

The God Who Is My Refuge And Strength  
Psalm 46

Intro. 1) The father of the Protestant Reformation was a German monk named Martin Luther. When he nailed his 95 theses to the Wittenberg Castle Church door on October 31, 1517 he launched a movement that spread across Europe like wildfire. Those who study Luther know of his love for the New Testament books of Romans and Galatians. Not as many know of his love for the psalms and the one which was his favorite: Psalm 46. It was this psalm that inspired the writing of Luther's best known hymn: "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." It is also a psalm that has blessed and comforted believers since it was penned by the sons of Korah over 2700 years ago.

2) • Psalms 46-48 is a trilogy of praise psalms.

- A song of Zion (cf. 48; 76; 84; 87; 122) it celebrates the presence of God among His People and the protector He is for His people.
- In content it is both a psalm of confidence, but also one of eschatological expectation when "[God] will be exalted among the nations and in the earth" (v. 10). Thus there is a marvelous missionary promise which concludes the song that should inspire and encourage us as we take the gospel to the nations.
- The word "selah", meaning meditate or think about this, would lead us to divide the psalm into 3 distinct parts: 1-3, 4-7, 8-11. However, there appears to be a significant turn at v. 10 that will lead us to explore the God who is our refuge and strength under 4 great affirmations about Him.

I. God's protection is readily available.

46:1-3

- The context of our psalm is uncertain but the promise of God's protection is not. Some have proposed that the historical context of Psalms 46-48 is God's

supernatural deliverance of the city of Jerusalem from the Assyria armies of King Sennacherib during the reign of good King Hezekiah in c. 701 B.C. Second Kings 19:35-36 informs us, “And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses-all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh.” Therefore, come what may, big or small, God’s protection is readily available to those who trust Him.

1) Trouble will not cause me to fear 46:1-2

- Troubles are a constant companion in life. They will come. They are unavoidable. When they do come where do you turn? How do you respond? Psalm 46 provides great counsel as to whom and where we should run.
- Note the verb tense: God is (present tense). Literally the Hebrew reads “Elohim to us a refuge and strength a help in troubles is found very much.” Not God was as if that day has passed. Not God will be as if that day has not come. God is, today, right now.
- What is He? 3 things are noted:
  1. refuge – protection, a place of shelter and safety
  2. strength – power, an avenue of might and means
  3. a very present help (an abundantly available help) – a constant companion and comforter “very much” when I need Him.

Trouble will not cause me to fear. My God is my refuge, strength and helper!

What more do I need.

2) Nature will not cause me to fear

46:2-3

- “Therefore we will not fear” is a “hinge” phrase that connects the flow of thought from vs. 1 to vs. 2-3.
  - The psalmist’s introduces cosmic and nature language to further confirm the all encompassing promise of God’s protection. Earthquakes and geological upheavals may strike... “we will not fear.” World catastrophes on a global scale will come in the “Day of the Lord” when Mighty Messiah establishes His kingdom. He will shake the world order and fear will grip the heart of the nations. But for those who know Him as refuge, strength and helper, there will be no fear but gladness (v.4).
  - The raging seas may toss and turn with hurricane force winds and flood-tide waters... “we will not fear.”
  - Selah. Think about this. Meditate on this. In whatever shape difficulties assail us, “we will not fear.” Large or small. Big or little. We have a refuge. We have a strength. We have a present help in the Lord.
- Trans. God’s protection is readily available.

II. God’s power is majestically offered

46:4-7

There is a dramatic change in tone and atmosphere beginning with vs. 4. From earthquakes and raging waters we suddenly are brought into the presence of a marvelous river and a holy city. These verses find a wonderful place and fulfillment in the Revelation of John as he describes the “River of Life” in the New Jerusalem of heaven in Revelation 22:1-5. The majestic power of God is displayed in a river of life, gladness, holiness and sovereignty that flows from the city of God.

Literal Jerusalem in our day is not being described. Only the heavenly city established by Messiah-King Jesus can fulfill this incredible picture of what God provides for His people.

1) God has a city of joy 46:4-5

- A river flowing whose source is God looks back the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:10-14 and reminds us of what we lost in the fall. It also takes us forward in anticipation of what we shall regain through Christ who is Himself the “living water” (John 7:38).
- This river makes glad those who live in the city of God (see Ps 48:1-3) for its waters bless and refresh. This city has a uniquely moral character for it is “the holy place where *Elyon*, the Most High dwells” (*NIV*).

He establishes His throne and residency here with such authority and certainty that our text affirms:

- 1) God is in the midst of her → His presence
  - 2) She shall not be moved (*HCSB*, “toppled, cf vs. 2,6) → His power
  - 3) God shall help her at the break of dawn → His promise
- In the early dawn when ancient armies usually attack, this city will know “no fear.” Indeed each and every day as morning breaks, we find a constant reminder of His unfailing love and covenant faithfulness to His people. Mountains may topple (v.2) and kingdom will topple (v.6), but the city of God will not topple, for “God is within her” (*HCSB*).

2) The nations have a destiny of judgment

46:6-7

- Again we are presented with a strong contrast as well as reminisces of Psalm 2 and how the nations react to the sovereign Lord and His Messiah. The city of God brings gladness and is a holy place. It is safe and sure because God is in her midst and promises His aid.
- It is not so with evil nations driven by selfish agendas, grasping for power, and in rebellion against the God of the universe. Controlled and enamored by gods who are no gods at all, 1) the nations rage (*NIV*, “are in an uproar”), 2) the kingdoms were moved (*ESV*, “the kingdoms totter”), 3) He uttered His voice, the earth melted.
- Our God simply speaks with what Revelation 19:15 calls a “sharp sword” and with only a word “He strikes the nations.” They rage and rebel, they toss to and fro jockeying for power and world domination. They build what they think is an invincible world empire. Oh what fools we are!
- *Jehovah Sabaoth* simply speaks and it all melts like snow under a blazing sun and comes to nothing. *Jehovah Sabaoth*, Lord Almighty, is the great God and King over the world and all peoples. “God of Jacob our refuge,” He is the personal promise/covenant keeping God of His people.
- ❖ It is one thing to know Him as Sovereign Creator. It is another thing to know Him as personal Savior. He is a powerful God. He longs to be your personal God. Selah! Think about this.

### III. God's peace is sovereignly accomplished 46:8-9

The raging and rebellious nations have been subdued. The pathetic kingdoms of man have been toppled, reduced to melted wax by the powerful voice of *Yahweh Sabaoth*, the Lord of Host and the God of Jacob. God's people are challenged, charged if you like, to come and see the works of Jehovah. In a sense vs. 8-9 flesh out the results of the declaration of v. 6. In melting the great empires and kingdoms of man, what does the "world to come" look like for those who love and serve the Lord?

#### 1) He will make desolate the places of war 46:8

"Behold, see, the works, the actions and accomplishments of *Yahweh*." And what are these works? First, "He has made desolations in the earth." Desolation means to devastate in such a way as to astonish the onlooker. Who would believe that the great empires of the world would come and go and eventually disappear all together? What a humble word for any nation. What a humbling word for our nation. Any and every nation that stands in opposition to the kingdom of God and His Christ can expect a devastating end.

#### 2) He will destroy the instruments of war 46:9

In every believer's heart there is a longing for the coming again of Isaiah's "Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6). When the Lord Jesus returns in glorious might and majesty as depicted in Rev. 19:11-16, He will bring an end to all battles and all wars once and for all.

- "He will make wars cease to the ends of the earth." Universal peace and blessing.

- “He will break the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.” The instruments of war will be destroyed once and for all, never to be used again for inflicting death and destruction. James Montgomery Boice captures well the thrust of vs. 8-9:

“[The text]” is not presenting God as a peace negotiator but as a conqueror. In other words, this peace is not to be compared to the SALT treaties, negotiated disarmament pacts between mutually power nations.” (vol. 2, 392).

No, what is revealed here is not a treaty but a surrender, not a truce, but a one-sided victory that will never be repeated. The same voice that shouted from the cross, “it is finished” (John 19:30), will sound like a declaration as He establishes His millennial kingdom where, as Isaiah 2:4 tells us, “He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares; and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

Trans. God’s peace is sovereignly established.

#### IV. God’s praise will be universally announced 46:10-11

This good news of the end of all war, hostility and aggression calls for a moment of deep spiritual reflection and then a ministry of fervent missionary proclamation. In light of this awesome display of sovereign power and might, what is our proper response to this Lord of host (of all armies) and God of Jacob who is our refuge?

##### 1) Know who He is 46:10-11

The peoples of the earth are issued a command: “Be still”, “cease striving”

(NASV), “Stop your fighting” (HCSB) “and know I am God.” Though this verse is often cited in the context of the personal devotional life, its true context is public, cosmic and universal. Stop striving against the God who created you and is Lord over you. Stop exerting yourself and your own agendas as if you were God. To the people of God the command may reflect a call to trust (cf. v2) and confidence in the God who will build a city that makes glad the heart of those who trust the Lord. Be still! Stop! Rest and know Jehovah is God, He is Jehovah *Sababoth*, He is the *Elohim* of Jacob. Think about that and find rest for your soul.

2) Know what He will receive

46:10

- The psalm concludes with a promise of eschatological missionary success. It anticipates the innumerable crowd of Rev. 7:9-17 who stand before the throne in heaven from every tribe, tongue, people and nation, a number that John says no one can count.
- In 2 short synonymous parallel declarations focusing on the word “exalted”, Psalm 46 looks to the future and the destiny of God’s knowledge and glory spread throughout the nations.
  - I will be exalted among the nations
  - I will be exalted in the earth.
- The spread of God’s glory among the nation may be opposed but it will not be stopped! It may be challenged but it will not be defeated. False gods may come against Him but not a one will defeat Him. “I will, I will” says the Lord. If God says is, you can count on it!

## Conclusion

It inspired Martin Luther, giving him strength and keeping him strong against great odds, tremendous opposition, and constant endangerment. It inspired one of the greatest hymns our faith has ever known. May the words of Psalm 46, echoed in “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” be a source of strength and encouragement for us this day as well.

1. A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing:  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power  
are great,  
And, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.
2. Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing:  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing;  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He; Lord Sabaoth, His  
name,  
From age to age the same, and He must win the battle.
3. And tho’ this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:  
The Prince of Darkness grim-we tremble not for him; His rage we can  
endure,  
For lo, his doom is sure, One little word shall fell him.
4. That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours thro’ Him who with us sideth:  
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill:  
God’s truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever. Amen