

# PSALM 46, A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD

Psalm 46 is a song of the sons of Korah, which has been a common feature in Book 2 of the psalms. This psalm was also one of Martin Luther's favorite psalms, which motivated him to pen the song that we know today "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Psalm 46 can be broken into three sections. These breaks are identified with the ending "*selah*." This is a psalm that paints an image for our minds. Therefore, as we read, we need to visualize the points the psalmist makes as he describes the help and power of the Lord.

## I. God Is For Us (1-3)

### A. Relying on God

1. The psalm begins by describing the confidence we have to rely upon the Lord. God is a refuge for us. God is our strength for us. God is an ever-present help for us in times of trouble. This is the literal force of what the Hebrew language is saying to us. God is all of these things for us. These images call to mind the

numerous times David described God as a refuge. God is the place to run to in times of trouble.

2. This knowledge should give us a quiet confidence. God is not against us. Rather, God is for us. Further, God is doing many things for us in this life. God is an ever-present help for us. This is a Hebrew idiom that means God is a help that can be found when you need it. God is reliable and dependable. One of the disappointments with our human friends is that they are not always dependable. Sometimes they cannot or will not be there when you need them most. But God says he could be found in our time of trouble.

## B. We will not fear

1. This is the reason why the psalmist says “we will not fear.” It does not matter what may happen, there is no need for fear because God is our refuge and our ever-present help. He is always there when we need him.
2. Notice how strong of a confidence we are to have in the Lord. The earth may tremble and give way, but we have no need to fear. The mountains may fall into the heart of the sea, but we

will not fear. The water may roar and foam, but we have no reason for fear. The mountains may quake with their surging, but we will not be afraid. These images describe such terrifying disaster that people would be put into a panic to see or hear about such events. We are not to be shaken even when the world seems to be falling apart.

3. I believe this is the symbolism the psalmist is bringing to mind. It is when our lives feel like a natural disaster that we are to remember that God is for us and can be found in our time of trouble. Our world may collapse around us but we will have confidence because of the Lord. Too often when our world is falling apart, we think God has left. But God is there. We simply need to run to the Lord.

### C. Run to the city of God

1. In the first act of this psalm, we are called to run to the city of God. The first step to having this lack of fear in the face of disaster is that we have put our full trust in God. In this psalm, God is described as a powerful fortress and city.

2. When enemies attacked in Old Testament days, the people who lived outside the city could not have confidence if they did not go inside the fortress. We cannot stand outside the fortress of God and think we are safe because God is our fortress. Responsibility is first placed upon us to go to the refuge for God's safety. This means you and I must believe God is there to protect us so that we will turn to him. This psalm tries to remind of us that God is reliable and worthy of our trust.

## II. God Is With Us (4-7)

### A. Life in the city of God

1. In the second act of this psalm, life inside the city is described. There is a river going through the city of God. The river makes the inhabitants of the city glad. This imagery parallels what we read in Revelation 22:1-2. *"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city."* The imagery also calls to mind the garden of Eden as a river flowed through the garden and was the source of four

rivers of the earth. In each of these instances we are picturing God with his people.

2. The city of God is where the Most High dwells. God is within her. *“The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him”* (Revelation 22:3). *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God’* (Revelation 21:3).
3. Since God is within the city, the city will not fall to any enemies or any troubles. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall, and the earth melts when the Lord lifts his voice. The book of Revelation pictures the hope of the gates of God remaining open at all times since God has conquered all the enemies. The psalmist does not look to the end, but look to the present, where God will destroy kingdoms at the mere sounding of his voice.
4. All of this was to be physically true under the old covenant. God was pictured as dwelling in the temple. Since God was with the people, the nation would not fall. But the people under the old

covenant misunderstood, thinking that God dwelled with them regardless of their actions and motives. Jeremiah identifies the problem: *“Correct your ways and your deeds, and I will allow you to live in this place. Do not trust deceitful words, chanting: This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord”* (Jeremiah 7:3-4). God was no longer with the people when they disobeyed God.

5. This was a picture for us to learn today about what we must do to have God abiding with us. Similarly, Paul said, *“For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people’”* (2 Corinthians 6:16). God does not dwell in buildings made with hands, as Solomon declared at the dedication of the temple. God dwells within us but this only can be when we are obedient to the Lord. The benefits are great when God is dwelling with us.

## B. The Lord of Hosts is with us

1. To summarize the point of these images, the psalmist declares in verse 7, *“The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”* This is the repeated picture in this psalm and

throughout the scriptures. God wants to be with us. As a child was born to Mary, the angel told her his name would be Immanuel, meaning “God with us.”

2. The true and living God is far different from all other gods that humans have come up with. We imagine gods as far away, wrathful, and indifferent to people. God shows his love and desire to be with us so much that God created us to be with him in the garden of Eden. It is actions of humankind that separated us from God. But God still wanted to dwell with his people. A tabernacle and, later, a temple were built so that the presence of God would be with the people, showing how near God is to us. God then sends his only Son, Jesus, to live with us and among us, to show us the way to the Father. Now God says he abides with us when we are walking according to the Spirit.
3. God is for us and God is with us. In the name “the Lord of hosts,” the word “hosts” is a military word used commonly to speak of armies engaged in war. It is the battle imagery that leads us into the final section of psalm 46.

### III. God Is Victorious Among Us (8-11)

#### A. Shattering the nations

1. In the third act of this psalm we read about the Lord's works and how the Lord is victorious. The psalmist encourages the worshippers to "come and see the works of the Lord." Particularly, the people are to notice the desolations God has brought on the earth.
2. Verse 9 describes how the Lord has gone about the earth bringing an end to war. Notice that God has brought an end to war through war. God breaks the bow and shatters the spear. God burns the chariots with fire. God's kingdom will always win the battle.

#### B. Be still and know that I am God

1. ***Stop getting out of sorts when things go wrong.*** Sometimes we can put our life into a tailspin because we are not putting our trust in God. We have forgotten that he is the one in charge. God rules the earth and will accomplish his purposes. As we approach new seasons, we will fret and worry about what may happen? Will we forget how God provided for each of us during



these last few years during the pandemic? When things in our lives do not go as planned, will we take matters into our own hands or rely upon God? If our job is not what we wanted, will we make a decision that will spiritually hurt us or trust God to work out something for us? We must decide for ourselves if we truly believe God has a vested interest in our lives and cares about what happens to us. When we unravel we are declaring that we do not believe God cares. We need to stop many times in a day and throughout the week remember that God is in charge. Be still and know that He is God.

2. ***We will not fear.*** No matter what happens in life, we should not be afraid. Of course, this is easier said than done. I am sure we want to argue with the statement made. We think we have many reasons to be afraid. We have so much going on that no one understands what we are enduring. As Israel was led out of Egypt, they ended up boxed in against the Red Sea. Pharaoh realizes that the Israelites seem to be wandering aimlessly and goes after them. We read in Exodus 14:10-12, "*And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very*

*afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, "Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians"? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."* The people become afraid. We would argue that they were afraid with good reason. But look at what was expected from the people. *"And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever"* (Exodus 14:13).

3. This is the start of a common problem with the people of Israel. When something went wrong, the people would try to take matters into their own hands and panic. When there was no food, the people cried out and panicked. When they spied out the land, they decided they would stone Moses and Aaron and go back to Egypt. Moses tells the people in Exodus 14 to quiet

down, be still, and let the Lord work. We need to do the same thing.

4. ***Surrender to God's might.*** Therefore, we must surrender our will to God's might. God will be exalted in the earth and among the nations. If we will surrender our will and let God be in control, we will see that the Lord of hosts is with us and will find refuge in him. Take refuge in the fortress of the Lord, the city of God, to find hope and confidence in any disaster that may come our way. (NKJV)