

God Is Our Refuge

The last four months have been unsettling. First the coronavirus pandemic. Then the lockdown.

Then George Floyd died. Rioting, looting, and burning followed. What rightfully upset so many was our government's reaction. They didn't protect citizens and their property. Instead, liberal governors and mayors let anarchy reign. In US history, this is a first. White guilt about racism motivated it. White guilt about U.S. history motivated it. BLM and Antifa stepped into the chaos and took advantage. They leveraged the situation to foment revolution.

In the meantime, a gap as wide as the Grand Canyon separates right and left, and it is getting wider each year. Even Jesus said, "a house divided against itself cannot stand."

Then there is the increasing persecution. Under constant bombardment from the left, our first and second amendment rights are slowly withering.

All of this provokes fear and uncertainty. What does the future hold? Is our future secure? How should we react? What should we do?

God has given us Psalm 46 for such a time as this.

Psalm 46

¹ God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,

³ though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. ***Selah***

⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

⁵ God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.

⁶ The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;

he utters his voice, the earth melts.

⁷ The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. **Selah**

⁸ Come, behold the works of the Lord,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.

⁹ He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots with fire.

¹⁰ “Be still, 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 fortress. **Selah**

Psalm 46 inspired Luther’s famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

It opens, “God is our refuge and strength.” A refuge is a place where people hide, where they go to protect themselves.

The point of this Psalm is that during times of fear and uncertainty, God’s people don’t take refuge in family. They don’t take refuge in relationships. They don’t take refuge in the United States constitution. They don’t take refuge in their assets. They don’t take refuge in their firearms.

Christians take refuge in God! God is our Fortress.

The Psalm divides into three movements, each ending with “Selah.” The first movement gives us the context. The second and third two reasons to take refuge in God. They are 1st he dwells in the City of Peace; and, 2nd he is Sovereign.

The last two end with the important refrain, repeated twice—“*The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.*”

A. VS 1-3 THE CONTEXT: TURMOIL & UNCERTAINTY

"1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. SELAH

Seas/Floods are a biblical symbol for God's judgment. On the third Day of Creation God separated the sea, and dry land appeared (Gen. 1:9).

Noah's flood reversed that process.

Verses 1-3 are verbal picture of the chaos of the last four months.

An article appeared in the *American Thinker*. It is by Jim Pierce. The title says it all. "*The Most Notable Experiment in Human History is on a Ventilator.*"

The rest of this Psalm, Verses 4-10, give us two reasons to hide in God, or to make God our fortress.

1. He dwells in the City of Peace
2. He is totally sovereign

Verse 4-7 gives us the first reason to take refuge in God. God's fortress is located in God's City, Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is the "city of peace."

B. 4-7 TAKE REFUGE IN GOD: HE LIVES IN THE CITY OF PEACE

We are going to read these verses one at a time and comment on them.

Notice the contrast between the raging seas, and the peaceful river that flows through God's City in Verse 4.

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

Jerusalem means "City of Peace."

Throughout the Bible, a symbolic "river" flows through the City of God.

A river flows through Eden.

The last chapter of the Bible shows us the finished product.

(Revelation 22:1-2) "1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the

street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

The river of peace flows through the city of peace. And because God dwells there, vs 5 tells us this city is immovable.

5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.

Then Vs 6 reminds us that, despite outside turmoil, God's word preserves the citizens of this city.

6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

Therefore, Verse 7 concludes—

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. **SELAH**

Conclusion: God is a fortress. His fortress is in the City of Peace, the dwelling place of the Most High. The river of life/peace flows through it.

You must be a citizen of this city to enter. You need a spiritual passport.

We receive a passport to enter this city through faith and repentance. It's a kingdom.

Those dwelling outside of God's City experience only "nations raging, and kingdoms tottering," They experience "the earth giving way, and the mountains falling into a boiling, roaring, foaming sea."

Those within Gods refuge/fortress, which is in Gods city, where God's presence dwells, experience the eternal unshakable peace that comes from drinking from the water of life that flows through the city of God.

There is a second reason to take refuge in God.

C. VS 8-11: TAKE REFUGE IN GOD: HE IS SOVEREIGN

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth.

9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire.

When God says, “Come Behold the works of the Lord” he commands us to think back on world history. God has repeatedly “brought desolations on the earth.”

In 588 BC God used the Babylonian Empire to desolate the Jewish people.

In 539 he used Persia to desolate the Babylonian Empire.

In 325 BC Alexander the Great desolated Persia.

In 100 BC the Roman Empire desolated what was left of Alexander’s conquests.

In 450 AD the Germanic tribes desolated the Roman Empire.

Since then Charlemagne’s Holy Roman Empire, the Spanish Empire, the Dutch Empire, the Napoleonic Empire, the German Empire of WWI and WWII, the British Empire, etc. have all come and gone.

In the same way, America has come, and God will eventually “desolate” America as well.

Why? To keep us from trusting in man and his institutions. To force us to make God our refuge.

By contrast, the prophet, Daniel had a vision. A stone strikes a statue representing the kingdoms of Babylon, Persian, Greece, and Rome. The stone turns this mighty statue into dust, then it becomes a Mountain that fills the whole earth.

Here is the second reason to take refuge in God: God is sovereign. He holds the levers of history. Returning to Vs 6, “*The nations rage, Kingdoms totter, He utters his voice, and the earth melts*” (Vs 6).

In addition, the God who holds the levers of history is infinitely good.

- The cross demonstrates God’s exhaustive sovereignty.
- The cross also unveils his infinite goodness.

Then Vs 10 tells us how God wants us to respond—

10 “Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

In the Hebrew *“Be still and know that I am God”* is plural. In other words, this phrase is not addressed to individuals. It is addressed to the nations.

God’s message to us, and the nations, is simple. I will have my way. I will be exalted through the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. I will be exalted through human history. History is my story. Therefore, be still. Rest!

The Psalm ends by repeating verse 7.

11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

D. APPLICATION:

God wants to be our refuge and strength. Take refuge in God. Make Christ your Fortress/Refuge!

Those outside God’s city experience the earth giving way, and the mountains falling into the heart of a raging, boiling sea.

Those inside experience Phil. 4:7 *“The peace of God, surpassing all understanding, guarding their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”*

We enter this city by faith and repentance.

We remain in the city, we “take refuge” in God’s fortress, by faith: Therefore, to hide in God, to take refuge in God, you need to build up your faith.

We build up our faith by practicing the spiritual disciplines—prayer, bible study, fellowship, fasting, giving, etc.

Last, hiding in God’s Fortress does not mean a lack of suffering, harm, or trouble.

It means rest, certainty, and peace *even in the midst of troubles, trials, and suffering*. Those who hide in God’s fortress become “more than conquerors” despite troubles.

(Romans 8:37–39) "37 No, in all these things [being slaughtered like sheep] we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Richard Wurmbrand's experience illustrates what it feels like to hide in God, to hide in his fortress.

Wurmbrand: "In our darkest hours of torture the Son of man came to us, making the prison walls shine like diamonds and filling the cells with light. Somewhere far away, were the torturers below us in the sphere of the body. But the spirit rejoiced in the Lord. We would not have given up this joy for that of kingly palaces."¹

Last: throughout the Bible, threefold repetitions appear for emphasis. Three times this Psalm exhorts us to take refuge in God.

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

In conclusion: Only those who dwell in God's fortress, in God's City, under the umbrella of God's sovereignty, can say with verse 2—

"Therefore, We Will Not Fear though the earth give way"

¹ Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured For Christ*, (Old Tappan: Spire, 1969) pg 73