through your son's name we pray these things. Amen. Our story is told of a doctor and an engineer and a politician.

And they were having a little, you know, brotherly argument, arguing about which profession was better and older, right?

[3 : 26] So the doctor raises his hand and says, guys, listen, without physicians, no one could have survived. So I think my profession is probably the best, right?

And the engineer was like, listen, before anything began, there was chaos. But it took an engineer, you know, to create what we see, the beauty that we see.

So engineering is better and older. And then the politician just looked at both of them and he said, but, and he winked at them. You as an engineer, who do you think created the chaos?

I hope you see the point. We live in a world that no matter what your profession is, no matter what you are doing each and every day in your life, we are surrounded by chaos, right?

If you are a doctor, you are trying to solve some problems. If you're an engineer, you're trying to solve some problems. If you're a politician, maybe you're creating some of them. But you are pretending to try to solve some of them.

[4 : 38] So it's no question as we come to this text that there is chaos everywhere, that we look around us. Hence, even the necessity of jobs and professions that we are all a part of.

A reader's digest from 1986 read this. Shall we watch the 6 o'clock news and get indigestion? Or shall we wait for the 11 o'clock news and have insomnia? We come to this text, friends, with a world that is in political turmoil, with disease.

We are in a pandemic. So much hatred and anger amongst the people. That seems to be at an all-time high. And when we are stuck in situations like this, one of the real temptations we have is to run to many, many things to find refuge, to find safety, and to find answers.

We are parched and we need a drink. We are confused and we need some direction. We are hurt and a lot of us need healing.

[5 : 49] And the temptation is real, friends, as we navigate our lives and try to figure this, the temptation is high that we will likely go to other places.

But the message of Psalm 46 is actually that when everything else around us begins to implode, we have in God real safety.

The psalmist in this song has three verses with two choruses in verse 7 and the very last verse. He's trying to solidify this very idea that regardless of the chaos that surrounds the people of God, in God they have a place where they can find rest for their weary souls.

I don't know about you, friends, but my soul needs some rest. My soul needs the type of rest that no politician can solve.

My soul needs the type of rest that no amount of money in a bank account can solve. My soul needs some rest that even taking away a pandemic would not solve.

[6 : 58] Our souls are restless. And there is no amount of solution that comes from this side of the world that is able to solve this.

The psalmist describes three different chaotic scenes in the psalm that are vivid and relatable to us. And he begins to help us as readers and listeners to have a picture, a real picture of how bad things are, but also how we can throw our gaze on a God who is a shield and a fortress for his people. From verses 1 and 3 we're going to see, which will be my first point, that although creation roars, God is powerful on behalf of his people.

Although creation roars, God is powerful on behalf of his people. Look at verses 1 through 3 with me. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and form, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

[8 : 18] Verse 1 starts with the very subject of this psalm, which, friends, I think should be and must be the very subject of our lives. God is our refuge and our strength.

And this is the God who is a trustworthy place that his people can run to and find refuge in times of trouble.

But also, this is a God who is powerful enough to intervene on their behalf, but also a God who is present.

Because sometimes there are people that can be powerful. Sometimes there are people that can be present.

But they can't do anything about it. But in God, we have a place and a person who's our refuge, who has the power, and is very present in our times of trouble.

[9 : 21] And this is the truth about yourself and the truth about me. If you are not in some kind of trouble right now as you are sitting here, I'm not a prophet, but I want to assume that you probably were in trouble maybe a couple months ago, maybe last week.

Maybe you just came out of something bad and horrible. Or something is right around the corner. Something bad is right around the corner. I'm not being a prophet of doom.

But the reality of life in a fallen world is we have troubles on every side. Some of us are coming from really horrible seasons. Some of us are in bad seasons right now.

And if the Bible is true, and this project, this thing called life that we exist in is real, then we are going to face trouble. We live in a world where suffering and trouble is normative.

Life is hard. Relationships are broken. We have famines. We have disease. We have conflicts of all kinds. But the psalmist wants us to know this morning that we have a God who can be trusted for safety.

[10:42] We have a God who we can go to in our times of trouble. Listen to what verse 2 asserts. He asserts that if this is true, therefore we will not fear.

With a God, friends, who can be trusted as a refuge. With a God who is powerful. With a God who is ever-present when we are in trouble.

Why do we fear? He goes on to say, Though the earth gives way. Though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea. Though its waters roar and form.

Though the mountains tremble at its swelling. See, what he begins to do here is he begins to paint a very dire picture of the very created order of God being in chaos.

The earth. The very representative of everything that we see with our eyes. Everything that is physical is giving away or giving way.

[11:48] There's a great earthquake. He sees mountains which are big structures that are stable. That are a sheer shore of strong physicality.

Being moved into the heart of the sea. The waters roar and they form. And the mountains are trembling. This is pure chaos.

Friends, mountains should not be trembling. They should be steady. But friends, sometimes we know and we see with our eyes as we live life that there are many, many things that are supposed to be steady.

That can be in shambles. And it bothers us greatly. Perhaps you are here this morning and your family is ridden with disease.

Perhaps you have relational strife. It's right before your eyes. The things that you thought were steady and strong are in shambles.

[13:08] But the psalmist is saying, even if all that is happening, we will not fear. Why? Because verse 1, God is our refuge.

God is our strength and ever-present help in times of need. See, God is our refuge because sometimes God actually shields his children from danger.

You do not know how many times you are. Heading right into danger. And the Lord came and saved you.

And you have no idea. Or the many times that your very own children were in grave danger.

And you had no idea. They had no idea. But because you have found your refuge in God, you were protected. Therefore, we will not fear.

[14:08] Therefore, we will not fear. Because God many times shields his children from danger. But also, God is our strength because sometimes, and we don't like to hear this, right?

Sometimes he doesn't shield us, right? But he gives us the strength, his strength, which helps us in our times of trouble.

We don't like that, right? We like him as our refuge, right? But we don't like this very idea that we can be in a rut and God can be our strength in there.

Paul says to Timothy in his very last letter in 2 Timothy, he says, All those who desire to live a godly life for Christ Jesus shall be persecuted.

And our Lord Jesus says in John 14, in this world, you would have trouble.

[15:10] But be of good cheer because I have overcome. We will get into trouble, friends, but God being our strength helps us to be sustained in those moments.

Yes, God has had us go through this horrible pandemic. But he has given his children strength.

Yes, maybe your family is going through the rut this very second, but guess what?

He is your strength in this moment. He is a very present help in times of trouble. Now, I don't know how people that do not have God make it.

I just sit and wonder sometimes, how do you go through a worldwide pandemic without God? How do you go through relational strife in your marriage, in your household, in your family, without God, who can be your shield, who can be your power, and who's ever present?

That is sad, right? We have a God, friends, who is a very present help in times of trouble.

[16:18] See, the people that we love the most are not always very present, right? And they are not sinning against us in any way. Your spouse is not always very present.

Probably going through things themselves. Your parents, they're not always very present. Your friends, your church friends, your pastor, all these human beings that are great, that are a gift from the Lord.

And that He serves us through. They're not always there. But God is. And look at the language that the psalmist uses here, right?

Very present. I'm not sure how much correct English that is. But you get the point. He's very present.

Look at verse 4 through 6 with me. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

[17:22] God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage.

The kingdoms totter. He utters His voice. The earth melts. This is my second point here, friends. We see that although the nations rage, God is still present with His people.

The psalmist moves the song into a scene where we see the city of God. Where God dwells with His people. And what's unique about this city is that it is made glad by a river which waters its streams.

See, the people of God in Jerusalem were under threat from the surrounding nations. The nations in the east back in those days would make sure that they were built closer to a river.

So when they are under attack, they still are able to have a supply of water that is not cut off. But in case it was cut off.

[18:36] In case they didn't have what they needed. The psalmist is saying, for the people of God, there was a supply that was constant. But not only was it constant, it made them glad amidst their trouble.

The psalmist moves from the first couple verses, 1 through 3, from a generic earthly chaos to a very specific type of chaos which is caused by human beings.

Right? See, the reason why sometimes the people of God need refuge and need strength is because of rage and uproar from people.

The nations here are raging and are in uproar against the people of God. Now this reminds us of Psalm 2. Why do the nations rage? And the people's plot in vain against the Lord and His anointed. There is an uproar against God, a worldwide uproar against God by the nations of the world and the people of the world.

[19:49] And of course, this is not talking about any physical nation. It's talking about any person who is not a believer. Right? As the nations in this instance. And we know the world does not unite around many things.

Right? You know you put politicians in Washington. They won't agree on anything. Right? Including if the sky is blue. They won't agree. But Psalm 2, in fact, says that the nations agree on one thing. They agree on their plot against God and His Holy One. That's what kings and the nations agree on. We see the uproar against the church, against the people of God.

We see more recently in the news how our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan are in so much trouble. But friends, there is a river which makes glad the people of God.

The people of God in Afghanistan that have found refuge in God, that have their strength in God, are the safest people on earth.

[21:03] Because when all implodes around us, God is the safest place to be. It doesn't matter what else is going on around. Added to that, it is clear from this section that God Himself dwells amongst these people.

Right? He's in their midst. A story is told of a famous German composer. His name is Felix Mendelssohn. Right? He was a great composer.

He visited a country in Europe one day and he goes into this big old cathedral. And they had recently bought a very expensive million dollar, you know, organ.

Now, if you're thinking about the 1800s, a million dollars is a lot of money. And he goes to, you know, the janitor who's responsible for that instrument and says to him, Hey, can I play this for a little bit?

The janitor is like, no way, sir. Like, I mean, this is a million. This is not a joke, sir. Like, go away. This is an expensive piece of equipment. And Mendelssohn begged a little bit more.

[22:11] Hey, please, like, can I just like, even for a minute, can I play? You know, after a struggle, you know, the guy's like, okay, one minute, one minute. You probably don't even know how to play. And Mendelssohn sits on that organ and he plays.

Now, this is a great composer, right? Like, you probably heard pieces of music that are composed by him and you don't even know. He begins to play music that was so good that this janitor had never heard music played like that before.

And he began to ask the guys, sir, mister, now who are you? And, of course, Mendelssohn introduced himself. Friends, sometimes we have greatness right in front of us and we do not know. But further than that, as the people of God, we not only have greatness, we have greatness defined. The great God, the creator of the universe, not only in the midst of his people, but on their inside.

Inside. So, when troubles come your way, guess whose troubles they also are. They are his trouble. Whatever comes to trouble you, child of God, is coming to trouble God.

[23 : 30] Now, even as I say that sentence, you see how ridiculous that is, right? Because nothing could trouble him. He's in their midst. God is present in his people and with us in the New Testament.

He dwells on the inside of us. That's why the psalmist says we shall not be moved. Because our God cannot be moved.

So, the nations can rage. The kingdoms can totter. But God, you see that, with the sheer force of his word, can make the raging storm stop.

You see that? Do you look around at the world, friends?

And you see how chaotic and helpless and hopeless things are. I want to remind you this morning that we have God in our midst as the people of God.

[24 : 38] I want to remind you that as a child of God, God himself dwells in you. You are indwelled by the Spirit of God. And that same God has the power to speak.

And the whole world melts. Therefore, we will not fear our enemies. We will not fear. Because God is on our side.

The first two verses of this song end with the chorus that we see for the first time in verse 7. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.

The psalmist is emphasizing the main point here, right? This is a statement in the confidence.

Rather, this is a statement of confidence in the presence and the protection of God.

Think about the Lord of hosts, right? Translated in other translations as the Lord of armies. Think about how crazy this description is. The Lord of armies who cannot be defeated, right?

[25 : 44] He cannot be defeated. Who is also the God of Jacob. Jacob? Jacob? You guys know Jacob, right?

Jacob was the hustler of hustlers, right? Like the... If Jacob could hustle God, he would do that, right? Like this guy was...

He was pretty sneaky. Like cheated... Like his uncle, Laban. He holds the heel when he's getting born. He's just like, you know, like the hustler of hustlers, right?

But the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, this mighty, powerful God who's also merciful and chooses to identify with people like Jacob or yourself and myself.

He's with us. He's with us. We shall not be moved. We shall not be moved.

[26 : 52] When it all implodes, God is our safety, friends. Lastly, the psalmist shows that, which is my last and third point, that although chaos reigns in air courts, our God has a purpose in mind.

Look at verse 8 through 10 with me. Come, behold the works of the Lord. How he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots with fire. Verse 10. Be still and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. I like how the CBS translation translates verse 10. Because I think it spills out the meaning that the psalmist intended here.

The CSP reads in verse 10 of Psalm 46. It reads, stop fighting and know that I am God. Right?

Verse 9 begins to describe the works of God as he fights his battles.

[28 : 08] Our battles. He actively brings devastation on the earth. He actively stops the enemy. Right?

He breaks the bow. Right? As the enemy is trying to shoot, God breaks the bow. He breaks, shatters the spear. The enemy wants to throw a spear at us.

The Lord breaks his spear. He burns the chariot with fire. The enemy is trying to pursue us. The Lord burns his chariot, his car, translated in 2021.

As H.B. Charles says, God doesn't fight fear. And it's on your behalf. So by the time we get to verse 10, the point the psalmist is making is this.

Stop fighting for yourselves. Chill out. Your God is actually able to fight your enemy. And he doesn't even need to fight them.

[29 : 17] He breaks their very weapons. Right? And in fact, he has a purpose in everything. Now, why would we fear, friends, when we have a God who breaks the very weapons of our enemies?

Why would we fear? Why would we fear? God is a safe place for us to go to when everything around us implodes. The invitation, come, right?

That imperative, come. He's saying, come and praise the Lord. Come and see how he has done all these things in the past.

But also, come and chill out. If you see this, chill out. Witness his powerful ability to crush rebels.

So as we come to the Bible, we read all the stories, how God works through his people and with his people. How he defeats Pharaoh and the Egyptians as they are pursuing the Israelites.

[30 : 32] As we subsequently get onto the cross where all these people think we finally got him. We finally have had this, what they call a crazy man in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we're going to crucify him. God proves that I've been, I've been, I've been, I've had a purpose all throughout.

I've had something in mind all throughout. As we read all these things or we listen to stories of our brothers and sisters all across the world. How God is working in them.

As we listen to each other's stories as a local church. Our confidence begins to be built. Where verse 10 becomes a reality for us.

Where we lay down our earthly weapons. And be still. And know that he is God. He will fight on our behalf.

[31 : 29] And if we're his people, as I said before. Our battles are his battles. Friends, there's a purpose in all of this.

And the psalmist says, this is the purpose. Verse 10. You see all the broken pieces in your life. All the broken pieces in the world. The end of all those is that our God be glorified. His name be exalted amongst the nations.

And I want you to see how direct the psalmist is. In fact, this is God speaking. How direct God is speaking here. I will be. Right?

Not I might be. Not I kind of would like it if. No. I will be exalted. All the implosions around us is to this end.

[32 : 37] That the name of our God is exalted. The name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be exalted. A father wanted to give his daughter something to do.

And there was a picture of a map of the world that was lying around there. And the little girl was a little antsy and weird. The father takes that map and, you know, he cuts it up into pieces.

Pals them together. And just hands it to the daughter and says, hey, here's something for you to do. You put together these pieces and tell me, and time it. Tell me how long, you know, it takes you to fix this puzzle.

But five minutes later, which was very quick, you know, the little girl comes and calls her dead. Like, hey, I'm done. Come and check it out.

I've finished. Of course, the dead is stupefied. Like, what? That was fast. Right? How did you do that so quickly?

[33 : 36] And the girl said, oh, so on the back of the map that you gave me was a picture of Jesus. And when I figured out how to put him, when I figured out Jesus the right way, everything else just fell into play.

Friends, you're looking on the wrong side of your troubles. On the other side of whatever you're going through is the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In fact, when all this is finished, when all this is done, because it will, right? It feels like, oh, we are on this earth. Things are hard.

Things are bad. But this is a tiny fraction of eternity. The Lord Jesus Christ will be exalted. At the end of all this, every knee will bow.

Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God our Father. Therefore, when everything around us implodes, our God is our safety.

