

Psalm 46 • Be still, and know that I am God

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Psalm chapter 46 is a fairly short Psalm. We're going to go ahead and read through the verses here and then we'll take a look at it. It says,

- “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.*
- 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.*
- 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.” (ESV)*

Great little Psalm. But when most people get done reading Psalm chapter 46, I can imagine the majority of us will probably only remember verse 10. Because that's the one that just jumps out on us. In fact, it might have already been underlined or highlighted in your Bible. Even if it wasn't, it's well known,

probably one of the favorite verses for Christians for giving comfort to their own hearts and sharing comfort with someone else.

Check out this picture on the screen. I just put in, be still, and know that I am God.



All day long I could find, show you pictures like that. Plaques and signs, and it's engraved on rocks, and boards, and just about every possible thing. And I get it. It's an incredible statement. Probably because it is spoken right from the Lord.

It's interesting how this Psalm all moves its way along. And then suddenly you hear the Lord speaking in the first person. Everything speaks about in more like a third person narrative, and then suddenly we have this quote from the Lord: *"Be still, and know that I am God,"* and so forth.

And of course, we love it when we receive comforting messages directly from the voice of our God. But lest we do take that single verse and make that Psalm necessarily all about that one single quotation.

I want to share it in the context with the rest of the verses because I think that helps us to get a better sense of why this statement is being made by the Lord. Why is He saying, *"Be still, and know that I am God."*

This Psalm begins with these words in verse 1. *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*

Now, in that first verse, there's no words that are unfamiliar to us. Refuge, strength, yeah, we've been reading those words a lot in our study of the Psalms. They seem to appear very often as the writers speak about the presence of God, in the midst of His people, and that sort of thing, and what it is to put your trust in Him.

But I also like the second part of this verse. Look with me there. It ends by saying, *"a very present help in trouble."* And I really love that phrase because it calls God in your life and in my life, saying that His help is very present. It's a strange phrase, isn't it? I don't usually say to someone, well, so and so is very present with us today. I would just say they're present.

But the psalmist is giving emphasis to the presence of the Lord by saying, He is a very present help. Just for your reminder, I know you all know this, but the word, present, means here, close to, next to. And obviously that word can apply to you and I at times when we happen to be present. But then when we're not around, you can't say that we're present any longer because sometimes we're not.

That's why when describing God, we take the prefix, omni and put it in front of that, and we say, He is omnipresent, which of course means He is everywhere present. That prefix, omni, gives any word a universal character, okay?

You and I can be present. God is omni-present. God is always, everywhere present. And of course those words and that understanding is one of the most incredible comforts that we have in God's Word related to our relationship to Him.

I want to show you a quote if I could on the screen from A.W. Tozer. I've been re-reading the book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, and this quote was in there.

The doctrine of the Divine omnipresence personalizes man's relation to the universe in which he finds himself. God is present, near him, next to him, and this God sees him and knows him through and through. At this point Faith begins, and while it may go on to include a thousand other wonderful truths, these are all refer back to the truth that God is, and God is here. —**A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy***

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these are (they) all refer back to (this truth, that) the truth that God is, and God is here.

In other words, the omnipresence of God is a reflection that casts a shadow on all the other truths that we may derive from the Word related to the character and the presence of God.

Here's what's interesting. I think if any of us as Christians were made to take a theology quiz: true or false, is God omnipresent? I think most of us would be able to accurately say, yeah, He's always and everywhere present. But what's interesting about that is how quickly we can abandon that idea when life gets hard.

How quickly we move off that sort of a concept, and we either ask things like, well, where's God? Or God has left me. I've had people say that many times to me. I feel like God has left me. Or the simple statement, I just don't feel God's presence. As if our feelings were remotely reliable on that particular score.

Isn't that crazy? We humans, we think our feelings are the end all say all of our theology. It's like, God's Word comes along and says that He is everywhere present, and we go, well, I don't feel that. As if to cast doubt upon the revelation of God's Word based upon my personal emotions. As if my emotions are exalted above the very revelation of God.

It's just, it's crazy, but that's just us. When life becomes a challenge, we are so quick to blame God for being absent, and we rarely ever stop to consider the possibility that we might have something to do with that equation. That there may be something in our lives that has lent itself to that sense or even that feeling of God not being present.

Let me show you an example of this. Jeremiah chapter 29, up on the screen, verses 13 to 14. God says,

Jeremiah 29:13-14 (ESV)

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD...

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. (and then God goes on to say,) I will be found by you, declares the LORD...

Now that is a promise in God's Word. He says, "*seek me with all of your heart*" and you will find me. No questions, no ifs, ands, or buts. But you'll notice that this wonderful promise comes with a requirement that is on our part, and that is, we must seek Him with all our hearts. It's not just this simple, yoo-hoo God.

It's this idea of pressing in to know God, to search for God, not in the sense that He's hiding or anything. God is not hiding. What we forget is that God is Spirit. (John 4:24) That's what Jesus told the woman at the well. You and I tend to look for God in very physical ways.

I've had people say to me many times in the past, I just, I want to be able to hear God's voice and they're talking about their physical ears. And if you're listening for God with your physical ears, you're listening the wrong way and you're not truly seeking Him in the way that He wants to be sought. God is Spirit. He wants to communicate with you spiritually. Can I just tell you something about spiritual communication? It's vastly superior to physical communication, vastly.

On those rare occasions, and I don't claim to be a person who God has spoken to a lot in my life, there have been occasions. I mean, He speaks to me all the times through His Word. But in a special a spiritual communication, where I wasn't reading the Bible, I wasn't, maybe I was praying, maybe whatever. I have had the Lord drop a communication in my heart and He has this incredible spiritual way of speaking volumes in a fraction of a second because He doesn't have the limitation of human speech.

It's spiritual communication, and it takes that long, (Pastor Paul snaps his fingers), and that you know that God just communicated this vast array of information that you can even regurgitate to other people. It might take you a long time to do but just in a fraction of a second, He spiritually communicated those things.

Anyway, that's off the beaten path there a little bit but if we're waiting for God to touch us in some sort of a spiritual way. I just want God to appear to me in my bedroom. No you don't. That's happened to a few people, and they usually fell down as dead. Daniel couldn't even breathe when he was in the presence of God Almighty.

Anyway, spiritually, God wants to minister and reveal Himself to us. He says, "*when you seek me with all your heart,*" you will find me. "*I will be found by you.*" Let's read on here. Let's look at the kind of situations that this Psalm talks about. God's presence being enjoyed through.

He says, verse 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.”*

Wow, it sounds to me like a natural disaster. I mean, if you take these 2 verses literally, you're going..., then the Psalm is essentially saying that God is an ever present help in times of trouble, even if the world, the literally the earth is flying apart.

Now, it's very possible because the Psalms are very poetic, it's possible that the Psalmist wasn't talking specifically about natural disasters, although that could have been in his mind, or he could have just been thinking of a symbolic expression of the worst day of your life where everything seems to be coming unhinged.

And in that time, whether literal or symbolic, the truth expressed in this first part of this Psalm is God is there. God is there. He is present. He is ever present, right? And He is an ever present help.

Verse 4 goes on to say, *“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.”* Stop there for a moment.

Another couple of interesting verses. What is it saying here? Well, it says there's a river and those, and the streams that come from that river. It says, *“make glad the city of God.”* What is the city of God? Jerusalem. Okay.

You know what's interesting about this word picture that the Psalmist is painting for you and I? He's talking about something that doesn't exist. There isn't a river that runs through Jerusalem. During the time of Hezekiah, he diverted a spring to go through the city when they believed that the Assyrian army was on its way to conquer them. And they knew how those armies conquered back in those days. They would basically lay siege to a city, meaning they would surround it with their armies and not let anybody leave, and the people would essentially be starved out.

Well, if there was water flowing into a city, you could last a long time. If there was no water that flowed into a city, there was a very, very, short period of time before you'd have to just surrender to the enemy. Hezekiah was smart enough as a king to divert one of the springs into the city so that they would have a supply of water, but it wasn't a river. It was far from a river.

What's interesting about this is that these verses project for you and I some prophetic foresight by the psalmist of another river, which we're told about elsewhere prophetically, that flows into the city of God.

And that is in fact, the river of life. It's one that the apostle John saw in his revelation of Jesus Christ when he saw the holy city. And I want to put it up on the screen for you from Revelation chapter 22. He says,

Revelation 22:1-2 (ESV)

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 through the middle of the street of the city;

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright (brightest) as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city;

It's even running through the street. And it says, “...on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit,” dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. And it goes on in that passage. The river of life, it's something that is going to happen. It's not something that has happened.

The psalmist goes on, verse 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.*” And so they say there's a bidding now.

“*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.*” What's this all talking about?

It's saying that God's sovereign and He controls the armies and conquests and risings and fallings of nations. That's really what this is saying. The psalmist is bidding you and I to look at the history of mankind and see how God has intervened.

See how God has responded to the needs of men and in keeping with His purpose and His will, He has orchestrated, again, the risings and fallings of nations. And that's what these verses are talking about.

It's a call to you and I to notice, and to acknowledge. Remember what that passage says in Proverbs, when we're told to trust in the Lord with all of our heart? It says to acknowledge the Lord in all of our ways. (Proverbs 3:5-6) Well, acknowledging the Lord is a huge thing.

You can acknowledge the Lord in your life and you can acknowledge the Lord in world history, that's what the psalmist is doing here. To acknowledge the Lord in your life is to say, God is working in my life and that thing that happened to me, that was the Lord. Even if he allowed a really rough season in my life, the Lord allowed that in my life. That's acknowledging the Lord.

When I look at what's happening in the risings and fallings of empires throughout the course of human history, what do we say? Sure. We can say, well, then the first World War, and then the second World War, and the rise of Nazism, and the fall of Nazism. And because of these nations.

Or we can just say, God was working. God was causing the rising and the falling of nations and empires and the conquest of kingdoms and so forth. And that's what the psalmist wants you and I to see. He wants you and I to have a worldview that is, that sees God as the sovereign Ruler of man. Okay? He's inviting you and I to acknowledge that.

Why am I making such a big deal of that? Because that is the context of verse 10. Understanding as you do, that God is sovereign over the kingdoms of man, and this is a word that goes out to the kingdoms of man that are against the Lord, or that are the enemies of the Lord. And this is a word that goes out to those who are God's people. Here's that word, *"Be still, and know that I am God."*

God says that to His enemies just as much as He says it to the people of God. See, you and I, we look at it on a nice little plaque, and it's a little nice sentiment that you give to Christians. *"Be still and know that I am God."* Right? That's what we do.

God says it to everybody. He says it to his enemies. *"Be still, and know that I am God."* And I will not be thwarted. I will not be mocked. My purpose will be achieved. My plan will come to fruition. *"Be still,"* to the enemies of God, be still, means lay down your arms, stop your striving, and surrender.

And to the believer in Jesus Christ, be still means, rest in My presence. Know that I am God. Know that I am working. Know that I am capable, and I will be exalted.

Man says throughout the course of human history, I will exalt myself, and God says, well, temporarily maybe, but in the end I will be exalted.

It's like what the Lord said through Isaiah. Let me put this passage on the screen for you.

Isaiah 2:22 (ESV)

Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?

Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, (he doesn't have nostrils or breath in any other part of his life in the sense except his nostrils, and he says,) for of what account is he?

Man is constantly exalting himself. God says, I will be exalted.

Stop putting your..., regarding man. God gives the breath of life. Man has only the breath that he breathes from God.

Beautiful Psalm, Psalm 46. I really love this one.