

## **Psalm 46 – God is Our Refuge and Our Strength**

Living today we may be experiencing heightened feelings and emotions, but these are central to being human. We cannot escape them nor should we. Psalms invites us to take the emotions we feel and bring them before God.

The Book of Psalms models how to come before God in times of sadness, brokenness and joy.

Over this next month we will focus on 4 of David's Psalms. This week I would like to read Psalm 46 – this Psalm praises God for His strength and protection. It invites the world to witness a future when wars and striving will cease and all the nations know and worship the one True God. This is the first of a number of psalms celebrating the kingship of the Lord.

If you have your bible in front of you, you will notice that this Psalm is broken up with 3 interludes. Each stanza is built around a powerful, godly concept that will strengthen and reassure us in times of trouble.

I would like to read the scripture

***Psalm 46 (1<sup>st</sup> Stanza) God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.***

***(2<sup>nd</sup> Stanza) There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; He lifts His voice, the earth melts. the sound of His thunder the earth***

dissolves. ***The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.***

**(3<sup>rd</sup> Stanza)** *Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations He has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; He burns the shields with fire. He says – **Be Still and know that I Am God.** I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. (3<sup>rd</sup> Stanza)*

**The three important parts of this Psalm are:**

**God is our Refuge and Strength**

**God is with us and is our fortress**

**God says to be still and know that He is God.**

The Hebrew word for **refuge** to me speaks of a quiet place to go for protection. The Old Testament often speaks of God's protection.

**Deuteronomy 33:26-27** – There is no-one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens to help you and on the clouds in His majesty. The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemies before you, saying destroy them.

**Psalm 91:2** I will say of the Lord – He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.

**Psalm 18:2-3** The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise and I have been saved from my enemies.

There are many more verses like that – all pointing out the direction we need to go when we are going through struggles and need some protection and hope. God has provided us with directions of where to go.

Now you may try other alternatives first when dealing with difficulty but how many times do you find no way out when you rely on your own resources.

I am not saying that friends and family are unable to assist but sometimes you only find a band-aid effect – when the band-aid is taken off or wears away – you are back where you started.

And like the verse from Deuteronomy, God rides in to protect us. God is with us, not merely as a temporary retreat, He is our eternal refuge and can provide strength in any circumstance – yes even during our pandemic.

I am sure that many know the hymn A Mighty Fortress is Our God. This song was written by Martin Luther, the man who helped to redefine faith-based Christianity. He wrote this hymn based on Psalm 46.

This hymn became the battle cry of God's people during the Reformation. It was a great source of strength and inspiration and the hymn has been translated into almost every language.

War and destruction, climatic disasters and diseases are inevitable in our world today. But so is God's ultimate victory.

Verse 10 is one I say every day, especially when I am faced with a difficulty and my thoughts and emotions start to well up – I take 10 deep breaths as I say – Be Still and Know that I Am God.

This makes me stop and be quiet before the all-powerful Lord. Reverently honouring Him and His power and majesty. I have found it very helpful to be still before God every day and to truly listen to His voice.

Today's psalm also tells us that God – our refuge is always accessible and He is ageless/eternal.

How often have we tried various strategies to resolve difficulties and they only last for a short time? Then we look for something different, perhaps newer and follow that strategy next and the next one and the next one.

David is saying in this Psalm what if the earth were to crumble, break apart – the earth is ancient but God is ageless and that's the difference.

During this pandemic it is natural to fear and say to God – come on, this is going on far too long, yet God's time is not our time – God created time and He is ageless.

When we are stuck in a whirlpool trying to find our way out – God reaches down to take our hand. We can then retreat to Him – our awesome, available and ageless refuge. No problem is too big or too small for Him to handle.

One of the things that I am missing during this pandemic is a good, long hug. And when I am struggling and seek my refuge in God I imagine Him wrapping His arms around me with protection and love. And then I realize that God really is in control and I feel comforted and safe.

When we experience anxiety, fear and stress our adrenaline pumps quicker through our system – this is the normal 'fight or flight' response. But when it continues we become exhausted, depressed and weak.

**God is not only our refuge but He is also our strength.**

If we take a walk back in time we can see that in the Ancient World, most cities were enclosed with fortified stone walls, to keep everyone safe and to keep approaching invaders outside. Most of the people however feared having no food or water more than the spears of the invaders.

David tells us – there is a river whose streams gladden God’s city – the holy dwelling place of the Most High, Jerusalem.

Water is used throughout the Bible as a symbol of God’s spirit in our midst to refresh us and strengthen us for our journey. He is the eternal spring that never runs dry.

**In John 4:13-14** Jesus sat by a well one day and said – whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

**In John 7:37-38** Jesus invites us – if anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

The Holy Spirit of God living within you is a secret fountain of lifegiving water. Reminds me of the chorus – Deep and wide, there’s a fountain flowing deep and wide.

Many don’t realize the depth of God’s Spirit within your soul. Through the Holy Spirit God has come to live inside you. There is no way to overstate this truth. Why should we look outside for help when trouble comes? Almighty God is among us and within us. He is the source of strength.

## **How can I know what God's plan is to help me overcome times of difficulty?**

God is eternal – God is the God of the past, present and the future. To find out you need to search the Scriptures – see how God has walked alongside His people since creation. Remember His good and trustworthy works.

When we go through difficult times, it is easy to become discouraged and think that God has abandoned us. But we need to remember how God has delivered us in the past and trust that He will once again restore us. Remembering the past can help us face the future with confidence.

## **God is still standing with you in the here and now in the midst of this pandemic.**

There is a word in the Old Testament – *emanu* which means “with me.” God is EMANU with you and me all the time, day and night, through good and bad, through joy and strife, in sickness, in health and death and beyond death.

We have hope for the future. The basis for our hope is firmly rooted in a past event – the resurrection of Jesus. In Corinthians 15:18 Paul points out to those who refute the resurrection of Jesus, that if there was no resurrection of the dead, then Christ was not raised and if Christ was not raised, then “all who have died believing in Christ are lost.”

But, in verse 20, Paul affirms “In fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.”

Thus Jesus is our sure ground of hope as we face an uncertain future. If it wasn't for Jesus there would be plenty to fear in the world. In Romans

8:35 Paul says we should not fear because despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us.

If we feed our fear without God, our problems and anxieties grow larger and larger. But when we admit our fears to God, we are feeding our faith instead of our fears.

**The adage goes – He who fears many, fears any. But he who fears ONE fears none.**

When we fear only one God instead of many men or women or circumstances, we can trust everything will be all right. And that's the reason that when can rejoice even amidst this pandemic.