

God is Our Refuge and Strength

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[0 : 00] Psalm 46. We're going to read the entire chapter. God is our refuge and strength and ever-present help in trouble.

Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. The holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her. She will not fall.

God will help her at the break of day. Nations are in an uproar. Kingdoms fall. He lifts his voice. The earth melts.

The Lord Almighty is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see the works of the Lord.

[1 : 06] The desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the shields with fire.

Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. Amen. Yesterday morning, Pastor John called me and told me that Josie was not doing well.

And that he wasn't going to be able to be here today. I don't know what that means for the future. I don't know. There's a lot I don't know. I know I'm sad. I know I'm afraid.

[2 : 13] And I know I need help. Because here we are. We're suddenly thrown into the deep. And we say how suddenly things change.

So Josie is not doing well. And I've asked myself questions the last few months. Questions that I don't have answers to.

And the hardest seems to me to be the apparent randomness of it. And I want to connect dots. And I want to make sense. And I can't make sense of it. So right in front of me is this impenetrable darkness. So I'm afraid.

I'm afraid of what's going to happen. I'm afraid of what this means for me. I'm afraid of what it means for John. For his family. For us. And I don't know.

[3 : 17] If that's how you feel this morning. You can look around. And you can look at your brothers and sisters. And know that they feel the same way. We were never meant to go through anything like this alone.

And God hasn't intended that. And we're not doing that. So you have brothers and sisters. We're a family. And families stick together. So I am afraid.

And I am uncertain. The ground beneath my feet is. Feels like it's falling away. And it feels more like walking on thin cracking ice than anything else. But.

But. God exists. God exists. God exists. God exists. Amen. Everything I said is true.

The fear. The questions. The ground falling out from under me. From under you. But. God. Exists. He exists.

[4 : 19] And that's what I believe. I believe. I believe that. And remember. That's what you believe. I believe that he exists. And that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

And he's not in my imagination. He's not some sort of mental construct. Put there by my parents. Or you.

I believe he exists. He exists quite apart from me. Quite apart from me. Other than me. My faith does not make him real.

My faith only sees that he is real. And so before I ever was. Before I was ever conceived. Before my neurons ever shook hands with each other.

Before my brain was ever in existence. He existed. Before Abraham was. I am. Jesus said that. And I believe it.

[5 : 20] I believe it. I believe in him. And so we say it. And we sing it. But right now. We believe it. He is our refuge.

And strength. And ever present help. In trouble. Therefore. We will not fear. Paul said it. And the psalmist said it. Paul quoted the psalmist. And so they both said it. I believe. Therefore. I have spoken. I believe.

Therefore. I have spoken. There is something very powerful. About those words. I believe. There's something very powerful. As we say it to one another.

As we say it to ourselves. There's something very worshipful. That when we say it to God. I believe. I believe. This. About you.

[6 : 19] And so this morning. We need to go back. To what we know. To what we believe. Truths unchanged. From the dawn of time. That will carry on.

Through all eternity. And in Psalm 46. That's exactly what the Lord. Tells us to do. And you know the psalm. And so I don't have to go over it. I just want you to look at verse 10.

Be still. And know. That I. Am God. Be still. And know. That I.

Am God. What's the lesson? It's just this. Times of trouble. Are times to be still.

And to think about God. To know God. To believe. Again. To rest. And to reckon. With what we know.

[7 : 19] To remind ourselves. Of who he is. To say. To ourselves. This is what. I believe. This is what I believe. And so what do we believe this morning?

This morning as we sit here. As we. Think about. Pastor John and Josie. Think about our sister Sharon. Think about cancer. What do I believe?

Well I believe God speaks to us. I believe God speaks to us. That. There is a God. And he speaks to us in his word. And he means what he says.

And every word. His every word is flawless. I believe that. And so here I am. I'm confused. And I'm afraid. And it's dark.

But there is a voice. That is cutting through the darkness. Through the uncertainty. Through the. I don't know what to do. And a voice is speaking to me. Is talking. To me.

[8 : 18] God is speaking to me. He speaks to me. In this book. By the Holy Spirit. He speaks to me. In this book. And so.

Give me that book. Give me that book. He hasn't hidden himself. He hasn't given us. The silent treatment. Although that. That is what we deserve.

In our sin. We have given God. The silent treatment. For years on end. And yet. He hasn't given us. That silent treatment. We. He hasn't left us. To wander. In the darkness.

He speaks to us. And so. In the book of Hebrews. It says this. In the past. God spoke. To our forefathers. Through the prophets. At many times. And in various ways. But in these last days.

He has spoken to us. By his son. God speaks to us. Yes. It's dark. But there is a voice. In the darkness. Talking to us. Telling us what we need to hear.

[9 : 14] Telling us what we need to believe. Telling us what we need to know. Telling us what we need to do. There is a voice. Cutting through the darkness. Through the fog. It's carried on the wind.

Of the Holy Spirit. And again and again. In the book of Hebrews. The author says. The Holy Spirit says. The Holy Spirit says. And then he quotes the Old Testament.

So the Spirit. Is in the present tense. Speaking. Speaking to us. And I'll tell you what. That's good. I need that.

I need those words. Tells me what I need to know. Tells me. Of many precious truths.

In his book. That he has given me. But the most precious is this. That Jesus loves me. And that's what God is saying to us right now.

[10 : 11] Jesus loves you. That hasn't changed. That isn't going to ever go away. And so. Those are words I need.

And so I say. Talk to me Jesus. If he left me all alone. With no words. Then I would be in bad trouble. But I believe God speaks.

And his voice cuts through all the darkness. And one day his voice will cut right through the grave's darkness. And the dead will hear. So he speaks to us.

I believe God speaks. I believe God is sovereign. Do you believe that? Remember that. I believe God is sovereign. I believe he rules over everything. Big and small. He rules over the stars. In their courses. He rules over the moon. And the sun. And the planets. Over the angels.

[11:10] And the demons. Over earth. The animals. Over peasants. And presidents. There is not a single. Rogue. Molecule. Outside of his control.

In the universe. This morning. I believe that. There's not a single. Adam. That doesn't answer his call. That doesn't obey him. And not a single. Cell. In anyone's body. Not a cell. Can you say that with me? Not a cell. High soaring above is my king. He's the king. He's the master.

He plans everything. And brings everything. About by his own powerful will. And so nothing that happens. Out. That happens outside of his decree. There's nothing that happens.

[12:07] That he does not decree. Not a hair of my head falls. The Heidelberg Catechism. What is your only comfort in life and death? Part of the answer is this. He so preserves me.

That without the will. Of my heavenly father. Not a hair. Can fall from my head. A hair. From my head. Has to ask permission. From God.

My father. Before it falls out. Yea. All things. Must be subservient. They must serve my salvation. And we sing it. And we. And we believe it. From life's first cry. To final breath. Jesus commands. My destiny. I always think of Sarah Edwards.

Letter to her daughter. Telling her about. Her father. Jonathan's. Sudden death. And listen. This is coming from your sister. Your sister in the faith.

[13:07] You'll meet her someday. And she said this. And I want you to put your hearts. Amen. Amen. On it. What shall I say?

A holy and good God. Has covered us with a dark cloud. Oh that we may kiss the rod. And lay our hands on our mouths. The Lord has done it.

He has made me adore his goodness. That we had him so long. But my God lives. And he has my heart. Did you hear that?

My God lives. That's true this morning. That's true right now. I believe that. He exists. And he is sovereign. And I believe all the days of my life.

Are written in his book. I don't know how long. My life story is going to be. I don't know how many pages. I have left. I don't know.

[14:08] Rex just this morning. Told me about his cousin. Young man doesn't know the Lord. Suddenly brought right next to death. Didn't know. Not ready. I don't know. But you know what?

I do know that my good. Great. Loving God. Is the author of that book. And he's. He's writing this book. Story. He's sovereign.

He's sovereign. So what do we do? We kiss the rod. We lay our hands on our mouths. Humble yourselves.

Therefore under his mighty hand. God has a mighty hand. When he bends us down. And James says.

When he is bending you down. Bow down. I believe God is sovereign. So I bend the knee.

[15:06] I believe he speaks. I believe he's sovereign. I believe he's the mighty one. We have this. In Psalm 46. Lord. Sabaoth.

Lord. Heaven. The. The king. The commander of the angels of heaven. The almighty. We sing it. Lord. Sabaoth. His name.

From age to age. The same. The Lord. Almighty. Mighty. To save. Is not a lack of power. That God does. Or does not do anything. He is mighty to save. Stronger than our enemies. Stronger. Than any disease. And he says. He heals us.

Of all of our diseases. And how can we say that? How can we say that? Now. I hate to call out.

[16:07] Max. But. Max said this about Jeanette. The Lord will heal her now. Or heal her later. It's not a matter of healing. It's a matter. It's.

The healing is not in doubt. Max believed. Therefore he spoke. And it is true. Stronger than any disease. Stronger than death. Up from the grave.

He arose. With a mighty triumph. O'er his foes. And with a loud call. And with a trumpet call. Of God. The dead. And Christ. Will rise.

My God. Is mighty. And he always. Leads us. In victory. Always. Leads us. In victory. After years. Of fighting. Here's a history lesson. After years. Of fighting. Alexander the Great. Was facing a mutiny. He had been. His soldiers. His Macedonian soldiers. Had been on.
[17:03] The. The campaign. For. Ten some years now. And his. And he was going to send. Some of them home. Some of the older ones. Some of the injured ones.

And. And for whatever reason. That. Sort of. Flipped a switch. In some of. His other soldiers. His Macedonian soldiers. Heads. And they. They went on a mutiny. They all wanted to go home. And. He stood in front of them. And he gave this. Withering. Defense. Of himself. To them. And he said. Let's talk about what.

I've done for you. And what you've done for me. He says. Let's. Let me talk about. What I've done for you. He says. It's right for me to begin with.

Philip. My father. And he talked about Philip. And he. My father took you from being goat herders. To free men. But that is nothing. Compared to what I've done for you.

[17:59] I gave you Egypt. I gave you Persia. I gave you cities. I made you satraps. And generals. And then he says this. Not one of you.

Have ever died. Running. From the enemy. Not one of you. Have ever died. In retreat. Some were lost.

But they were always lost. In victory. With courage. Advancing. And I want to say. That's Jesus. His people die. But they never die.

In defeat. They always die. In victory. Because Jesus. Is in the front. He's gone before us. And he always goes before us.

Now all Alexander could do. Was bury his men with honor. And he says. I always bury the men with honor. But you know what? Jesus buries his soldiers with honor. And then he raises them from the dead.

[18:58] He always leads his people. In victory. He's mighty to save. That's the point. A mighty fortress is our God.

A bulwark. Never failing. Satan is strong. On earth is not as equal. But yet one little word from Jesus. Shall fell him. And so do you believe?

There's darkness. And there's fear. And there's sorrow. And there's sadness. And it's all real. But God exists. And he speaks to us. And he is sovereign. And he is mighty. But more than that.

I believe in Jesus Christ. Whom he sent. I believe in Jesus. Whom he sent. I believe he's the God man.

The one and only. One of a kind. The only unique son of God. And yet a man. The son of Mary.

[20:02] We don't think about that. But. The son of Mary. And he is. Jesus is as human as I am. Everything I have felt. And am feeling.

And experienced. As a human. He felt. And so. He's my sympathetic high priest. I believe right now. In heaven. I have a priest. Whose heart. Is beating.

In concert with mine. And when my. Heart sings a minor tune. His heart sings a minor tune. Right along. With mine. And he knows fear.

He knows disappointment. He knows betrayal. He knows highs. He knows low. He knows joy. He knows agony. And he cares for us. He really cares for us.

We believe it. And so let's run to him. On the day of our trouble. Because we know that. When we go to that throne of grace. What we are going to receive. Is mercy. And help. And grace. And our time of need.

[21:02] Now why can I be so confident. In this moment. That I can come to the throne of grace. To God. And expect help. You know why I can be so confident.

Because at his right hand. Is a high priest. Whose heart. Is torn. In all the same places. As my heart is. Who hurts with me. Who feels with me.

And out of his heart. Tearing sympathy. He won't deny me help. Because I'm his. And he is mine. And he feels my pain. Jesus is a man.

The son of Mary. And he knows my trouble. And I believe in Jesus. The son of Mary. Who took a real body. To a real cross.

And had real nails. Driven through that body. For me. For my sin. To pay the price.

[22:00] I could never pay. I would never dare to pay it. And I believe that that man. Died for me. My brother.

My friend. Flesh of my flesh. And bone of my bones. That's. Who died for me. I believe Jesus is the son of God.

The image of the invisible God. The perfect representation of his being. And so when Mary kissed her baby. She kissed the face of God. Veiled in flesh.

The Godhead see. Hail incarnate. Deity. Everything the father is. Jesus is. Co-equal in power. Co-equal in glory.

And what does that mean for me now? Well it means my life. And my death. And my salvation. Are in his hands. It means nothing. Can snatch me.

[23 : 04] Or my. The ones who are in Christ. From his hands. And until he returns. Or Christ comes. And calls me home. Here in the power of Christ. I stand.

I'm held. I am held. You are held. John and Josie are held. So do not fear. For I am with you. Do not be dismayed. For I am your God. I will strengthen you. And help you. I will uphold you. With my righteous right hand. I will uphold you. So the earth is falling under me.

But underneath me are the everlasting arms. They are not tired. They are not weary. I am. I am. I am. I don't feel him though.

I don't feel held. But you know what? I have been through fire. And I have been through water.

[24 : 06] And the flames have not hurt me. And I have not drowned. All of us have been in that furnace. With those three children of Israel.

And we have all found. That there is a fourth person. Walking with us. And so when through the deep waters. I call thee to go. The rivers of woe. Shall not thee overflow. For I will be with thee. Thy troubles to bless. That is why. That is why I know I am held. And we are not talking about. What I feel. We are talking about. What we believe. Feelings can come and go. But this morning. We are talking about. What we believe. And that is what I believe.

He says. I will be with thee. And cause thee to stand. And I stand. So that is my Jesus. He is the son of Mary. He is the son of God.

[25 : 06] God. My perfect savior. More than enough. For me. More than enough. For me. More than enough. For this church. More than enough.

For whatever happens. In the weeks. In the months. In the years. To come. More than enough. Not barely adequate. More than enough. I believe God exists.

I believe he speaks. I believe he is sovereign. I believe he is mighty. I believe in Jesus Christ. The son of Mary. The son of God. And you know what else I believe? I believe in the forgiveness of sins. Thank God. I believe in the forgiveness of sins. Oh my sin. The bliss of this thought. My sin. Not in part. But the whole. Is nailed to the cross.

And what? I bear it. No more. I believe. Psalm 130 verse 4. With you. There is the forgiveness of sins.

[26 : 05] Now Satan is in one ear. Saying. You know what? You shouldn't. And you can't believe that about God. But I believe it. Satan.

With him. There is the forgiveness of sins. That's what it says. Satan wants one side. Where he talks about how God is holy and just. And will judge you.

But he wants to hide the other side. About with you. There is the forgiveness of sins. And I say. Satan. I believe all of it. I am a sinner. And yet there is forgiveness.

For me. And so. If I'm looking at my life. My blunders. My sin. My failures. I don't see any hope. Or any reason to think that. I don't know about you.

But sometimes at night. I. My wife will testify. I don't sit there for very long. But I think there. Lie there in my bed. And. I. You just think about.

[27 : 00] What you've done wrong. What you could have done better. But you know what. When I'm. Lying there at night.

Thinking about that. I don't dare. Think of that old lie. I've done the best I could. Because I haven't. I don't believe that. I don't believe that for a minute.

And you know what. God doesn't look to see. If I've done the best I could. My hope is coming from somewhere else. My hope is coming from someone else. And so.

You know what I do. I lay all my sin in a pile. And then I lay all my best efforts on the same exact pile. And I turn around and walk away from both of them. And I walk to Jesus.

Out of my sin and sorrow. Sadness. Jesus. I come. Jesus. I come to you. So. Where do I go? It's Jesus. And he paid it all. And all to him I owe.

[28 : 00] Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow. My sins are forgiven. Because my sins are paid for. There's no more debt.

Because my debt. Has been paid. Mine was the sin. His was the sacrifice. His life. For mine. A literal. One for one. Exchange. And I believe that. And that's my hope. Because in his great love. The father gave his son for me. I didn't steal him from heaven. I didn't grab him from the father's hand. I didn't make this sacrifice.

He was the father's free gift. And that's good news. Because that tells me. That there's a. In my father's heart. There's a love for sinners.

[29 : 01] That comes before believing. That comes before any good thing. A father's heart. And he sends Jesus. And so I believe in the forgiveness of sins.

And you might say. Well how does that help me now? How does that help me in a problem? In darkness. In the situation. Well because I know God is on my side.

There's no hidden catch. In his heart. He doesn't have anything against me. That's going to keep him from loving me. And keep him from. From forsaking me. Or keep me. Keep.

To cause him to forsake me. There's nothing he's holding on to. Nothing he's waiting to punish. There is no dark alley in the future. Where he is going to turn on me. And attack me. There's no dark alley.

Where he's going to. To turn on me. And say. Now it's time to. I'm holding you accountable for this one. His whole heart. Is all for me. Because of Jesus.

[30 : 00] So no guilt in life. No fear in death. God is safely. And all together. On my side. I believe that.

So what difference. The forgiveness of sin makes. What difference. It turns the whole. Turns night into day. It turns. Into drowning.

Into singing. Distress. Into joy. It changes everything. God is for me. So I believe in the forgiveness of sins.

The free. The full. The complete. The joyful. Forgiveness of all sins. Of all my sins. Last thing.

I believe God will be exalted. Exalted. I believe that God will be exalted. I don't know how. I don't know how all this is going to end.

[30 : 59] I don't know how all this. Where this road takes us. I don't know what the troubles. We are going to go through. Or. What I will go through. What you will go through. What John will go through.

What Josie will go through. What. Pam will go through. I don't know. But this is what I do know. I do know that in the end. He will be exalted.

In my heart. I will look at him. And I will smile. And say you God. How great thou art. And nothing is going to stop.

That. From. Happening. My God. Has said it. In his heart. That he. Will. Be. Exalted. And he will. And that's why he says. Be still. You're all in a. Tizzy. Hold on. Be still. And know that I am God. I.

[31 : 58] Will. Be exalted. So troubles are troubles. Mountains. Are mountains. Earthquakes. Are earthquakes. Nations. Are nations.

But I. Am. God. There's none other. I am God. And I will be exalted.

I will be exalted. On. The earth. And so I don't know. How we're going to get there. But that's where we're going. That's where I'm going. That's where grace fellowship is going.

That's where your family is going. That's where this whole earth is going. With faith. Turning. To sight. With sadness. Turning. To joy. With dishonor.

Being replaced with honor. With silence. To song. I will be exalted. I will be exalted. And so.

[32 : 57] Set that day before your eyes. Right now. Move. Your calendar back. Set that day before your eye.

Take a deep breath. And walk on. Who are we? We are not those who shrink back.

And are destroyed. But those who believe. And are saved. Who are we? We are not those that shrink back.

And are destroyed. But those who believe. And are saved. You believe. Remember what you believed.

Remember what you believe. Let's pray. God. Our help in ages past.

[34 : 03] Our hope for years to come. Let us turn all of our eyes. And hearts upon you. Help us to look to you.

Help us to remember what we believe. Help us to remember what you've said to us. Help us to see who we are.

But we are not those who shrink back. And are destroyed. We are those who believe. And are saved. Remind us of who we are.

Remind us of what you have said. The world and our hearts. Our heads. Our brains. All sorts of things are saying. All sorts of things about us. Help us to hear what you say.

And help us to believe it. We pray this in Jesus name. For his sake. That we would be a people. Pleasing to you. That you would take joy in our king.

[35 : 07] In his name. Amen. Amen. Amen.