

Psalm 46

Introduction: I like the comment by H. C. Leupold in his commentary on this psalm: "Few psalms breathe the spirit of sturdy confidence in the Lord in the midst of very real dangers as strongly as does this one." In this psalm God's people rise above all human trust to simple faith in God's almighty power and unchangeable love.

Verse One- The Hebrew word order in this verse places emphasis on the word "God." We might underline the word "God" and understand that He and He alone is our refuge and strength in the face of troubles and calamities of every sort. "Refuge and strength" describe two facets of the help He gives to His people. The Hebrew word translated "refuge" is used twenty times in the Old Testament. It means "Refuge, shelter, from storm or danger."^[1] The word translated "strength" is used ninety-three times in the Old Testament and is translated in various places, "strength, power, might." So God is to His troubled children a strong fortress or shelter into which he may flee and be absolutely safe. At the very same time He is an unfailing source of strength, enabling us to bear whatever comes our way. The aspect of "refuge" reminds us of Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The provision of strength is reminiscent of Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

The second half of the verse stresses the fact of His nearness, but also that He has proven Himself to be ready and able to help. John Gill says of God's having proven Himself many times to be the helper of the saints: "In all kind of trouble that the saints come into, the Lord has been found, by experience, to be an exceeding great helper of them..." The word translated "very" means "exceedingly or much." Commenting on this Adam Clarke writes, "He is found an exceeding, or superlative help in difficulties."

The word translated "trouble" illustrates vividly how completely God helps His people. This word is used seventy-three times in the Old Testament and is variously translated "trouble, distress, affliction, adversity, anguish, tribulation, adversary." The Lord delivers His people from all these troubles!

What we have then in this verse is One who is both **willing** and **able** to give His children all the help they need!

Verses Two and Three- Leupold beautifully and pertinently remarks here: "If one really appropriates the truth embodied in the first verse, his attitude cannot be any other than one of **complete fearlessness**." What the psalmist seems to be describing here is an earthquake. Mountains are moved. Tidal waves which are often associated with earthquakes, cause serious unrest in the sea. Nothing could be more physically frightening and intimidating than an earthquake. We consider the ground beneath us to be firm and unmoving. When the ground beneath our feet begins to tremble and shake, we are terrified. Speaking of the agitation of the sea caused by wind or an earthquake, and the attitude of people caught in such a situation, Albert Barnes writes: "Nothing is more sublime and fearful than the ocean in a storm; nothing furnishes a better illustration of the peace produced by confidence in God amid the agitations which occur in the world, than the mind of a seaman that is calm when the ocean is heaved in wild commotion."

There are times we may encounter such physical dangers. We may go through times of terror caused by earthquakes, tornados, and such. However, we may encounter other "earthquakes" in our lives which are not physical in nature. We encounter sickness, death, family problems, political problems,

church problems, financial difficulties, and many others. It is not easy to remain confident and fearless in the midst of such dangers. Our faith may be put to severe tests. The only way we can pass these tests is to keep in mind the wonderful truths of verse one.

After verse three we have the Hebrew word “Selah.” This seems to indicate a pause, and indicates a division of the psalm into another section.

Verse Four-There is a tremendous contrast between this verse and the section that has gone before. There we saw turbulence and trouble. Here we see peace, security, and adequate provision. No doubt the river referred to was a literal river which watered Jerusalem, God’s special city. Commentators are divided over which actual river is under consideration, but the idea is plain. The river, which often in God’s Word signifies copious blessings will water the city of God, which in New Testament times is His church.^[2] Some of the references which show the blessings that rivers represent are Is. 32: 2; 41: 18; Ps. 1: 3; 36: 8; Rev. 22: 1.

One of the greatest fears an eastern city had in Bible times was that there would not be enough water. This was especially true in times of warfare, when the city was being besieged. If the water ran out the city would be forced to surrender to the enemy. Here the psalmist is assuring God’s people that there would be plenty of water in God’s church. There the children of God can go and find refreshment, even in time of tremendous trouble. The water of the gospel can refresh their souls. This happened to Asaph. He had almost despaired when he saw the troubles of the saints and the prosperity of the wicked. He was troubled until, as he wrote in Psalms 73:17, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." Yes, the river of the gospel of the grace of God will make glad the city of God. It is sad that when some of the saints are compassed with trouble they are tempted to forsake the house of the Lord. They are just too sad to go there. They must remember that the city of God is exactly where they will be revived and their broken hearts will be made glad.

Verse Five- God is always in the midst of the city [His church]. We must believe that by faith. Faith believes the promises of God, even when the outward evidence seems to contradict them. I like what John Gill writes about this clause: “The church and people of God; not merely by his essence, power, and providence, as he is in the midst of the world; but by his gracious presence, and which always continues, though not always perceived; and is a sufficient antidote against all fear of men and devils...” Since He is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. This is reminiscent of Psalms 121:3, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber." There is a popular song that vividly portrays this great truth:

Glory hallelujah, I shall not be moved; Anchored in Jehovah, I shall not be moved;
Just like a tree that’s planted by the waters, I shall not be moved.

In His love abiding, I shall not be moved; And in Him confiding, I shall not be moved.
Just like a tree that’s planted by the waters, I shall not be moved.

Tho all hell assail me, I shall not be moved; Jesus will not fail me, I shall not be moved;
Just like a tree that’s planted by the waters, I shall not be moved.

Tho the tempest rages, I shall not be moved; On the Rock of Ages, I shall not be moved;
Just like a tree that's planted by the waters, I shall not be moved.
Chorus

I shall not be, I shall not be moved, I shall not be, I shall not be moved.
Just like a tree that's' planted by the waters, I shall not be moved.[\[3\]](#)

The psalmist then writes, "...God shall help her and that right early." Sometimes we think that God is never going to come to our rescue, but in His infinite wisdom, He is always on time. Charles Spurgeon has a beautiful comment on this: "As soon as the first ray of light proclaims the coming day, at the turning of the morning God's right arm shall be outstretched for his people. The Lord is up betimes. We are slow to meet him, but he is never tardy in helping us. Impatience complains of divine delays, but in very deed the Lord is not slack concerning his promise. Man's haste is often folly, but God's apparent delays are ever wise; and when rightly viewed, are no delays at all."[\[4\]](#)

Verse Six-This verse teaches that even though the enemies of God often rage, and many times tumult convulses the nations of the earth, the Lord has ultimate control. The Lord sets up and brings down kingdoms and empires. He has only to speak and the earth "melts." The Lord always triumphs over His enemies, who are also the enemies of His people. Finally, at the end of time, this triumph will be complete. Paul wrote of this in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

When God speaks, things happen! David majestically wrote of this in Psalms 33:9, "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." David also wrote in Psalms 29:4, "The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty."

Verse Seven-The reason God's people are safe is because "the Lord of hosts" is with them. The Hebrew name is *Jehovah-tsabaoth*. To show the incredible strength of this concept, I quote from one of my own writings:

This is our final name combination with Jehovah and it is one of the most comforting and inspiring. *Jehovah-tsabaoth* is the LORD of Hosts. He is designated by this name in 1 Samuel 1:3. A "host" is a great number or multitude. God has at His instant command innumerable numbers of incredibly powerful heavenly beings. Speaking of the expression, LORD of hosts, G. T. Manley, in an article in *The New Bible Dictionary*, says that the hosts "are all the heavenly powers, ready to do the LORD's command."

We cannot imagine how powerful nor how numerous are these heavenly armies. Psalm 68:17 says, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." Speaking of the great power of these heavenly beings David said in Psalm 103:20, "Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that **excel in strength**, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." In 2 Samuel 24:17 one angel destroyed seventy thousand men by sending a pestilence upon them. When the wicked king,

Sennacherib, came against Israel with what looked like an invincible force, God sent one of His angels against him. This single angel killed 185,000 of the Assyrians in a single night. (2 Kings 19:35). There is a reference to this in 2 Chronicles 32:21 where it is written "And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria."

Our dear Lord Jesus told Peter in Matthew 26:53, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" When the Lord Jesus Christ comes at the end of the world He will be accompanied by these mighty hosts of heaven. As Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 1:7,8 "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with **his mighty angels**, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Sometimes we tend to go into discouragement and even despair when we see our numerous and powerful enemies arrayed against us. We see our weakness and we think all is lost. It is then that we need to pray to *Jehovah-tsabaoth*, realizing that He has much more than adequate power to defeat our enemies. One time Elisha and his servant were surrounded by enemies and there was no visible means of escape. The servant went into a panic. "And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. (2 Kings 6:17). My dear Christian friends let us pray that our spiritual eyes may also be opened that we may see that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them."[\[5\]](#)

The psalmist further writes, "The God of Jacob is our refuge." God helped Jacob when he was in distress, and He will also help his spiritual descendants. Commenting on this expression, John Gill writes "...by Jacob is meant the church of God, and all true believers, who are Israelites indeed..." The word translated "refuge" in this verse is not the same word used in verse one. The word used here means "high place, refuge, secure, height, retreat, stronghold."

The blessed Holy Spirit, in inspiring this verse has given abundant consolation and encouragement to the troubled children of God.

After verse seven we again have the Hebrew word "Selah." This seems to indicate a pause, and indicates a division of the psalm into another section.

Verse Eight- The Hebrew word translated "desolations" also has the meaning of "astonishment," and in fact is translated that way thirteen times in the Old Testament. Whatever particular event the psalmist had in mind here, God had worked in such a way to destroy the enemies of God's people that they were completely desolated to a degree that was astonishing. Some commentators think this psalm is about the destruction of the arrogant and powerful Assyrian army under the leadership of Sennacherib. An angel of the Lord destroyed 185, 000 Assyrians in one night, saving essentially helpless Jerusalem.[\[6\]](#)

However, no matter which contemporary event the psalmist had in mind, these glorious truths are a valid consolation to the saints in all their troubles with all their enemies. Commenting on the

expression “come behold the works of the Lord,” Adam Clarke writes “See empires destroyed and regenerated; and in such a way as to show that a supernatural agency has been at work. By the hand of God alone could these great changes be effected.”

Showing the enduring value of this psalm to all generations of God’s people, Charles Spurgeon writes, “It were well if we also carefully noted the providential dealings of our covenant God, and were quick to perceive his hand in the battles of his church. Whenever we read history it should be with this verse sounding in our ears. We should read the newspaper in the same spirit, to see how the Head of the Church rules the nations for his people's good, as Joseph governed Egypt for the sake of Israel.”^[7] **Verse Nine**-This verse provides particulars of what he wrote in verse eight. The events in history are in God’s hands. He both sets up and brings down nations and empires. No matter how powerful a military force a nation possesses, it will not be victorious without the providence of God. As the inspired Word says in Proverbs 21:31, "The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD."

Verse Ten-Knowing that God is in complete control and He will be strong on behalf of His people causes them to cease from worry, fretfulness, discouragement and despair. The child of God is here exhorted to “be still.” That which enables him to be still in his soul, is to remember who God is. Commenting on this verse, Albert Barnes writes, “In this place the word seems to be used as meaning that there was to be no anxiety; that there was to be a calm, confiding, trustful state of mind in view of the displays of the divine presence and power. The mind was to be calm, in view of the fact that God had interposed, and had shown that he was able to defend his people when surrounded by dangers.”^[8] Similarly, John Gill writes “...but that they should not be fearful, nor fretful and impatient, or restless and tumultuous; but be quiet and easy, resigned to the will of God, and live in an assured expectation of the appearance of divine Providence in their layout.”

He also wrote that God would be exalted among the heathen. This is no doubt in a two-fold sense. He will be exalted among the heathen who are His enemies by their final and ultimate defeat. He will be exalted among His people among the Gentiles, by bringing them the good news of the gospel.

Verse Eleven-When God repeats something in His inspired word, it is for emphasis. This is a repetition of verse seven. God is the mighty God of hosts, and He has a special and effectual love for His people, who are represented here by Jacob. What a wonderful way to end such a comforting psalm!

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^[1] *Online Bible*.

^[2] See 1 Tim. 3: 15.

^[3] V. O. Fossett, *Stamps-Baxter*. Copyright 1944.

^[4] *Treasury of David*, From *Online Bible*.

[5] *Jehovah, the Personal Name of God*. (The entire article can be downloaded from <http://gracechapelmemphis.com/>).

[6] This is recorded in 2 Kings 19: 35; 2 Chronicles 32: 21; and Isaiah 37: 36.

[7] From *The Treasury of David*.

[8] From the *Swordsearcher* software.