

# GOD OUR FORTRESS

## Psalm 46 – “*A Mighty Fortress is our God*”

1. A Fortress Against Fear in Time of Trouble (verses 1-3). The first line of this Psalm is tremendous, it is one of the most encouraging lines in the Bible. To know that no matter what kind of trouble you face today God is present and available - He is never too busy and far off. The first line is like the thesis for the whole Psalm. God is a refuge, a strength, a fortress, and therefore, when trouble comes we can find Him and go to Him for refuge. God is very aware that this world is full of troubles and hardships. There are many difficulties about at the moment. However, the claim of this Psalm is that there is always a place to run to in times of trouble. God - He is our refuge. A refuge is a place you find to escape from harm. That's why we call people who seek asylum from oppressive governments “refugees.”

The main reason refuge is needed is because of fear. When the unexpected happens, when things look dark and grim, the emotion that fills the human heart is fear. People fear all kinds of things. Some people get afraid of little things; but then there are the real fears... Fear of future, fear of man's opinion, fear of failure, fear of loneliness, fear of sickness and death. Psalm 46 says there is no reason to fear, and goes a step further than even the threat of an army. *“Though the mountain be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at it's swelling (verse 2-3),”* even then we will not fear. Notice, the mountains and the earth, two impregnable and unmovable forces, are cast into the raging sea. This is the picture of a world thrown into convulsion. The very frame of nature coming apart - not just an army with a vendetta. This is utter catastrophe. But even then, God is a refuge! Yes, even if the whole world comes apart at its seams - God is a refuge.

2. A Fortress of Joy When Attacks Mount (verses 4-7). The next verse in the song, says God's fortress not only quells our fears but it gives us joy. Even when things are at their hardest. ***"There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God."*** Water almost always is a sign of God's Spirit in the Bible. In John 4, Jesus says He gives living water. The theme and point is that no matter where we are God's spirit is able to reach us. This Psalm talks about the city of God. God's streams make her glad. St. Augustine wrote a book titled the city of God which is essentially about the contrast between the city of man and the city of God. The city of man is the city man builds by his own ideas, philosophies and experience. In contrast is the city of God, the true city, the way things really are, the way God has told us they are (as revealed in His word). But city buildings don't get glad do they? People do. Cities are people. If that's true then look at the next words...*"the holy habitation of the Most High."* It's claiming that God, who is the most high over all, makes His dwelling place with His people. He "inhabits" with them.

God inhabits His people. Because God's habitation is with his people, no matter where they go or what they do, verse 5 says, ***"He is in the midst of her"*** and she shall not be moved. Mountains may move and be cast into the sea but God's people will not. This is the doctrine of the "perseverance" of the saints. One of the most assuring truths of the Bible. Those that know and love God, know how to come to His goodness and get rooted. God's city is like a tree, with deep roots, when the storm comes we bend but don't break because we got roots.

The next part of verse 5 and then including verse 6 states what many of us know well, and that is, things often get worse before they get better. God's help comes in the morning. But often before the morning is the greatest attack.

In fact the darkest part of the night is just before dawn. And it's in that hour that faith is often born. Faith is really and truly only tested when we are brought into very severe conflicts. This is what faith offers, hope for the morning. When you face the real evils and sufferings of this world, truly face them, there really is no hope or chance for a bright morning outside of God.

This verse speaks to the power and the might of God. God created the world with a word. With one word, the earth melts. That is why verse 7 calls Him "The Lord of Hosts." Lord of hosts is literally the commander and chief of all the armies. God not only has great power in just a word, but He has a whole army of angels at His command. And as we know from 2 Kings 19, just one of them can take out 185,000 people.

This Psalm is filled with different views of God. *A God of refuge and strength. A God with a city. The Most High. The Lord of hosts.* And then last part of verse 7 adds, *the God of Jacob.* When the Bible uses the phrase the "God of Jacob" it's a reminder of the covenant with Jacob. A continuance of His Abraham / Isaac covenant. Jacob, a liar and deceiver, wrestled with God, but God promised to make a city for himself not based on our goodness but on His. It's always about Him and His glory, not ours.

3. *A Fortress of Praise in Victorious Peace* (verses 8-11). The last verse, continues this same line of thought and gets practical with some very good instructions. A fortress of praise in victorious peace. It tells us to do three things. a) Behold works of God. b) be still and know God. c) exalt and worship God.

(a) ***"Come behold the works of the Lord, how He has brought desolations on the earth."***

A couple things here. First, one of the biggest tools, weapons, encouragements for the soul is to remember times when God has been merciful and worked in your life. In fact, the biggest impetus for our praise to God is to consider and remember who He is and what He has done for us. That's why we sing about it. Second, we get another name for God added here in verse 8. "Yahweh." This is the one name God gave for Himself that others haven't given for Him. And when He gave it was when He brought some of the greatest miracles on the earth...the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt.

Verse 9 says He breaks the bow and shatters the spear and burns the chariots with fire. Bows, spears and chariots were the modern weapons of war at the time, but they are powerless against him. What are our weapons today - bombs, guns, and nuclear power. But they are no match for Him. I like that side of God. God is a God of love for sure. But He is all-mighty! Peace is His goal. Notice the beginning of verse 9 says He makes wars cease. The interesting thing here is that the main tenor of this Psalm is written with the perspective of looking at trouble in front of you, not behind. So actual peace isn't there yet, trouble is still present, but because of who God is, knowing His power and His joy and His ultimate plan for peace, enables us to rest. Which is the second specific thing this Psalm tells us to do: ***be still and know that I am God***. Often when we have a lack of peace, when we are overcome with fear, we do foolish, rash, stupid things. Here we're told not to. Just stop. Wait. Trust. Be still. Bask leisurely in the power of God. It is really and truly learning to rest in His Sovereignty. The result of resting in God's sovereignty is peace and then worship. Twice here, "*I will be exalted, I will be exalted.*" This is a call for us to exalt Him - to praise Him with all our hearts.

I know it may sound strange to many of you, but in times of trouble God is a strong fortress, and one of the main ways that we experience His protection is in worship. Rather than doubt and distrust and be anxious, we ought to turn and exalt and worship Him. He is with us, no matter what! Several times we are promised by the Lord, ***“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*** That being the case, we will always have somewhere to run to. God is our fortress!