

No Fear

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One of the glories of salvation is that we can face death and we can face eternal life without fear, with a confidence that in this great Savior of whom we have been singing, we have a full and complete redemption that secures us and secures our blessing forever and ever and ever, without fail, without exception, that in Christ there is no threat to our soul, and we will celebrate the remembrance of that full and complete redemption in just a little while as we go to the communion table together and remember the body and blood of our Lord.

So we look forward to eternity without fear, that is essential to being a Christian. What I would have you see today as we continue in our systematic study of the Psalms, is that that confidence that we have in Christ for eternity is also to define a sense of confidence in which we live life here on earth. And I realize that adversity and I realize that trials and uncertainty, whether it's on a national or worldwide level, or whether it's in your own personal life, that there is often an element of temptation to fear and of uncertainty. "What lies ahead? And I don't know what's going to happen," and it brings that familiar knot of discouragement and pain into your stomach. But beloved, I want to say to you based on the authority of God's word that a true Christian should never panic in adversity. The great Martyn Lloyd Jones once said that faith is a refusal to panic. He didn't mean that as a comprehensive definition of faith, what he means is that you and I as Christians should live in a way that no matter what happens in our lives, we should be so confident in the character and the power and the promise of God that we refuse to panic in the face of adversity, in the face of setback, in the face of the worst things that life could bring to us.

And you know this from Scripture. Perhaps the most familiar passage of Scripture is Psalm 23 and embedded in Psalm 23 is a verse that I will often send out to people as they are going through hard times, Psalm 23:4, David said, "I fear no evil, for You are with me." And David is basing that statement of confidence on the fact that the Lord is his Shepherd; that God deals with us, deals with his people as a shepherd cares for their sheep, and he provides for us and he leads us, and he guides us in a way that is infallibly designed to secure our ultimate blessing, and you are intended to live life with that as your defining perspective and that that would become the prism through which you understand everything about what happens to you in life. No matter what people may do against you, no matter how they may fail you, no matter how they may wrong you, no

matter what the external circumstances may be, your fundamental approach to life, the cornerstone in which you view life is, "I fear no evil, for this God whom I know in Christ, is with me."

Beloved, I want to tell you that Christians are meant to live courageously. Christians are meant to be men and women of courage. Men and women who do not flinch at adversity, who do not flinch at danger because there is always this settled confidence that God as our Shepherd is with us. So, beloved, what that means, if courage comes from the presence of an immutable unchanging God who is always faithful to his people, then get this: courage comes not from a lack of trouble. Courage does not come from the absence of threat or the absence of wrongdoing against you. Beloved, courage is not found in an excessive control over your circumstances or over the people that you love or the people around you and just controlling things so that threat never comes to you. That is not the ultimate source of courage. No, courage is found in a true knowledge of the God of the Bible and that alone is sufficient for you to live life without fear. No fear because of who God is, not because we know what the future holds. That is a critical distinction and that's what we're going to look at in Psalm 46 as our text.

I invite you to turn to Psalm 46. I'm going to read it in its entirety and then we'll go through it today. If you're visiting with us, we've been teaching through the Psalms systematically, usually on our midweek study on Tuesday nights. Today we have the privilege of reading and teaching from Psalm 46 in preparation for communion. Psalm 46, beginning in verse 1,

1 God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; 3 Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah. 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. 6 The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted. 7 The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah. 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has wrought desolations in the earth. 9 He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire. 10 "Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.

I want you to notice something as we begin, just to give you a sense, I like to give you a sense of the structure of a passage so that you can kind of go back and read it later on your own. You'll notice that after verse 3, verse 7, and verse 11, there is that familiar word, "Selah," a word indicating to pause here, meditate. Perhaps if this was being played musically, it was a notation for a musical interlude. Whatever it is, it's designed to help you to pause, to reflect back on the section that was just finished and to let that sink in a

little bit deeper. So there are three sections to this Psalm, all designed to do this: all designed to reinforce the primary statement found in verse 2, "Therefore," look at verse 2 with me, "Therefore we will not fear." We will not fear. The people of God, the church of Jesus Christ in the New Testament era, are meant to be a people who live life without fear.

Now, let me step back, beloved, and just as a little pastoral matter acknowledge the fact, I understand that many of you are prone to anxiety. You are prone to fear. You are prone to worry. You chew your nails over what's about to happen in life, or your concern over what might happen to you or to your loved ones. I understand that. God's word comes to you this morning in two different ways, you might say. One, it comes not to condemn you so much in that and to discourage you by holding up an unattainable standard, God comes to his people to bless us and to help us. But also God's word comes to you today not to affirm you and leave you in that condition of life, and that approach to life, as if that were an acceptable way for a Christian to live. If that prevailing, biting, concerning anxiety is a mark of the way that you live your life, what you need to do is you need to come to God's word and let it sift you and let it change you and let God's word show you why that condition of fear and anxiety is utterly unnecessary for you to live. You see, God has designed life, God has given us Christ, God has given us the indwelling Spirit, God has given his infallible word to us all in part to strengthen us so that we would be people of courage as we live our lives. It doesn't do much good, does it, it doesn't really glorify and honor God, does it, to say that you believe in this God, that you believe in this Christ, that you are trusting him for your eternal salvation, and yet to live life in such a way that you present to everyone who knows you this fragile, breaking, concerned, overwhelmed persona that says, "I don't know what's going to happen next." Well, realize that there is a severe disconnect between that manner of living and the God that you claim that you know, and what you need to see is God's word comes to you today and says you cannot continue on living that way and gives us understanding to help us see why that is totally unnecessary. The question becomes: if we know God like we say we do, then that has a powerful corrective, it has a powerful influence on the way that we approach all of life, and God's word comes with authority to us today to lay these things out before us and it is our responsibility as the people of God to recognize his exalted nature, his power, his promises, his presence with us and say, "Ah, that's going to influence the way that I live life from now on."

So God comes to us today in his word to address us in our anxieties and say, "It's time for that to change and here's why it can change." The three sections of this Psalm all help us to understand and to reinforce the reality that a Christian can live with no fear. I realize that that's a high and lofty challenge but in response to the nature of God, it is the only appropriate response. Why can we live this way? How can we be certain that this is all right?

Point 1: we can have this certainty, we can have this confidence because, point 1: God prevails over nature. God prevails. God rules over all of nature and we see a theme verse as the Psalm opens up. Verse 1, "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble." The verse presupposes that you're going to have trouble, Christian. You know

this from your own personal experience that trouble comes. The courage and the absence of fear is not from an absence of trouble but the presence of God in the midst of it, and that's what this Scripture is calling you to recognize, calling you to respond to. This is a theme verse, verse 1 lays out the theme and then everything else is just an unfolding of what the significance of that is for you as a believer. God is a refuge, the Psalmist says. In other words, God to his people is like a shelter that you can go into that protects you from the storm; a refuge in a time of danger. The whole idea is this, is that the reality of your salvation, the reality of God being your God means that you are meant to go to him in trust, you are to appeal to him, to seek him as your help in the midst of the danger that assaults you. Christian, in your times of threat, in your times of helplessness, God is present with you in order to assist you, to aid you, to help you. That's the whole point of that verse. And this sense of protection is reinforced.

Look at verse 1 with me again, it is reinforced by saying that he is a strength. Christian, your confidence, your power in your time of trouble is not found, again, by manipulating people and circumstances. It is found by remembering that you serve, you belong to a God of might and power. Your ability to walk through danger without fear is found not in your personal resources, your personal cleverness or your ability to manage things in a particular way. The arm of flesh will fail you without fail. Your might and power is found in the God in whom you know and the God in whom you trust.

So, beloved, the strength and the power of God comes to you like a mighty wind, like a mighty wave over your soul and says, "This is designed to define your worldview. This is designed to determine the way that you think about everything else." And until you come to realize that this is the cornerstone, this is the foundation upon all of the rest of your life is built, you're going to struggle with fear and anxiety. You see, whenever we talk about the character of God, there is always real life implication to it, and sometimes I'm afraid that we miss that; that we've been conditioned perhaps to think about God in the abstract, to think about God and your belief in Christ as a compartment of life; that the spiritual stuff is stuck over here and I think about that and that's okay, but then there's real life over here and you miss the fact that those two are interrelated. So when you are experiencing fear and anxiety, beloved, I can promise you that you are not thinking about life through the prism of the strength and refuge that is your God because if you were thinking about it from that perspective, these other things would not overwhelm you in such a way as they tend to do.

So I emphasize that simply to say this: that if you are prone to anxiety and you hear these things about the power and strength of God and say, "I've heard this before. I've known this before." Well, understand, beloved, that if those two things are coexisting in your life, "I've heard this before and, boy, am I worried about what comes next," then you've never really understood it in the first place. You see, it becomes a spiritual issue that you say, "Maybe I'm not as far advanced in the Christian life as I think I am, if anxiety controls me to such an extent." You see, anxiety is like a physical disease, it's a spiritual symptom that points out that something is wrong. You have pain in your side and you say, "Oh, there is something wrong here. I've got to see a doctor." If you're plagued by consuming ongoing anxiety, you should realize that that's telling you that there is a

spiritual problem, that there are aspects of spiritual life that you have not yet accessed that are designed to change the way that you think and live. You see, this fear is not something that is an expected, tolerated part of genuine Christian living.

No, no, look at verse 2, "Therefore," therefore being a connection with what we just saw because God is our refuge and strength, because God is a present help, he is ever ready to assist his people in their difficulty, therefore, based on that, this follows. This is connected like an engine to the rest of the train. They are linked together. Therefore, what? "Therefore we will not fear because our God is like this. Because he is a strength and a help, therefore we will not fear. We will not tremble at circumstances. We will not be afraid of the future. No matter what happens in the next election, no matter what happens in the world, no matter what happens in life, we look forward to the future without fear. Why? Not because we know what's going to happen, not because we're necessarily going to experience earthly prosperity and success. It has nothing to do with that. It has nothing to do with that shifting sand. It has nothing to do with that collapsible house of cards when we don't know what our lives will be like tomorrow. No, we live without fear because this God is our refuge and strength."

Let me state this in a positive way, beloved: the power and the promises of God call forth a response of worship. We worship God. We recognize his greatness and in the presence of someone infinitely superior to us, we bow in worship to him. Worship is a response to the character of God. What I want you to see is this: is that in the language of Psalm 46, trust then becomes our response of worship to him. Trust, a confidence, trust, an absence of fear, is the only appropriate response to making this declaration of faith, that this God of the Bible is our refuge and strength. It's the only appropriate way to respond to him. The nature of your God should inform the way that your heart responds to the inevitable challenges of life. You see, when the trials come, when the sorrows flood over your soul, when the uncertainty starts to overwhelm you, you have to step back and say, "Ah, but where is my help in this? Who is my help in this? My help is in my God." And the question then becomes, "Okay," you just kind of walk through this and, "what is this God like? Who is this God that I say is my strength and refuge?" And what you find as you go through the rest of Psalm 46 is that this Psalm calls you to unlimited confidence, unqualified trust in him, because of who he is, to the point that even if the earth collapses, you still go forward without fear.

Look at verse 2, "Therefore we will not fear," and then perhaps with a measure of hyperbole, the Psalmist says, "We will not fear even if this and this and this and this happens. We won't give in to controlling anxiety even if," verse 2, "the earth should change." Wow, Psalm 46:2 just did away with the whole climate change hysteria in one little bit of word. "We won't fear if the earth should change, though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride."

You know, we presuppose something in life, Those of you who have lived in California maybe not so much the rest of you probably so, you presuppose that the ground on which you walk is going to be solid and stable. You presuppose that. You don't even think about

it. You just get up and you just start walking around and everything is solid because that's just the way that things are. That is woven into the fabric of your existence, that life is like that, the earth stands firm. What this verse is saying is that if that should be shaken up, if all of a sudden the whole earth should start to tremble to the point where you cannot even walk straight, that doesn't change your perspective. You realize that God is your refuge and strength, God is a God of power and might, and the fact that the earth is changing and shaking, hasn't changed the nature of God. God is our refuge and strength, that hasn't changed, therefore I am still without fear though this tremble underneath me.

I can speak to that from a measure of personal experience. We lived through the Northridge earthquake of 1994, 6.8 on the Richter scale, woken up at about 4:30 in the morning with the sound of this rumbling. I'm not saying I wasn't scared at that time. Now I wouldn't be. But this low roaring rumble wakes us out of a solid sleep and all of a sudden our house is literally violently shaking. Windows are breaking out. This awful train roar of noise and I'm walking down, I'm not walking down the hallway, I'm trying to go down to the hallway where our three young children were located and the thought in my mind was, "I am going back there so that I can die with them." And as I was going down the hallway, the force of that earthquake was literally throwing me and bouncing me off the walls. The earth was shaking in the midst of it.

Now, I don't mind telling you at the time I was frightened. That was a terrifying event. I know something about the earth shaking and what that's like and what the Scripture says is that even if things are overthrown to that extent, there should be a settled confidence in your God that no matter what is happening in nature around you, you are confident. Why? Because God rules even over nature. He prevails over that. He is the God of the storm. He is the God of the quake. He is the God of the flood. And if you know him, then you know the one who is directing all of that to accomplish his ends and therefore there is no reason to fear because God, our strength, does not change. And when you belong to him, beloved, it doesn't matter if there is a tornado roaring down on you, it doesn't matter if the floodwaters are rising, it doesn't matter if the earth is shaking, it doesn't matter if the earth is collapsing before your eyes and melting into some unrecognizable mass and everything that defines your life is fluid and changing without warning. Scripture says even in that, no fear because there is a transcendent God that you know that is your strength and refuge even in a time like that. God prevails over nature.

Now, here's the thing: the time to find that strength and that courage is not found in the middle of the collapsing of the elements. What you are designed to do is to develop your convictions now, to develop them when there is stability in your life, when you do have time to think about these things. You reflect on the character of God, the nature of God, and you say, "Yes, I do believe that. Yes, this is true. Yes, this is the heart conviction that will define my approach to life and therefore even if these things happen in the future, I will remain unmoved from my position of confidence." And that's why, beloved, it is so vital for you to be here this morning. I thank God that you're here. It is so vital for you to be a persistent reader and student of God's word because it is only in the midst of times of relative calm where you are developing these heart convictions that prepare you for those

times to come. If you are spiritually careless now, indifferent to the claims of God, indifferent to a love for God's word, you're vulnerable when those times hit.

So you are meant to develop these convictions and as you go through a Psalm like Psalm 46, you say to yourself in the quiet of your heart, "That is what I believe," and you say, "By the grace of God, that's where I'm going to stand and I am not going to move off of it." Then when you are tested, when the ground starts to shake, when life starts to collapse, then you fall back on the convictions that you developed before rather than falling down in the midst of the trial.

So, beloved, here's what you have to answer for yourself here today: do you believe that God prevails over nature? Do you believe that he is God over all? Is that the conviction of your heart? Well, if it is, then you're in a position of stability and you say, "Therefore we will not fear no matter what comes."

Look at verse 3 there at the end with me, "Selah." It causes you to pause and meditate. Beloved, what that selah is telling you to do is to clear your mind of the distractions and meditate on this: "God," you say to yourself, "is my refuge and strength. He is my shelter. He is my stronghold. He is where I go and he rules and he prevails over all and he knows my name and he carries me and I trust him and no matter what happens, nothing can alter that fundamental relationship with him that defines the very nature of my existence and guarantees the future outcome to me." And you say, "Therefore my commitment is no fear because I will trust him as a worshipful response to who he is." God then is a transcendent source of stability, transcendent in the sense in that he is not defined by or controlled by the changes in your circumstances, even the changes in the ground in which you walk. He is not threatened by that. It does not change him. He still rules over all of it and so you go to him and you rest in him and you receive that certain confidence that comes from believing that, and what you believe in your heart defines the way that you respond to life. And beloved, that answers fear; you trust this God even when upheaval threatens you at the core, not just nature, life.

We know from the New Testament, don't we, that our Lord Jesus manifested that control over nature. You remember him walking on the waves. You remember the raging sea and he just looks at it and says, "Hush, be still," and a hurricane, as it were, turns to glass in response to the powerful demonstration of our Lord Jesus' power over nature. Well, let me ask you: do you know him? Do you know Christ? And you say, "Yes, I do. I have received him. I do believe in him." Well, do you realize what that means then? It means that you belong to the Lord. The Lord who is over nature like that is the one who has said, "You belong to me and I'll keep you forever," to which you say, "Ah, then I can rest without fear because my Lord prevails over nature."

Sometimes for those of you that don't know Christ, sometimes the threats of life, sometimes the threats of nature and you say, "Oh," and you are really gripped by the fear, that may simply be a manifestation of the fact that you don't know Christ at all; that you don't have any solace in Christ is an indication that you are separate from him and you need to come to him for salvation in the first instance to be born again, to be saved at all,

because the truly redeemed heart responds to the truth of God's word and says, "I do believe that and I fall short and, yes, I have forgotten that, but that is true of me. I do believe that about Christ. He is my strength. He is my refuge therefore I will not fear no matter what happens."

Secondly, it's not just that God prevails over nature, secondly: God prevails over nations. God prevails over nations. The Psalmist turns from an upheaval in nature to an upheaval in the nations. Look at verses 4 and 5 with me. "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns." Then look at verse 6, verses 4 and 5 being a reference to the earthly Jerusalem where God dwelt in the temple at the time that this Psalm was written. God was in the midst of the city and his holy dwelling place in the temple where he uniquely manifested his presence and he says in verse 5, the Psalmist does, "God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns." God is in the midst therefore what could be the threat against this marvelous city where his presence is dwelling?

Verse 6, "The nations made an uproar." A threat came against Jerusalem. "The kingdoms tottered," they were vulnerable. What did God do? Verse 6, "He raised His voice, the earth melted." God merely elevated his voice and the threat was turned away at the beginning of the day. You know, that happened twice in Israel's history at least. It was at daybreak when God drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea as the people of Israel were leaving Egypt heading into the Promised Land. It was at daybreak, Exodus 14:27 says, that God drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea when they tried to pursue them. It was at daybreak when Israel found the Assyrian army destroyed after the siege of Jerusalem and 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, their finest men, were dead in one night. It was at daybreak that they found that.

Look at verse 5 there, "God will help her when morning dawns." What it's saying here is that from the very start of the day, the people of God are safe, even when nations rise up against them. Why? Why is there is this sense of safety? Verse 6, "The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted." Scripture tells us that God is so sovereign over nations that they cannot successfully rise up against him. Now, follow the logic of the Psalm in this, see where that leads us. You have this God over nature, you have this God over the nations who protects his people and lives in the midst of them, and verse 7 says, "The LORD of hosts is with us." The God of armies. The God of the armies of Israel. The God of angel armies always by my side.

Verse 7, "The God of Jacob is our stronghold," Jacob being another name for Israel. The God of Israel is our stronghold. Jacob who was weak and faltering, even a deceiver in his early years as a man, the man from whom the nation of Israel came from his loins, that wavering, weak, deceitful man became one who belonged to the God of the nation, and that God is the one, the Psalmist says, who is our stronghold. He is the fortress that we run into and we are safe from all who would attack us. And what you're meant to do as you hear that, as you read through that, is to say, "Who is this a God, the God of hosts, the LORD of hosts?" LORD being the covenant name, the promise keeping God of

Israel, the one who has made Israel his people, and he is their God. What about him? Well, nations cannot stand before him. Nature is under his control. What this Psalm is saying is, "That's our God. That's the God who is with us. He's over nations. He's over nature." What does that mean? Go back to verse 2, "Therefore we will not fear."

Beloved, the United States is not the people of God. It never has been, it never will be. In New Testament times, it's the church that are the people of God and we belong to him in that way. But do you see what this means? Do you see that in the midst of everything that is designed in an election cycle to stir you up to fear and being unsettled about the future of government, the future of the world and what's going to happen, do you realize as a humble believer in Christ, as a member of the true universal church of Christ, do you realize that the Lord who is over nations is with you? Do you realize that the God who is sovereign over all is beside you and with you and committed to your well-being and guarantees it by the sure precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do you realize that? Do you realize then that that empties all of this cycle of fear for you looking to the future? What defines your future, what defines your perspective on life is not who the next elected official is, beloved, it's defined by who your God is and the nations may make an uproar and they may come after the church and they may do this and that and we look at all of that and say, "I know, I know, I know, I know, I know. I know something more important. I know who my God is and my God is a refuge. My God is a strength. My God is over nature. My God is over nations and he is with me. I'm not afraid."

I long to see the people of God go through an election cycle like that rather than engaging in the fear that politics brings. You should want to at least be a person like that because your God is worthy of that trust, your God will care for you through whatever comes, and because he is who he is, because he is over nature, because he is over nations, then you should worship him and you should worship him with trust, with confidence that says, "No fear. I'm not afraid." "How can you not be afraid? Don't you know, blah, blah, blah, blah?" "Yeah, I know blah, blah, blah, blah, but I know something more important: I know that the Lord of hosts is with me. I know that the God of Jacob, I know that the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ is my stronghold. Why are you trying to scare me? I trust him. I know him. I will not be afraid." No fear. Why? Because of who God is, because of what Christ has done at Calvary for my soul. I'm not living for this world.

So, verse 7, look at it again with me. This is really a refrain for the Psalm, it's the chorus, that which is repeated again at the end, "The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah." Clear your mind and think on this, beloved: there is no limit to the power of God, there is no limit to the promise of God to defend and help his people. None. Therefore we respond with a vertical sense of trust that says, "God, you are with me therefore the response of my heart is no fear. I will offer you a courageous heart in response to the God that you are to me, O God." And whether it's a personal trial of great physical magnitude, a family matter that shatters you to the core, financial reversal, things that go on around you, no fear because God is who he is.

There is a final aspect of it that the Psalmist brings us to. Point 3 is that God prevails over judgment. God prevails over judgment. The Psalmist now in this final section is going to call you to examine God, think about God, contemplate God in light of final judgment.

And let me just say this and backup for a little bit: I realize that Psalm 46 is one of the more familiar Psalms and, you know, I've often gone to Psalm 46 in times of personal crisis, concerns and things like that. What I would have you see to appreciate and appropriate Psalm 46 more deeply in your heart, is that it is dealing with the power and supremacy of God at a level that is far beyond your earthly individual life. This is not a Psalm that is about your personal circumstances and if you approach it simply through the prism of, "I need help today in this immediate particular problem," you're really going to miss the defining impact that it has on your life. This Psalm presents such an elevated and glorified view of God: God over nature; God over nations; God over judgment, as we'll see in a moment; to realize that it's talking about God at such a great transcendent level that spans the eons of time. This is not a Psalm isolated into our personal life circumstance, this is about who God is over eternity. God in his sovereign might. God in his powerful majesty. And you're supposed to leave yourself behind, as it were, and look up at the full greatness of God and see him there on the throne high and lofty and exalted like Isaiah did in Isaiah 6, and you say, "Wow, that's who God is," and then bring that in, bring that down to earthly life after you've already contemplated everything else. You see, some of these Psalms come to you not to give you an immediate answer to the circumstances that trouble your heart, no, actually what the Psalms call you to is to forget the circumstances that trouble your heart, look up full into the full glory of God and the troubles diminish by comparison. This Psalm is like that.

In verses 8 and 9, he calls us to think about God in light of his coming judgment. Look at verse 8 with me, "Come, behold the works of the LORD." "Behold" here being a term not so much to see it with your physical eyes but to see it with your inner understanding. Grasp this in your heart. Kind of like you see the answer to a math problem. Well, you're not literally seeing it with your physical eyes, you're understanding it with your mind and so this is a verse to understand, to think about, to contemplate, to meditate on the fact of who God is.

And what does God do? Let's look at verses 8 and 9 again. Oh, this is cool. I mean, this is really cool. "Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has wrought desolations in the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire." Speaking to the elements of warfare as they existed at that time; nation against nation warring against one another. And how great is God? God intervenes and imposes his will on the outcome. God is a divine warrior, Scripture shows us.

And I want you to see something and I want you to understand something and I want you to write this down because we need it so much in the day in which we live, in an era, in an age which has denied absolute truth, in an age of false tolerance that just says everybody should get along with everybody else, we should coexist with one another, and people believe that so much that they stick it as a bumper sticker on the back of their car.

Boy, is that ever conviction for you, huh? Good grief. And we're in an era of all tolerance and compromise and negotiation no matter what the implications for righteousness might be. I want you to see something in this passage when it says in verse 9 God "makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He," this LORD of hosts who is with us, this God of Jacob who is our stronghold, "He breaks the bow and cuts the spirit in two; He burns the chariots with fire." What is this saying about the nature of God? Do you know how God wins wars? Do you know how God brings conflict to cease? It's not through compromise, it's through conquest. It's through victory. God defeats his enemies. God subjects them to his power. That is the way that God prevails in judgment, not to negotiate with Satan to some kind of outworking where each side gives. No, God in the fullness of his righteousness, the fullness of his power, imposes his will to absolute outcome of righteousness, and the complete fulfillment of his purpose and everything that is opposed to him will eventually bow in defeat in acknowledgment of who is Lord. That's who God is.

Look over at 2 Peter 3. This is the outcome of the ages. 2 Peter 3, just before 1 John which we read earlier in the service. 2 Peter 3, we'll start in verse 10. What is this world headed to for those who are concerned about climate change? Yeah, the Lord is going to change the climate, alright. 2 Peter 3:10, "the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up." God is going to come and is going to judge his enemies and is going to judge this wicked world and bring it all to an end in judgment.

Verse 11, "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!" God is going to prevail in judgment and it will be decisive, it will be complete, it will be the end of everything evil that has opposed him. Not because of some compromise that he negotiates with supposedly equal powers; no, by an exercise of his sovereign indomitable will, he will accomplish everything that he wants.

That's our God. What does this certain outcome of his judgment, what effect does that have on our heart? Verse 13, "according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." Do you know what that's saying? It's saying that God, as it were, is going to have his people in the palm of his hand safely covering them as he exercises his judgment, and what is he going to do except carry us through all of that safely so that on the other side we will be in an era of righteousness and peace. That's how great his care is for his people and so while God prevails in judgment, he keeps his people through the process and brings them safely out on the other side. That is what God does.

Now, go back to Psalm 46 with that in mind. This God who prevails in war, this God who prevails in judgment, no one to contest him, no one to successfully oppose him, now in verse 10 he calls for surrender to all the nations, including his own people. He says,

"Cease striving," stop the opposition to me, "and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." This God who is over nature, this God who is over nations, this God who prevails in judgment, he is still yet to be fully exalted on earth. One day Christ will be reigning on earth and the fullness of his glory will be on display and he will be exalted and that is the certain outcome of history, is the return and reign of Jesus Christ. So resistance is futile. Cease striving. Stop the sin. Stop the opposition and simply recognize who this God is, know him, bow before him, bow before the certain conquest that he will have while there is still time because God prevails even in final judgment. The earth can collapse, God still reigns. The nations make war, even against his people, God still reigns. Judgment is coming, God will reign. That's who God is.

Now, what you're meant to do with all of that is to come to this refrain again in verse 11. Look at it with me. That is the God who is with us. Verse 11, "The LORD of hosts is with us." This God of power is with us and on our side. "This God of Jacob is our stronghold." When we go to God, we don't go to a weak effeminate deity who is not able to do anything about it. When you trust in God, when you appeal to him, you are going to the God who is over all and therefore no fear.

A final "Selah" calls you to bring it all into your mind and to contemplate it and filter it through your mind until it changes your perspective on life. He is with us to prevail for us. And do you know what, beloved, as we come to the communion table in just a moment? He is with us in that macro sense, and he is with you to prevail for you even in the depth of the sin of your own heart.

Look over at Matthew 1. Time go so quickly, doesn't it? At least it does to me. What's the very name of Jesus? Matthew 1:21, angels speaking to Joseph, telling him about the child in his betrothed's womb. Verse 21, "Mary will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Oh, oh, you mean he's not only over nature, he's not only over nations in judgment, but he can even be Lord over my sin and do away with my sin as easily as he does away with nations? Verse 22, "Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel,' which translated means," what? "God with us." God with us. In Christ, God is with us. In Christ at the cross, with Christ in the tomb, with Christ in the resurrection, with Christ in the ascension, God with us, sparing not even his own blood in order to defend his people; despising even his life for the sake of obedience to the Father in order to accomplish redemption for his people. God with us.

God with us over nature, over nations, over judgment, and as we see him in the cross, even over our sin, over your sin. What a magnificent God. What a God to trust. Do you see how your fear in life is a denial of these great truths of which we speak? If your God is who Scripture says he is and you know him, then the outcome is assured no matter what the variations and circumstances might be from time to time.

So, beloved, let's leave it here. Is your life being ruined by fear? By anxiety? By that knot in your stomach as you look to the future with gloom? I ask it sympathetically, beloved. I ask it in care for your soul, I ask it to help you: why? Why are you like that? Don't you know your God? Don't you know that you can completely trust him with everything with an assurance that he will bring you safe on the other side?

Let's pray together.

My friend, if you have not trusted Christ for salvation, he offers you free forgiveness of sin. I invite you to come and rest in his blood atonement for your salvation.

Our God, we do recognize your greatness in response to Psalm 46. We respond with the worship of trust in you. You rule over nature, you rule over nations, you rule over judgment, you can certainly care for us. We trust you to do so. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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