

# Psalm 46 – God is our Fortress

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1 ESV)*

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.  
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.  
(Psalm 46:4-5ESV)*

*Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!” (Psalm 46:10 ESV)*

## **We Will Not Be Shaken**

**January 3, 2021**

**Psalm 46**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning! Please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 46.

As you are doing that, I want to ask you a simple question: *what do you think you need to hear at the start of this uncertain year? What do you think is it that God would want to assure you as you start this year?*

I am going to put forth that God would have you see a FRESH VIEW OF HIS GREATNESS. You need to catch a glimpse of His might and power. You need to see that though EVERYTHING else seems to be falling apart, HE REMAINS THE SAME. That’s what you need. And boy that is what I need!

Psalm 46 serves us perfectly it was a song of confidence for God’s people who had reason to feel shaken. They like us, needed to be reminded of who their God was, what He had done, and what He WOULD do. God knew that His people needed to hear those truths time and time again to quell their fears.

And friends, that is what we need to hear today as we begin this year. We need to have a song of confidence that would make us SOAR ABOVE the uncertainties that are here now and the ones that are coming. Do you feel that today? Friends, if our hope was in the calendar switching to 2021 then we are in big trouble. Our hope NEEDS to be in the ONLY ONE WHO NEVER

CHANGES, who is ALWAYS REIGNING, and who is ALWAYS WITH US. We need to go into 2021 with our eyes set on our great and ever-present God.

So by God's grace, we are going to see that this morning as we dive into Psalm 46. With these things in mind, hear now from the Holy and necessary Word of God:

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, <sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. <sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. <sup>6</sup> The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. <sup>7</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. <sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. <sup>10</sup> "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" <sup>11</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah (Psalm 46:1-11 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Now many of you as you heard that read couldn't help but hearing the famous reformer Martin Luther's 'A Mighty Fortress is Our God.' His inspiration for that classic hymn came from these very Psalm. It is said that whenever he was met with discouragement he would say, 'come, let us sing the forty sixth Psalm.'<sup>1</sup> Luther, battled heavy discouragement as he fought with all his might to see the Church reformed. He was a man who LITERALLY feared for his life. He faced constant spiritual attacks. And though he saw great victories, he saw great setbacks as well. So he ran to this Psalm often to be reminded of the greatness, might and power of the God he served.

### **We will not be shaken**

But this wasn't only true of Martin Luther and the reformers, it has ALWAYS BEEN the plight of God's people. We have ALWAYS NEEDED to behold the might of our God.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *An Exposition, with Practical Observations, of the Book of the Psalms, Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary*, (Public Domain), (Digital).

And by BEHOLDING HIM, we have been reminded to FEAR NOT. It's the most repeated command in the Bible for a reason! There is rampant sin. There is rampant injustice. There is wickedness that seems to win time and time again. And the people of God have often felt like the whole world was against them.

But Psalm 46 teaches the people of God that no matter the storms around them, God's people WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. WE will not be shaken through THIS STORM.

First, Psalm 46 teaches us that we will not be shaken because:

### **1. Our God is Lord OVER the chaos**

There is chaos yes, but GOD IS REIGNING OVER IT. Look with me at Psalm 46 again.

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, <sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah (Psalm 46:1-3 ESV)

<sup>6</sup> The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. (Psalm 46:6 ESV)

Notice there is no dismissing the reality of trouble in the world or in the lives of God's people. The Psalmist saw the might and power of the nations, the chaos and unrest. They fully acknowledged it. There is this awful picture painted of the whole world being given to destruction and yet God's people are remaining confident as they KNEW THEIR GOD WAS IN CONTROL. All that God has to do was open His mouth and the chaos would cease. Peace would come. That was the hope. But this hope, this ability to FEAR NOT in the situations Israel found themselves was by no means easy!

Just for a second, think about the land where GOD placed His people. It was a good and fruitful land people but it was also a coveted piece of land because it was the natural bottleneck between Asia Minor, Asia, and Africa. As one author says:

If safety from marauding neighbours or security from social and cultural corruption had been God's intent, the island of Madagascar or Iceland would have provided security and isolation for his chosen people.<sup>2</sup>

Maybe for us it can be hard to picture what Israel felt, looking at the powerful nations surrounding them, the enemies that desired their land, knowing they could be caught in any moment between warring lands. Think of it, Egypt to the south, the Philistines to the west, Assyria to the North, Edom and Babylon to the right. There was chaos surrounding them. And again, it was GOD WHO PLACED THEM THERE. God placed them in the chaos and uncertainty that was the ancient near east.

But OVER THE CHAOS stood their Faithful, Sovereign God who stood as their protector and guardian. They NEEDED TO HEAR THESE WORDS TIME AND TIME AGAIN. They needed to PREACH THIS TO THEMSELVES AND ONE ANOTHER OFTEN!

AND SO DO WE! Just as God ordained trials for Israel so He does for us today. And when He does, we need to remember that He is still on His sovereign throne reigning over covid 19, the uncertainty surrounding your job, the school year, lockdowns, the US presidency. But if we are honest, like the Psalmist, sometimes our confidence is shaken! That was 2020 in a nutshell! It seems like each week our emotions were bounced around like a seesaw. The social unrest that we saw in the States that made its way around the world! Didn't it feel like the 'earth would give way, that the mountains would be moved into the heart of the sea?' That the world might end?

God shows us that the answer is not to cower in fear, but to remember and BELIEVE that He is still in control. Remember how Daniel praised God?

He (God) changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. (Daniel 2:21-22 ESV)

YOUR GOD remains the same. Do we believe that today? Will we be a people who choose to FEAR NOT? A people who CHOOSE TO trust God rather than cower in this time of uncertainty? Will you? God has not been bested in and because of that YOU can trust that you won't be either. Your God is over ALL THE CHAOS. So fear not!

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<sup>2</sup> Michael D. Williams, *Far as the curse is found: the covenant story of redemption*, (P & R Publishing, New Jersey, 2005), 115).

Secondly, we will not be shaken because:

## **2. Our God is a mighty Defender**

Lets look at verses 8-9:

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. <sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. (Psalm 46:8-9 ESV)

Here the Psalmist councils the people of God to REMEMBER God's past deeds. He says REMEMBER how He has WONDROUSLY SAVED US BEFORE. This is an ALL IMPORTANT but OFTEN NEGELCTED practice. Psalm 107, after recounting how many times God had redeemed His people ends with this:

Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD. (Psalm 107:43 ESV)

Remember the pillar of cloud and fire that led you when you were lost. Remember the sound of the Red Sea dividing in two so that you could cross on dry land. Remember the sound of Pharoah's chariots being swept away by the rushing waters as your women and children moved forward in safety.

Whoever is wise will remember.

Remember the walls of Jericho crashing down before your eyes. Remember the armies of the Midianites fighting one another as they fled from Gideon and his 300 men. Remember the giants and the tyrants, the kings and the pharaohs that all fell before the mighty hand of your God! Your God fights for you!

Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things.

Like them, we the Church can remember all that God has done not only in our own lives but in the lives of our brothers and sisters who went before. When we are given to fear, we need to go back and recount what God has done. We've gone through some of Israel's history, but our faith would be drastically helped if we looked to the early Church. How God took a group of maybe 40 or so and transformed the ancient near east with them! The Church should have never made it off the ground when you think of the cowards that made up the disciples. But what did God do? He filled His people with the Holy Spirit and filled the Roman world with the wonderful Gospel of Jesus

Christ. Persecution didn't stop it. Not even the threat of losing one's life could quell God's Kingdom.

And fast forward to today, look at how the Church has grown in China amidst an oppressive government. Fear and persecution have only fuelled the spreading fire that is the Kingdom of God. Friends, no doubt you have stories of your own of the faithfulness and might that God has demonstrated. Think back to this past year. How many moments did you feel like you were hanging by a thread only to see God intervene and bring hope?

REMEMBER THOSE MOMENTS. TREASURE THEM. When everything feels like it's falling apart, when you feel like God may have lost control, REMEMBER. God has acted mightily time and time again and WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. Remember your God is a MIGHTY WARRIOR who fights for you. So FEAR NOT.

The Psalmist goes on to remind us that:

### 3. Our God is with us

The Psalmist sang:

<sup>1</sup> God is **our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.** <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, <sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. <sup>5</sup> **God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;** God will help her when morning dawns. (Psalm 46:1-5 ESV)

Friends here we are reminded that our God is EVER PRESENT with His people. The Psalmist treasured that their God was not only MIGHTY, but that He was EVER PRESENT.

They could trust that the raging of the world would not overtake their borders. Other nations would rely on other advantages but God's people were meant to trust ONLY in their mighty God!

Charles Spurgeon commented:

Not our armies, or our fortresses. Israel's boast is in Jehovah, the only living and true God. Others vaunt their impregnable castles, placed on inaccessible rocks, and secured with gates of iron, but God is a far better refuge from distress than all these: and when the time

comes to carry the war into the enemy's territories, the Lord stands his people in better stead than all the valour of legions or the boasted strength of chariot and horse.<sup>3</sup>

Fear not for your God is mighty to save and HE IS EVER PRESENT. Let's read verses 4-5 again:

<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. <sup>5</sup> **God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.** (Psalm 46:1-5 ESV)

The people of God can rest assured that amidst the chaos their God is WITH THEM. We just celebrated this truth over Christmas and it never gets old! Here the Psalmist' delights that though chaos reigns outside, the city of God is calm, protected, and satisfied. Their God is in their midst and they can rest assured.

This is seen in the contrast between the raging seas and mountains and the CALM rivers and streams which Israel boasted about. Matthew Henry comments on this:

There is a **river** the streams whereof shall make it glad, even then when the waters of the sea roar and threaten it. It alludes to the waters of Siloam, which went softly by Jerusalem (Isa. 8:6, 7): though of no great depth or breadth, yet the waters of it were made serviceable to the defence of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time.<sup>4</sup>

These waters not only represented God's protection but His provision. He was present to protect AND to provide for His people from within their own borders. We forget what a dreaded thing it would be to not have water but in ancient times they didn't take water for granted. The Psalmist is rejoicing in God's ability to provide for His people WITHIN THEIR LAND. I love this because Israel isn't picturing their God FAR AWAY BUT NEAR AND UP CLOSE. MIGHTY AND PRESENT. Resting INSIDE THE CITY WITH HIS PEOPLE.

In the New Testament we catch a glimpse of this when Jesus was with His disciples. He was exhausted from ministering to the crowds and as they in a boat a great storm arose. The disciples were panicking as anyone might do. Yet there lay Jesus ASLEEP! The LORD OF ALL CREATION WAS ASLEEP AND CALM IN THE STORM WITH HIS PEOPLE. Then when He awoke, merely with A WORD, calms the storm. Do you see that? Not only MIGHTY, but PRESENT in the storm!

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, (Public Doman, accessed December 19,2020).

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Henry, *An Exposition, with Practical Observations, of the Book of the Psalms, Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary*, (Public Doman), (Digital).

Do you believe that God is near to you now? Christian do you cling to this when everything is falling apart? Look back to last year, did your prayer sound like the Psalmist' or were you rushing trying to find comfort and hope in something else?

Friends, it isn't wrong to pray that God would deliver us from the storm we are in. That is a GOOD prayer. BUT, often the very storm that we are in is God's way of teaching us how CLOSE HE REALLY IS TO US. It's in the storm when we are most eager to find shelter. So during this storm lets be the people who flee to our mighty God for shelter.

Sorrows and pain will still come. We don't believe in the prosperity Gospel. BUT WE DO BELIEVE that the people of God can have a quiet, steadfast, and peaceful confidence that their MIGHTY God will be NEAR. Our God is reigning OVER the storm and HE IS WITH US THROUGH IT. That's why the people of God can FEAR NOT. That's why the people of God will NOT be shaken.

Fourthly and lastly, we will not be shaken because:

#### **4. Our God will be exalted**

The Psalmist sang these reorienting words that we all need to treasure and hear:

<sup>10</sup> "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" <sup>11</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah (Psalm 46:10-11 ESV)

God says, 'I WILL BE EXALTED, MY GLORY WILL BE SEEN BY ALL!' THAT is meant to be the comfort of every child of God. The One who loves you dearly, the One who put a plan in place for YOU to be freed from the penalty and power of sin, and the One who gave His one and only Son WILL BE SEEN FOR ALL HE IS. Your God will be exalted. To the rejoicing of the Church and to the PERIL of God's enemies. Matthew Henry comments:

Let his enemies be still, and threaten no more, but know it, to their terror, that he is God, one infinitely above them, and that will certainly be too hard for them; let them rage no more, for it is all in vain: he that sits in heaven, laughs at them; and, in spite of all their impotent malice against his name and honour, he will be exalted among the heathen and



not merely among his own people, he will be exalted in the earth and not merely in the church.<sup>5</sup>

Do you hear that? Our God is a God of mercy yes, but when sinners reject His Gospel, when they reject His Lordship they leave Him no option. They will face his judgement. So this is just as much of a warning to God's enemies as it is a COMFORT to His people.

The Psalmist knew that the promise that God would be exalted among the nations meant good news for them. Their identity was meant to be SOLEY TIED to their relationship with Yahweh. So instead of ending the Psalm with a vague comfort that 'all would work out,' or, the famous line, 'this too shall pass,' the Psalmist looked forward to the day when THEIR GOD would be glorified in ALL the earth.

For us on this side of the Cross, we still hunger for that day when God will be exalted in FULL. When our God will be treasured as He should be. John saw that day coming:

<sup>22</sup> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup> But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:22-27 ESV)

That is the day that the child of God SHOULD LONG FOR. When God will be:

WILL BE SEEN FOR WHO HE IS IN FULNESS

WILL BE VINDICATED IN FRONT OF ALL THOSE WHO OPPOSED HIM

WILL BE EXALTED BY HIS PEOPLE

WILL MAKE ALL THINGS RIGHT

Knowing this allows us to FEAR NOT. To hold our ground and not be shaken. The nations will continue to walk in chaos, it will be seem like God has lost control, but He hasn't. One day we will see this. We will see Him exalted and enjoyed by His people. Think of it, all of us who have hid in the shelter of Jesus Christ, all of us who have ran to Him for refuge will see Him

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Henry, *An Exposition, with Practical Observations, of the Book of the Psalms, Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary*, (Public Doman), (Digital).

worshipped and adored for all that He and has done. THAT WILL BE THE DAY! THAT WILL BE THE JOY OF GOD’S PEOPLE.

Can I ask you, is that what you are longing for now? Are you holding onto this promise? Is your joy tied up with God being seen for ALL HE IS? I began this section by calling these last verses REORIENTING because that’s what they are. Like hikers who have gone off the trail, we need to be reminded of the right direction. And seeing God exalted is ALWAYS THE DIRECTION that we should be going. If our eyes are fixed on that, then we will not be shaken.

## Conclusion

Friends, isn’t it interesting that this famous and treasured Psalm teaches God’s people to not trust in themselves at all? ALL of the Psalmist’ hope is found in WHO GOD IS. His sovereignty, His power, His nearness, and His coming glory. Why? Because what will keep us pressing on, walking in fearlessness, is NOT TO SEE OURSELVES. But to see WHO OUR GOD IS.

If you are finding yourself feeling weak in the knees as you begin this year, embrace the weakness. Fall down and look to Jesus Christ. Remember that He loved you enough to leave His glory that you might be brought to safety. That you could be clothed with His righteous robes and brought into His family. And brought into a kingdom that NOTHING CAN STAND AGAINST. He is the rock by which you can endure ALL TRIALS.

As we begin this year, let us be a people who take our eyes off ourselves and the circumstances which would cripple us. Let us know fix our eyes on our mighty God who is OVER the chaos, with us in it, and who will one day exalt His name for all to see. Who are able to say with the psalmist:

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, <sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. (Psalm 46:1-3 ESV)

For His glory, and for our good. This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.