

# PSALM 46

This psalm encourages us to hope and trust in God, and his power, and providence, and gracious presence with his church in the worst of times, and directs us to give him the glory of what he has done for us and what he will do: probably it was penned upon occasion of David's victories over the neighbouring nations (2 Samuel 8), and the rest which God gave him from all his enemies round about. We are here taught,

**I.** To take comfort in God when things look very black and threatening (v. 1-5).

**II.** To mention, to his praise, the great things he had wrought for his church against its enemies (v. 6-9).

**III.** To assure ourselves that God who has glorified his own name will glorify it yet again, and to comfort ourselves with that (v. 10, 11). We may, in singing it, apply it either to our spiritual enemies, and be more than conquerors over them, or to the public enemies of Christ's kingdom in the world and their threatening insults, endeavouring to preserve a holy security and serenity of mind when they seem most formidable. It is said of Luther that, when he heard any discouraging news, he would say, Come let us sing the forty-sixth psalm.

## ~~1961~~ PSALM 46:1-5

### GOD THE PROTECTION OF HIS PEOPLE

*To the chief musician for the sons of Korah. A song upon Alamoth.*

The psalmist here teaches us by his own example.

**I.** To triumph in God, and his relation to us and presence with us, especially when we have had some fresh experiences of his appearing in our behalf (v. 1): *God is our refuge and strength*; we have found him so, he has engaged to be so, and he ever will be so. Are we pursued? God is our refuge to whom we may flee, and in whom we may be safe and think ourselves so; secure upon good grounds, ~~1880~~ Proverbs 18:10. Are we

oppressed by troubles? Have we work to do and enemies to grapple with? God is our strength, to bear us up under our burdens, to fit us for all our services and sufferings; he will by his grace put strength into us, and on him we may stay ourselves. Are we in distress? He is a help, to do all that for us which we need, *a present help, a help found* (so the word is), one whom we have found to be so, a help on which we may write *Probatum est* — *It is tried*, as Christ is called a *tried stone*, ~~2386~~ Isaiah 28:16. Or, *a help at hand*, one that never is to seek for, but that is always near. Or, *a help sufficient*, a help accommodated to every case and exigence; whatever it is, he is a very present help; we cannot desire a better help, nor shall ever find the like in any creature.

**II.** To triumph over the greatest dangers: *God is our strength and our help*, a God all-sufficient to us; *therefore will not we fear*. Those that with a holy reverence fear God need not with any amazement to be afraid of the power of hell or earth. *If God be for us, who can be against us*; to do us any harm? It is our duty, it is our privilege, to be thus fearless; it is an evidence of a clear conscience, of an honest heart, and of a lively faith in God and his providence and promise: “*We will not fear, though the earth be removed*, though all our creature-confidences fail us and sink us; nay, though that which should support us threaten to swallow us up, as the earth did Korah,” for whose sons this psalm was penned, and, some think, by them; yet while we keep close to God, and have him for us, we will not fear, for we have no cause to fear;

— *Si fractus illabatur orbis,  
Impavidum ferient ruinae* — *Hor.*

— *Let Jove's dread arm  
With thunder rend the spheres,  
Beneath the crush of worlds undaunted he appears.*

Observe here,

**1.** How threatening the danger is. We will suppose the earth to be removed, and thrown into the sea, even the mountains, the strongest and firmest parts of the earth, to lie buried in the unfathomed ocean; we will suppose the sea to roar and rage, and make a dreadful noise, and its foaming billows to insult the shore with so much violence as even to *shake the mountains*, v. 3. Though kingdoms and states be in confusion, embroiled in wars, tossed with tumults, and their governments in continual

revolution — though their powers combine against the church and people of God, aim at no less than their ruin, and go very near to gain their point — yet will not we fear, knowing that all these troubles will end well for the church. See <sup>139</sup>Psalm 93:4. If the earth be removed, those have reason to fear who have laid up their treasures on earth, and set their hearts upon it; but not those who have laid up for themselves treasures in heaven, and who expect to be most happy when *the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up*. Let those be troubled at the troubling of the waters who build their confidence on such a floating foundation, but not those who are led to *the rock that is higher than they*, and find firm footing upon that rock.

**2.** How well-grounded the defiance of this danger is, considering how well guarded the church is, and that interest which we are concerned for. It is not any private particular concern of our own that we are in pain about; no, it is the city of God, *the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High*; it is the ark of God for which our hearts tremble. But, when we consider what God has provided for the comfort and safety of his church, we shall see reason to have our hearts fixed, and set above the fear of evil tidings. Here is,

**(1.)** Joy to the church, even in the most melancholy and sorrowful times (v. 4): *There is a river the streams whereof shall make it glad*, even then when the waters of the sea roar and threaten it. It alludes to the waters of Siloam, which *went softly by Jerusalem* (<sup>238</sup>Isaiah 8:6, 7): though of no great depth or breadth, yet the waters of it were made serviceable to the defence of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time, <sup>220</sup>Isaiah 22:10, 11. But this must be understood spiritually; the covenant of grace is the river, the promises of which are the streams; or the Spirit of grace is the river (<sup>418</sup>John 7:38, 39), the comforts of which are *the streams, that make glad the city of our God*. God's word and ordinances are rivers and streams with which God makes his saints glad in cloudy and dark days. God himself is to his church a place of *broad rivers and streams*, <sup>232</sup>Isaiah 33:21. The streams that make glad the city of God are not rapid, but gentle, like those of Siloam. Note, The spiritual comforts which are conveyed to the saints by soft and silent whispers, and which come not with observation, are sufficient to counterbalance the most loud and noisy threatenings of an angry and malicious world.

**(2.)** Establishment to the church. Though heaven and earth are shaken, yet *God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved*, v. 5. God has assured his church of his special presence with her and concern for her; his honour is embarked in her, he has set up his tabernacle in her and has undertaken the protection of it, and therefore she shall not be moved, that is,

**[1.]** Not destroyed, not removed, as the earth may be v. 2. The church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when that is in ruins. It is *built upon a rock*, and the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.

**[2.]** Not disturbed, not much moved, with fears of the issue. If God be for us, if God be with us, we need not be moved at the most violent attempts made against us.

**(3.)** Deliverance to the church, though her dangers be very great: *God shall help her*; and who then can hurt her? He shall help her under her troubles, that she shall not sink; nay, that the more she is afflicted the more she shall multiply. God shall help her out of her troubles, *and that right early* — when the morning appears; that is, very speedily, for he is *a present help* (v. 1), and very seasonably, when things are brought to the last extremity and when the relief will be most welcome. This may be applied by particular believers to themselves; if God be in our hearts, in the midst of us, by his word dwelling richly in us, we shall be established, we shall be helped; let us therefore trust and not be afraid; all is well, and will end well.

## ~~146~~ PSALM 46:6-11

### CONFIDENCE IN GOD

These verses give glory to God both as King of nations and as King of saints.

**I.** As King of nations, ruling the world by his power and providence, and overruling all the affairs of the children of men to his own glory; he does according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may say, *What doest thou?*

**1.** He checks the rage and breaks the power of the nations that oppose him and his interests in the world (v. 6): *The heathen raged* at David's coming

to the throne, and at the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of David; compare <sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 2:1, 2. *The kingdoms were moved* with indignation, and rose in a tumultuous furious manner to oppose it; but God *uttered his voice, spoke to them in his wrath*, and they were moved in another sense, they were struck into confusion and consternation, put into disorder, and all their measures broken; the earth itself melted under them, so that they found no firm footing; their earthly hearts failed them for fear, and dissolved like snow before the sun. Such a melting of the spirits of the enemies is described, <sup><BIB></sup>Judges 5:4, 5; and see <sup><BIB></sup>Luke 21:25, 26.

**2.** When he pleases to draw his sword, and give it commission, he can make great havoc among the nations and lay all waste (v. 8): *Come, behold the works of the Lord*; they are to be observed (<sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 66:5), and to be sought out, <sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 111:2. All the operations of Providence must be considered as the works of the Lord, and his attributes and purposes must be taken notice of in them. Particularly take notice of the *desolations he has made in the earth*, among the enemies of his church, who thought to lay the land of Israel desolate. The destruction they designed to bring upon the church has been turned upon themselves. War is a tragedy which commonly destroys the stage it is acted on; David carried the war into the enemies' country; and O what desolations did it make there! Cities were burnt, countries laid waste, and armies of men cut off and laid in heaps upon heaps. Come and see the effects of desolating judgments, and stand in awe of God; say, *How terrible art thou in thy works!* <sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 66:3. Let all that oppose him see this with terror, and expect the same cup of trembling to be put into their hands; let all that fear him and trust in him see it with pleasure, and not be afraid of the most formidable powers armed against the church. Let them gird themselves, but *they shall be broken to pieces*.

**3.** When he pleases to sheathe his sword, he puts an end to the wars of the nations and crowns them with peace, v. 9. War and peace depend on his word and will, as much as storms and calms at sea do, <sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 107:25, 29. *He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth*, sometimes in pity to the nations, that they may have a breathing-time, when, by long wars with each other, they have run themselves out of breadth. Both sides perhaps are weary of the war, and willing to let it fall; expedients are found out for accommodation; martial princes are removed, and peace-makers set in their room; and then the bow is broken by consent, the spear cut asunder and turned into a pruning-hook, the sword beaten into a ploughshare, and

the chariots of war are burned, there being no more occasion for them; or, rather, it may be meant of what he does, at other times, in favour of his own people. He makes those wars to cease that were waged against them and designed for their ruin. He breaks the enemies' bow that was drawn against them. *No weapon formed against Zion shall prosper,* <sup>2547</sup>Isaiah 54:17. The total destruction of Gog and Magog is prophetically described by the burning of their weapons of war (<sup>2549</sup>Ezekiel 39:9, 10), which intimates likewise the church's perfect security and assurance of lasting peace, which made it needless to lay up those weapons of war for their own service. The bringing of a long war to a good issue is a work of the Lord, which we ought to behold with wonder and thankfulness.

**II.** As King of saints, and as such we must own that *great and marvellous are his works,* <sup>2550</sup>Revelation 15:3. He does and will do great things,

**1.** For his own glory (v. 10): *Be still, and know that I am God.*

**(1.)** Let his enemies be still, and threaten no more, but know it, to their terror, that he is God, one infinitely above them, and that will certainly be too hard for them; let them rage no more, for it is all in vain: *he that sits in heaven, laughs at them;* and, in spite of all their impotent malice against his name and honour, he will be exalted among the heathen and not merely among his own people, he will be exalted in the earth and not merely in the church. Men will set up themselves, will have their own way and do their own will; but let them know that God will be exalted, he will have his way will do his own will, will glorify his own name, and *wherein they deal proudly he will be above them,* and make them know that he is so.

**(2.)** Let his own people be still; let them be calm and sedate, and tremble no more, but know, to their comfort, that the Lord is God, he is God alone, and will be exalted above the heathen; let him alone to maintain his honour, to fulfil his own counsels and to support his own interest in the world. Though we be depressed, yet let us not be dejected, for we are sure that God will be exalted, and that may satisfy us; he will work for his great name, and then no matter what becomes of our little names. When we pray, *Father, glorify thy name,* we ought to exercise faith upon the answer given to that prayer when Christ himself prayed it, *I have both glorified it and I will glorify it yet again.* Amen, Lord, so be it.

**2.** For his people's safety and protection. He triumphs in the former: *I will be exalted;* they triumph in this, v. 7 and again v. 11. It is the burden of the

song, “*The Lord of hosts is with us*; he is on our side, he takes our part, is present with us and president over us; *the God of Jacob is our refuge*, to whom we may flee, and in whom we may confide and be sure of safety.” Let all believers triumph in this.

(1.) They have the presence of a God of power, of all power: *The Lord of hosts is with us*. God is the Lord of hosts, for he has all the creatures which are called *the hosts of heaven and earth* at his beck and command, and he makes what use he pleases of them, as the instruments either of his justice or of his mercy. This sovereign Lord is with us, sides with us, acts with us, and has promised he will never leave us. Hosts may be against us, but we need not fear them if the Lord of hosts be with us.

(2.) They are under the protection of a God in covenant, who not only is able to help them, but is engaged in honour and faithfulness to help them. He is the God of Jacob, not only Jacob the person, but Jacob the people; nay, and of all praying people, the spiritual seed of wrestling Jacob; and he is our refuge, by whom we are sheltered and in whom we are satisfied, who by his providence secures our welfare when without are fightings, and who by his grace quiets our minds, and establishes them, when within are fears. The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, has been, is, and will be with us — has been, is and will be our refuge: the original includes all; and well may *Selah* be added to it. Mark this, and take the comfort of it, and say, *If God be for us, who can be against us?*