

## PSALMS & JOB

PSALM 46:1-7

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present<sup>1a</sup> help in trouble.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

### Dueling with the Devil

Martin Luther was a brash, bold bear of a man. He knew about power, but he also knew about fear. Terrified by the power of God displayed in a fierce thunderstorm, young Martin vowed to serve the Lord as a monk. He tore into his monastic duties with a vengeance, fearing that he would displease God if he didn't do every good deed possible.

But God was slowly softening Luther's heart, assuring him of love and not simply judgment. From the Scriptures, Luther learned that the righteous would find eternal life by trusting Christ and that they couldn't earn it with good deeds. He realized that God was not a demanding tyrant but a refuge, a comfort, a help.

The rest is history. Luther's doctrine of "salvation by faith" sparked the Protestant Reformation, transforming the way millions of people would understand God. He wrote many books and essays, but Luther's most famous work is a hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," based on Psalm 46. There are few texts that portray faith in God as powerfully as this song.

Luther's life wasn't easy. He was arrested, tried, excommunicated, hunted, hidden, and betrayed. But Luther knew that he need not fear the "ancient foe" and all his attacks, for God was his refuge, "a bulwark never failing."

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
Our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.* MARTIN LUTHER

**Fascinating Fact:** Tradition holds that the translators of the King James Version used this psalm to pay homage to their fellow wordsmith William Shakespeare on his forty-sixth birthday. The forty-sixth word in Psalm 46 is shake, and the forty-sixth word from the end is spear.

**Notable Quotable:** "The double prop on which our faith rests: the infinite power whereby he can subdue the universe unto himself and the fatherly love which he has revealed in his Word." JOHN CALVIN

1. How has God been your refuge & strength recently?
2. In verses 4-6 how does this strengthen your daily walk of faith?
3. How is God our Fortress?

PSALM 46:8-11

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

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

<sup>10</sup> "Be still, and know that I am God.  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!"

<sup>11</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

The God of Israel is our Fortress

The fourteenth century was not a good time to be Russian. The Mongol hordes, led by Genghis Khan, had invaded a century earlier and still dominated Russia. The people chafed under "the Mongol yoke."

But there was a quiet Christian renewal going on. Seeking new intimacy with God, a man named Sergius had established a monastic community outside of Moscow. The spiritual fervor of these monks caught on in the surrounding communities as nobles and peasants alike sought to know God better. It also inspired an artistic explosion, as new religious icons were created in many churches in the area.

During this time twelve-year-old Dmitry became Grand Prince of Russia. Living in Moscow, he learned a great deal from this Christian leader, Sergius. When Dmitry later gathered Russian forces to fight the Mongols, he encouraged his outnumbered troops with the words of Psalm 46: "The Lord Almighty is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress." Emboldened by these words, Dmitry won an important battle against the Mongols.

Now we must be careful not to conclude that God will reward us with victory simply because we claim Psalm 46 as our battle cry. We can see from verse 9 that God ultimately desires peace, and eventually he will cause all wars to end. But we can be certain that God is our fortress, and we can look to him for our refuge from those who seek to harm us.

*Be still, my soul:*

*Thy best, thy heavenly Friend*

*Through thorny ways*

*Leads to a joyful end.*      KATHARINA VON SCHLEGEL

**Fascinating Fact:** *On his deathbed, John Wesley found peace in the reading of this psalm.*

**Notable Quotable:** *Verse 10 "resembles the command to another raging sea: 'Peace be still!' and the end in view is stated in terms not of man's hopes but of God's glory." DEREK KIDNEER*

4. What does it mean to be still? How does this encourage our daily walk of faith?

Remember for the Christian we are not fighting for victory, Christ has already won the battle. So, the Christian fights from a position of victory in their daily battles.

JOB 38:8-18 (God's Poem)

- <sup>8</sup> "Or who shut in the sea with doors  
when it burst out from the womb,  
<sup>9</sup> when I made clouds its garment  
and thick darkness its swaddling band,  
<sup>10</sup> and prescribed limits for it  
and set bars and doors,  
<sup>11</sup> and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther,  
and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?"  
<sup>12</sup> "Have you commanded the morning since your days began,  
and caused the dawn to know its place,  
<sup>13</sup> that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,  
and the wicked be shaken out of it?  
<sup>14</sup> It is changed like clay under the seal,  
and its features stand out like a garment.  
<sup>15</sup> From the wicked their light is withheld,  
and their uplifted arm is broken.  
<sup>16</sup> "Have you entered into the springs of the sea,  
or walked in the recesses of the deep?  
<sup>17</sup> Have the gates of death been revealed to you,  
or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?  
<sup>18</sup> Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth?  
Declare, if you know all this.

*Psalm Link*

PSALM 46:10 "Be silent, and know that I am God!"

Learning Who Instead of Why

As all parents know, every child's favorite question is *why*: "Why do I have to go to bed now?" "Why do I have to eat my vegetables?" "Why do I have to turn off the TV?" We may think that this is simply a stage the child will grow out of, but the truth is, their *why* questions will continue throughout life.

In fact, even as adults, they will keep on asking *why*. When a relative is killed in a fatal accident, when their parent is afflicted with Alzheimer's, or when their own children are plagued with problems, they will ask the same question. Apparently *why* was Job's favorite question, too. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once wrote: "He who knows the *why* can bear with any *how*." That seems to be what Job thought and that's what we often mistakenly think as well. But in all forty-two chapters of Job, God never answers the *why* question. Instead, he shows Job that knowing *who* is far more important than knowing *why*. If you get to know the *who*, any *why* will be OK. Like a parent who has come to the end of a child's string of *why* questions and answers, "Because I said so," God often must tell us, "Trust me, even when you don't get answers." We are to live by faith – not just with the first step of our journey but with every step.

*When mystery clouds my darkened path,  
I'll check my dread, my doubts reprove;  
In this my soul sweet comfort has,  
That God is love, God is love.  
And thought I cannot trace his way,  
I am resolved to always say  
That God is love, God is love. ANONYMOUS*

**Bible Networking:** This passage in Job gives us a glimpse of the greatness of our Creator. For another glimpse of our Creator's greatness, read Psalm 148:5-6.

**Notable Quotable:** “God answered none of Job’s questions; they were the wrong questions. Instead, he involved Job in the experience of knowing him through his creative activity. Job’s questions about the ways of God could not be answered apart from the knowing of God himself.” WILLIAM E HULME

5. Describe the majesty of our God demonstrated here. How should this encourage our daily walk of faith?
6. How has He kept you personally through times of suffering or struggles?