

Psalm 46:1–3 | “Our Refuge from Fear”  
*Preached on June 9, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown*

This morning, I’m going to be speaking out of Psalm 46, verses 1–3, and it says this...

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

Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”  
*[pauseeee]*

Back in the 1950’s, when the threat of the atomic bomb was high, there was a big push for kids in school to “duck and cover”. *[pause]*

They even used a cartoon turtle named “Bert” to teach the kids to quickly duck and cover under their desks. *[pause]*

Now would that tiny desk be much of a shelter against an atomic bomb?

I can’t answer that, but really, that would probably be the only option with the amount of time you had. *[pauseeee]*

Even today they teach kids in school to “drop, cover, and hold on” during an earthquake. *[pause]*

This is because as humans, we need shelter.

We need places of protection that shield us from whatever dangers we face. *[pauseeee]*

Think about what you do whenever you are caught in a downpour of rain or a thunderstorm, you immediately look for some sort of shelter or refuge.

You look for a house, a pavilion like this, or anything that will protect you from the raging storm.  
*[pauseeee]*

Well the psalmist here in Psalm 46 shows us where his refuge is found, and by doing so, calls us to find refuge in the same place. *[pause]*

It’s certainly not under a desk or even under a pavilion, but his refuge is God Himself.

For he says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” *[pause]*

*He’s showing us that our confidence can be in the fact that...*

**I. God is our refuge. (1)**

It truly matters what your refuge is. *[pause]*

Like if your refuge isn't reliable, then it does you no good, but if your refuge is strong, it will safeguard you. *[pauseeee]*

When I would go on church hiking trips in Canada, we would sleep in tents at night.

And one night, there was this crazy thunderstorm with strong winds and heavy rain.

And I remember laying in my tent thinking, *This tent is going to do nothing against this storm!*  
*[pause]*

I didn't feel protected or sheltered in a refuge made of thin polyester and small poles. *[pause]*

This is because we find refuge in things that are strong, solid, and sturdy. *[pauseeee]*

Well look at what the psalmist says about our refuge...

"God is our refuge." *[pause]*

Just sit back and think about that very simple statement—"God is our refuge." *[pause]*

This is no mere inanimate object that could fail.

Nor is this an ordinary, weak mortal, who is our refuge, but our refuge is God Almighty! *[pause]*

God, the powerful Miracle-Worker and Creator, who can create out of His mere word, is our refuge.

God, the eternal One, who never changes and whose existence has never and will never be threatened, is our shelter.

God, the all-knowing, all-present God, is our fortress. *[pauseeee]*

It's like we stand enclosed by Him, like a bunker, and He becomes our place of protection against all outside forces. *[pauseeee]*

He is our place of safety and security from danger.

He is our haven and safe place.

He is our place of trust. *[pauseeee]*

Think about when you are looking for shelter and see something promising, you run to it, trusting that it will shelter you.

So also, we run to our God, who is our refuge, trusting Him to shield us and provide us with ultimate security. *[pauseeee]*

God is also our strength. *[pause]*

When you take shelter in a refuge, the refuge becomes your strength to take whatever it is that is bombarding you. *[pause]*

If you hid behind a large rock to protect yourself from fierce wind and waves, then that rock would not only be your refuge, but your strength.

It is taking the brunt of the wind and waves, so that you don't have to. *[pause]*

That's how it is with God...

God takes the force of the wind and waves of life, and we sit under His strength, so we are able to bear it. *[pauseeee]*

The next line of verse 1 expands further about God as our refuge and strength, for it says that He is "a very present help in trouble." *[pauseeee]*

We face a lot of trouble in this life.

I mean we do live in a fallen world, where things are askew. *[pause]*

We feel pain, we experience hardship, we face dangers, we encounter natural disasters. *[pause]*

There are dangers within and without, close and far, big and small. *[pause]*

We go through adversity, affliction, and distress—it's a part of life in the current state of the world.

And so we need help in trouble, for we are weak, incapable, and not in control of many, many things in this life.

Yet the verse here tells us that amidst all of those things, we have a help in times of trouble! *[pause]*

*God is our help.*

He gives us what we need for each moment, for each day, for each trial. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever tried to do something yourself that required at least another person, and you realized, "I can't do this myself, I need help."? *[pause]*

So also, life is like that...

It's not that we just need a *little* help, where if we didn't get it, we could still do it, albeit slowly.

No, if you didn't have the help of God, you could not make it. *[pauseeee]*

God as our help really feels like an understatement, for just think of the help of God! *[pause]*

His help is life-saving help, strength-empowering help, comfort-giving help, peace-producing help. *[pauseeee]*

It's not that we won't ever face pain in this life, but when we run under the protection of God our refuge, He helps us *through* the times of trouble.

He gives us what we need to go *through* the pain, the distress, the hardship.

He helps us through it, sustaining us, and showing off His power through our weakness.<sup>1</sup>  
*[pauseeee]*

What a refuge, what a help our God is!

And He's not just a help, but "a very present help". *[pauseeee]*

One of my favorite things to do while studying the Bible is to see the depth of meaning in the original Greek or Hebrew word that's used in the passage. *[pause]*

Well the word that's translated as "present" is literally "found", as in something that is found somewhere. *[pause]*

So this verse is saying that God is found in times of trouble: He's there!

He's present to help. *[pause]*

He doesn't abandon you in trouble, but He's very much so found there to help.

Therefore, in your times of trouble, you don't have to say, "Where's God?!" for He's present there to help. *[pauseeee]*

He's not just somewhat present, but *very* present.

He's not slightly present, but He's very much so 'there'. *[pauseeee]*

You can count on Him being with you through trouble.

He's readily available to help, you don't have to go searching for Him, for He's found there.  
*[pauseeee]*

What good is a refuge or shelter that you can't reach in a time of desperation?

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to 2 Corinthians 12:9–10.

What good is a refuge that you can't gain access to, like being locked out of your house in a storm?

Yet God is a refuge, a help that's "a very present help in trouble". *[pauseeee]*

*So what difference should this make in our lives?...*

## II. We should not fear. (2-3)

That's what the psalmist says, "Therefore we will not fear." *[pause]*

Since God is our refuge, our strength, our help—it is on that basis and on that foundation that we do not have to fear. *[pause]*

In fact, God as refuge should cause us to proclaim, "we will not fear"! *[pauseeee]*

Think about it this way—in a refuge such as God, how could we fear? *[pause]*

In a refuge such as the Lord, why should fear even have a place or a footing in our lives? *[pause]*

No, we should resolve to say, "we will not fear!"

For if you think about it, fear should fly away when you know that you are safe within the refuge of God's arms. *[pauseeee]*

If the Creator and Sustainer of the universe is our refuge, it doesn't quite make sense to fear anything in creation. *[pause]*

If the Life-Giver, Power-Supplier, and Providential Lord of all is our shelter, fear seems illogical. *[pause]*

It's sorta like a person who is scared of falling from high things when he's already planted on the ground. *[pauseeee]*

You see, fear happens when our thinking isn't truly aligned with the reality of our God.

For if we truly believed that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe...

If we truly believed that God was providentially in control of all things, and gave life and breath to everything...

If we truly believed that He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and always present, then *why* fear? *[pause]*

He's in control, He will give us what we need.

And that's why the psalmist can say...

“Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”  
[pause]

He uses words that describe a worst-case scenario in the world.

They are images of the total collapse of the earth. [pause]

The earth giving way is the idea of the earth being altered or even removed. [pause]

The mountains being moved is this imagery of the mountains tottering and slipping into the depths of the sea.

And then the waters roaring and foaming is this picture of chaos. [pause]

Especially back then, the earth and mountains were seen as the solid, unshakable things of this world, while the sea was seen as chaotic and changing.

Well this psalm is saying that if the solid, seemingly unshakable things of this world were shaken and moved, he will not fear even then. [pause]

To put it plainly, if even the worst things would happen, we don't have to fear. [pause]

Though the world shake, our refuge is unshakable, for our refuge is God. [pause]

He is our refuge amidst the worst life circumstances and tragedies.

So no matter what we face, we can live with fearlessness, for we have a refuge, a strength, and a help in times of trouble. [pause]

Berit Kjos wrote this story in one of her books...

“Long ago a man sought the perfect picture of peace. [pause]

Not finding one that satisfied, he announced a contest to produce this masterpiece. [pause]

[At the contest,] the judges uncovered one peaceful scene after another, while the viewers clapped and cheered...” [pause]

At the end, there was one painting that was uncovered, “and the crowd gasped in surprise. Could this be peace? [pause]

A tumultuous waterfall cascaded down a rocky precipice; the crowd could almost feel its cold, penetrating spray.

Stormy-gray clouds threatened to explode with lightning, wind and rain. *[pause]*

In the midst of the thundering noises and bitter chill, a spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls.

One of its branches reached out in front of the torrential waters, as if foolishly seeking to experience its full power. *[pause]*

A little bird had built a nest in the elbow of that branch.

Content and undisturbed in her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs.

With her eyes closed and her wings ready to cover her little ones, she manifested peace that transcends all earthly turmoil.” *[pauseeee]*

Could you be described like that bird, finding refuge amidst the turmoil that surrounds you? *[pause]*

You can, if you find your refuge in God. *[pauseeeee]*

Jesus showed us the perfect example of this, for remember when he was asleep in the boat during a great storm?

And interestingly, what does he say to His disciples after they wake him up?

“Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?”<sup>2</sup> *[pause]*

Faith can lead you to fearless sleep amidst a storm, and faith can lead you to a fearless life amidst life’s turmoils, when your trust is in God your refuge. *[pauseeee]*

Where do you turn to for refuge and shelter amidst life’s trouble?

Don’t look for refuge in other things, which are only mirages of refuges. *[pauseeee]*

God *is* our refuge and strength.

Now that’s a statement of trust and confidence, can you say that confidently, too? *[pauseeee]*

He is in control of all things, knows all things, has all the power, and is always present.

And He has given us eternal refuge in Christ, who came and died for our sins and rose again.

In Him, we have eternal security and forever forgiveness. *[pauseeee]*

What situation are you facing that feels like the earth is giving way?

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 8:26.

What circumstance seems like a mountain is being moved in your life?

What trial feels like waters roaring and foaming, and you just keep trembling at it? *[pause]*

Is it that financial problem?

Is it a tense matter with another person?

Is it a health issue? Or the unknown, uncertain future? *[pause]*

Remember that God is your refuge and strength.

He's your help in trouble, for He's present there. *[pause]*

No matter what you are going through, and even if the worst thing happened, you do not have to fear.

For you have a refuge from fear in God. *[pause]*

Is He *your* refuge and strength? Is He who you look to? Is He who you trust? *[pauseeee]*

It's said that "Whenever the stress and pressures of life would become too severe, Martin Luther would say [to his friend], 'Come, Philipp, let's sing the forty-sixth Psalm.'"<sup>3</sup> *[pause]*

May we sing this truth over and over again in our hearts, may we remind ourselves of it time and time again.

For great peace and steadfast comfort can be found in just that one little statement, "God is our refuge."

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<sup>3</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 2:388.