

## Psalm 46

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.

Psalm 46: This psalm expresses thanks for the deliverance of Jerusalem, “the city of God” (verse 4). It contains three key ideas. First, God is a place of security when all else is insecure (verses 1-3). Second, God protects His city, giving its people assurance and comfort (verses 4-7). Third, all men are called upon to consider God’s works and submit to His authority (verses 8-11).

Verses 1-11: Psalm 46 was the scriptural catalyst for Martin Luther’s great hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”. This psalm also launches a trilogy of psalms (i.e., 46, 47, 48); they are all songs of triumph. Furthermore, it has also been grouped among the so-called “songs of Zion” (compare Psalms 48, 76, 84, 87, 122). Psalm 46 extols the adequacy of God in facing threats from nature and the nations. God indeed protects (compare verses 1, 7, 11); His people upon the earth (compare 2, 6, 8, 9, 10). The major burden of Psalm 46 is that God provides stability for His people who live in two exceedingly unstable environments.

- I. The Unstable Environment of Nature (46:1-3).
  - A. The Affirmation of His Stability (46:1);
  - B. The Application of His Stability (46:2-3).
- II. The Unstable Environment of the Nations (46:4-11).
  - A. The First Chorus (46:4-7);
  - B. The Follow-Up Chorus (46:8-11).

“Title”: The new element in this title is “Alamoth”. The early Greek translation (LXX), interprets this technical term as “hidden things”. However, the Hebrew word normally has to do with “girls” or “young maidens”. Consequently, the most likely conjecture about this phrase is that it is a technical musical notation, possibly indicating a song which was to be sung with female voices at a higher range.

### **Psalm 46:1 "God [is] our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."**

That is, Christ, who is God as well as man, is the "refuge" for souls to fly unto for safety. As for sensible sinners, in a view of danger, wrath, and misery, so for saints, in every time of distress. Typified by the cities of refuge, under the legal dispensation (See note on Psalm 9:9). And he it is from whom they have all their spiritual strength, and every renewal and supply of it. To exercise grace, perform duties, withstand enemies, bear the cross patiently, show a fortitude of mind under the sorest distresses, and hold on and out unto the end. In short, he is the strength of their hearts, under the greatest trials of their lives, amidst the greatest dangers. And of their salvation, notwithstanding all their enemies.

"A very present help in trouble": Whether inward or outward, of soul or body. The Lord helps his people under it to bear it, and he helps them out of it in the most proper and seasonable time.

They are poor helpless creatures in themselves; nor can any other help them but the Lord, who made heaven and earth. And he helps presently, speedily, and effectually. In the Hebrew text it is, "he is found an exceeding help in trouble"; 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. Moreover, he is easily and always available to come to and found by them for their help.

Others may boast of their great armies and their weapons of war, but our strength and help if we are Christians, is the Lord. In our world now, there are enough atomic bombs to destroy the world as we know it. We cannot depend on these bombs for protection. If one person ever pushes the button to the first atomic bomb, there will be many that will follow. There is no security in this world, or in the things of this world. God alone can help us.

Verses 2-3: The psalmist says that even if all these things happen, God is there still!

**Psalm 46:2 "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;"**

“Though the earth be removed”: I.e., “When earth changes and when mountains move (or), shake (or), totter (or), move ...” (compare the language of Isa. 24:19-20; 54:10; Haggai 2:6). These are poetic allusions to earthquakes. Since “the earth” and “mountains” are regarded by men as symbols of stability when they “dance” great terror normally ensues. But when the most stable becomes unstable, there should be “no fear” because of the transcendent stability of God.

There is enough total fire power in the world today to do this very thing. In tests that have been done of one bomb, islands have disappeared. You see, this earth that we dwell in is very unstable. I will not fear, because I will look up and rejoice for my redemption draweth nigh. The world's people today do fear, as the following Scripture tells us.

Luke 21:26 "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

**Psalm 46:3 "[Though] the waters thereof roar [and] be troubled, [though] the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah."**

“Though the waters thereof roar”: This is an illustration of powerfully surging and potentially destructive floods of waters. These will not erode God’s protective fortifications.

We know that this too, can happen and will happen during the wrath of God. Selah, in the verse above is saying, take a moment and think on these things. Fear is not for the Christian. We have hope and the world does not. We know that when all of this begins, there will be an earthquake that we be felt all over the earth. Of course, all of this uproar of the earth will cause the waters to swell as well. What a wonderful time to be somewhere else other than on this earth.

**Psalm 46:4 "[There is] a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy [place] of the tabernacles of the most High."**

"There is a river, the streams whereof": These words about refreshing waters contrast with those about the threatening torrents of verse 3. Compare the garden of paradise concept often mentioned in ancient Near Eastern literature, but most importantly, compare the biblical revelation, noting especially the "bookends" (of Gen. 2:10 and Rev. 22:1-2).

"The city of God": These words in their present setting refer to Jerusalem, God's chosen earthly residence (compare Psalm 48:1-2; Isa. 60:14).

There is a river that brings great peace to the Christian. It is the river of the Spirit of God. This is speaking of the river that brings perfect peace to the church of God. This is that water spoken of by Jesus to the woman at the well. This city of God is the habitation of God. Each true Christian is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God.

Revelation 21:3 "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God."

Verses 5-6: "She shall not be moved": These verses pick up some of the key terms about moving, slipping, tottering, sliding, and roaring from verses 1-3; however, here, because of the presence of God, the forces of nature and the nations are no longer a threat to the people of God who dwell with Him.

**Psalm 46:5 "God [is] in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, [and that] right early."**

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.

"She shall not be moved": Though the earth may. And when it is (Psalm 46:2), neither from the heart of God, on which his people are set as a seal; nor from the hands of Christ, from whence they can never be plucked. Nor from the covenant of grace, which is immovable. Nor off of the rock Christ, on which they are built. Nor from the state of grace, of justification, adoption, and sanctification, in which they stand. Nor out of the world, by all the cunning and power of antichrist.

"God shall help her, and that right early": Or "when the morning looks out". When it is night with the church, it is the hour and power of darkness with the enemies of it. And this is the time of the reign of antichrist, whose kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. But the "morning cometh, and also the night"; the former being about to break forth, and the latter to be at an end. Yea, at eventide it shall be light: and the Lord will be a suitable, seasonable, and timely help to his

people. Always when need requires, for though weeping endures the night, joy comes in the morning.

The her in this verse, is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. God dwells in the Christian, so she cannot be moved. Right early would mean at the breaking of day. The world may be falling down around her, but the church will not fall. The church in this sense, is not a building, but the Christians.

**Psalm 46:6 "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted."**

As they did at Christ's first coming, against him, his Gospel, and people. And which continued during the three first centuries; and then the Pagan kingdoms belonging to the Roman empire were removed. Since then another sort of Heathens, the Papists, have raged, in violent persecutions and bloodshed of the saints and martyrs of Jesus, and will rage again. About and at the downfall of Babylon (see Rev. 11:18).

"The kingdoms were moved": Either from their Pagan or Papal religion, and became subject to Christ. So it was at the downfall of Rome Pagan. And so, it will be at the downfall of Rome Papal; when the kings of the earth shall hate the whore, make her desolate, and burn her flesh with fire. Or they shall be destroyed; that is, those that shall be gathered together in Armageddon, to make war with the Lamb (see Rev. 16:14).

"He uttered his voice, the earth melted": Like wax, as the inhabitants of the earth do at the voice of his thunder, and as antichrist will at the breath of his mouth. And all within the Romish jurisdiction, signified by "the earth", as it often is in the book of the Revelation. When the voice of the mighty angel shall be heard, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (Rev. 18:1).

The heathen raged is speaking of the world gone mad. The kingdoms being moved has to do with the rulers of this world being over thrown. All of the turmoil that you could imagine in your heart would not be as bad as this is saying here. In our day, the middle East crisis could blow up into just such a mess. Notice though, that all the powers in the world are no comparison to God uttering His voice. The earth melting just means that the power of the voice of God settled this whole thing. Perhaps it means also, that those things which could be burned up were. The world and everything and everyone in it, are in the control of God. We are but putty in His hands.

**Psalm 46:7 "The LORD of hosts [is] with us; the God of Jacob [is] our refuge. Selah."**

"The LORD of hosts is with us": The precious personal presence (compare "God with us" in Isa. 7:14; 8:8, 10), of the Divine Warrior (compare "LORD of hosts" or "armies", e.g., Psalms 24:10; 48:8; 59:5), secures the safety of His people.

The church is in the hands of God. In our study in Revelation, we saw that the candlestick was in the church. Jesus' Light is with us, those of us which are His church, He is our refuge. We are in Him, and He in us.

1 John 3:24 " And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

Our refuge "safe place", is in Him. Again, we see Selah. Pause and think on these things.

**Psalm 46:8 " Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth."**

Personal circumstances never exceed God's power and faithfulness. Remembering the specifics of how God has provided in the past fosters courage for the future.

"Desolations": This word not only characterizes God's past exploits but it is also employed in various "Day of the Lord" contexts (e.g., Isa. 13:9; Hosea 5:9; Zeph. 2:15).

We know of the utter destruction God brought on Sodom and Gomorrah. This will be just such a destruction, but even more widespread. This verse is about the time when the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth. This is the time when the water turns to wormwood, and one third of the trees are burned up, and all the other destructions that go with that. Praise God that we will not be part of the destruction, but will be beholding the destruction.

**Psalm 46:9 "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."**

As at the birth of Christ, the Prince of peace. In the times of Augustus Caesar, when there was a general peace in the world, though it did not last long. And in the times of Constantine, signified by silence in heaven for half an hour (Rev. 8:1). When for a while there was a cessation from wars and persecution; and as will be in the latter day, and which is here chiefly designed. When nations shall learn war no more, and Christ's kingdom will take place. Of which and its peace there shall be no end (Isa. 2:4). The consideration of which may serve to relieve distressed minds under terrible apprehensions of present troubles and public calamities.

"He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder": He burneth the chariot in the fire; that is, "chariots", or "carts" or "wagons", in which, as Aben Ezra observes, arms and provisions were carried for the use of soldiers. The Targum renders it "round shields": and the destroying of all these military weapons and carriages is a token of peace. And of war's being caused to cease, there being no more use for them. With this compare (Ezek. 39:8). It was usual to burn the armament of enemies taken in war.

The war we have been reading about is the war that ends all wars. Jesus is the King of Peace. He brings peace to the world. We saw in the previous verse; how great the voice of God is. He speaks, and peace comes. There will be no more weapons. God destroys them all. There will be a time of peace, such as the world has never known.

**Psalm 46:10 "Be still, and know that I [am] God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."**

When God cannot be found in the midst of the frenzy, silence and stillness are needed to hear Him, so that His children may “know” He is present and has a plan for the future.

“Be still, and know that I am God”: These twin commands to not panic and to recognize His sovereignty are probably directed to both His nation for comfort and all other nations for warning.

This is not a request, but a command. There will be no question that this is God. Sometimes God does not want us helping Him. He wants us to be still. and know that He is God. Jesus will reign with a rod of iron for a thousand years on this earth. We will serve Jesus as His helpers over the heathen.

**Psalm 46:11 "The LORD of hosts [is] with us; the God of Jacob [is] our refuge. Selah."**

“The LORD of hosts” in the Hebrew means “the Lord of Sabbath, the lord of the angels, the Lord of the hosts of heaven”. There is not just one angel present; the Lord of all the angels is “with us”! The word Emmanuel comes from the root of the words “with us” (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23).

Christians throughout the world should shout praises of this fact. He is our refuge “hiding place”. The Lord is with us. The God of Jacob is the Lord. The Lord is with us now, and will continue to be with us for all of eternity.

### **Psalm 46 Questions**

1. Who was this Psalm addressed to?
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is our refuge and our strength.
3. Is there security in having the atomic bomb?
4. Who is our only hope?
5. Verse 2 speaks of 2 terrible world happenings, what are they?
6. What attitude should we have of these calamities?
7. What is the word Selah telling us in verse 3?
8. Where is the river that brings great peace to the Christian?
9. What is meant by the city of God?
10. Where do we find the Scripture that says the tabernacle of God is with man?
11. Who is the her in verse 5?

12. What does right early mean?
13. What does the heathen raged mean?
14. What crisis in our world could blow up in to a terrible war?
15. All the powers in the world are no comparison to what?
16. Who is in control of the entire world?
17. The church is not a building, but what?
18. We are but \_\_\_\_\_ in His hands.
19. Who, does verse 7 say, is our refuge?
20. What is a refuge?
21. Who has caused the desolation of the earth in verse 8?
22. What will be different in this destruction by God from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?
23. What are some of the devastating things that happen on the earth?
24. What 3 things does He do that signifies the end of war?
25. Who is the King of Peace?
26. In verse 10, we are instructed to do what?
27. Describe the reign of Jesus on the earth.
28. What is God called in verse 11?