

God is our refuge and strength * Psalm 46

April 7, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

Today I want to look with you at what has quickly become one of my favourite psalms – Psalm 46. I actually spoke about this once already – BCV (before coronavirus) and you can hear that message online, but I think that it's worth coming back to in in this time of COVID-19.

Because it's a tough time, isn't it? This is not an easy road that we are on – it is legitimately difficult – but Psalm 46 tells us that God is with us and for us, every step of the way.

Psalm 46 starts like this:

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

Just sit with that for a minute. GOD is our refuge and strength. Not *I* am my refuge and strength, not my bank account is my refuge and strength. GOD is our refuge and strength. The God who spoke the world into being, the God whose power holds all things together – HE is our refuge and strength. He is our hiding place, our strong tower, our shelter as the storm rages around us. He is our strength, our energy, our motivation to push on when we can't take another step.

And there is nothing that can stop Him from coming to help us. He is very present help in every time of trouble. And we need Him now, don't we?

Well... 1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. And the psalm continues -

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

The world could literally fall apart, and yet, in God's hands, we are still safe. And so the psalmist reminds us, we need not fear. He's so optimistic that he says we WILL not fear. And let's be honest – this is a scary time. In a real way, the world HAS fallen apart. COVID-19 has drastically changed the realities of our lives right now, and yet we need not fear because the God of heaven and earth is our refuge and strength.

Now up to this point, the psalmist has been using the image of a fortress to talk about God; but here he switches to talk about something that we're all too familiar with - being stuck inside.

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

Now at first glance, you might say, 'wait, what does that have to do with being stuck inside?' Well, here - the psalmist is talking about a city under siege. People stuck inside, not sure how long their food stocks will last, not sure when or where the enemy will strike next, not sure about whether their defenses will hold. Can you identify with that? I've felt this last month this ominous feeling of 'when's the other shoe gonna drop? Who's gonna get sick?' That's life under siege.

And yet what does the psalm say?

God is there. There is a river that runs through it to give life to the people inside. And verse 5 continues - Therefore she (the city) shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.

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

God is with you. Therefore you shall not be moved. And as dark as this night might get, morning's coming. We will look back at this time and see how God worked in marvellous ways.

And verse 7 pulls it all together into what is essentially the chorus of this psalm –

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

You know what that means? The God of angel armies is with us with His heavenly host arrayed behind Him. The God of Jacob – that is – the God of relationship and commitment and kept promises is our fortress. Let that play over and over in your head. “The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress.”

Now it's certainly one thing to say – ‘we will not fear’ – but how do we get our hearts to feel that way? The LORD of hosts is with us – how do we take that from being an idea in our heads and make it a comfort for our souls?

Well, verse 10, God Himself steps in and takes the mic. And He answers that. Verse 10 –

10 "Be still, and know that I am God." God says to me and to you: Be still ... and know ... that **I** am God!

Yes, COVID-19 is great but our God is greater. Yes, COVID-19 is scary but nothing scares YHWH. He is all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing and all-loving. He is exalted above the nations, sovereign over all the earth.

We need to take time to calm our hearts and remind ourselves who's in charge here. Because it's not us. It's YHWH. And He is in control. And so we need not fear though the earth give way and the mountains move into the heart of the sea...

Why? Because –

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

See what I mean? It's the chorus of this psalm. Let it play over and over in your heart and in your mind.

11 The LORD of hosts is with me; the God of promise and commitment is my fortress.

And let that soothe your troubled heart. God is with you as you walk with Him.

Now listen. Those words are powerful all by themselves, but they really came alive for me when I listened to a musical arrangement by an artist called ‘Corner room music.’ I'll link to that video from this one so that you can go and hear it yourself. And I really encourage you to go listen, because he's really

captured perfectly the force and power and truth of this song. I'm singing it non-stop in my head these days.

Let me leave you with this –

God is our refuge and strength, so we need not panic.

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

Be still and know that HE is God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-wVk7sDdNs>