

Psalm 46 v 1 - 7

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[0 : 00] Hello and good morning. It's lovely to have the opportunity to share with you again. Sorry that we can't come up to be with you personally in these difficult days, but greetings from Antonia and the children, and we really genuinely want to send our love to you. Now this morning I'm going to be preaching from Psalm 46, just half of the psalm. So I'd like to read the first few verses to you. Psalm 46 beginning at verse 1. 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. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

God is in the midst of her, and she shall not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter. He hutters his voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. Let's pray. Father God, as we reflect on these beautiful words, we ask for your spirit to speak to us. Open up our minds and hearts to your truth, Lord. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

During the recent lockdown, the children have spent more time at home than normal, and the younger children have especially enjoyed making their own dens. They've taken blankets, chairs, boxes, clothes pegs from the line, and constructed a den in various parts of the house. The latest one was in the living room.

They got four or five blankets together, moved some sofas, brought a lamp and some cushions and snacks. Took nearly all day to build.

[2 : 34] But of course, at the end of the day, they have to put it away. It's a temporary structure, but it gives them some fun. For us as adult Christians, we also can build our own dens, safe houses, places of refuge.

But sadly, these often can be not in God, but in our own strength and our own hopes. Maybe we're trying to develop a good pension, a good house, a good income.

Maybe we're trying to protect the health that we have. And we focus more on these temporary things than on the reality of what the psalmist has reminded us in these words, that God is our fortress.

And what I'd like us to do this morning is to focus our minds on this idea of God being our fortress, God alone.

He is our refuge and strength. And we need time to reflect on this in these days of challenge, for sure. If you know your history, you'll have heard of Martin Luther, the great reformer.

[3 : 55] And in April 1521, he was called to appear before the council, the prelates, to recant the so-called heresy of his teaching of justification by faith.

And that night, he turned to the scriptures and he read Psalm 46. And God, through these words, gave him strength.

And he was able to stand up against the challenge of those before him and say, No, I do not recant of this teaching, for this teaching is truth.

And often with one of his friends, he would sing Psalm 46. And it is quoted that he said, Let us sing the 46th Psalm and let the devil do his worst.

In fact, you may know the great hymn, A Mighty Fortress is Our God. And that was written by Luther himself. So this morning, as Luther reflected on this psalm, Let us ourselves turn to this psalm and learn from it.

[5 : 09] I'm just going to be sharing three simple points. The first point is taken directly from verse 1. God is our refuge and strength.

God's presence. God's presence. Reading in verse 1 and 2. God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear that the earth gives way. This psalm encourages us to hope and trust in God, In his sovereign power and providence.

And immediately at the beginning of the psalm, We are pointed to God being our refuge. God is a place of refuge, of protection.

The word relates to a place where you can go when you are threatened. Time and time again in the Old Testament, The word refuge is used in relation to a threat that comes upon the people.

[6:18] In fact, when they entered into the promised land, They established cities of refuge, One being Hebron, A place where people could flee for protection.

Well, God's presence is with us. He is our refuge. He can provide for us protection, security and comfort, From the threat of the consequences of sin in this world.

In fact, God delights to comfort us, To protect us, To enfold his loving arms around us. And we can read that in the psalms and other places in scripture.

In Psalm 18, we can read verse 2, From your present, Verse 2, The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, In whom I take refuge, My shield and the horn of my salvation, My stronghold.

What wonderful words of assurance in these days. Also in Isaiah 25, verse 4, For you have been a stronghold to the poor, A stronghold to the needy in distress, A shelter from the storm, And a shade from the heat.

[7:49] And again in Psalm, This time Psalm 91, A beautiful psalm about God being our protector, Our refuge. Psalm 91, Reading of verse 1, He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say to the Lord, My refuge and my fortress, My God, In whom I trust. God is a place of refuge for us, A place where we can go and be comforted.

But also the verse says, God is our refuge and strength. God gives us strength when we are weak. He is a source of strength spiritually and emotionally.

For us as believers, How often we turn away from God. We try to rely on our own strength. When circumstances get difficult, Often we seek a solution first in and of ourselves.

And only when we cannot cope, We turn to God and His strength. How foolish we are. For God is our strength. He has strength to strengthen us.

[9:06] When we are weak, When we are broken, When we are struggling in life, We do not need to struggle on our own. For God can strengthen us.

Through His word, like this morning, Through prayer, Through the fellowship of believers, God uses many means to give us comfort And strength.

But more than this, God is, in verse 2, In the end of verse 1, sorry, A very present help in trouble. God helps us constantly.

I love that phrase, Ever present, Very present help In times of trouble. In Deuteronomy, We are reminded that God never leaves us, Nor forsakes us.

That reassurance to Joshua and the people, As they were in the promised land. And God Can protect, Strengthen, And help us.

[10:12] You see, He has the eternal perspective On our life. We only see the temporal, The momentary, And yet God Sees the eternal.

And His help Is in the light of that eternal framework. When we face trouble, Or trial, Or tribulation, We can be comforted to know That God Is ever present with us.

Not temporary, Not coming and going, But constantly there beside us. And when life's challenges Get too difficult, He will carry us In His loving arms.

I remember When I lived in North Yorkshire, I had an old red Ford Escort. And I went one day On a route out myself, Just for a drive, On some scenic roads.

And unfortunately, The car broke down. Well, I felt comforted Because I knew I was in the RAC.

Back in those days, I didn't have a mobile phone. So I went into the village, And I got a pay phone And rang the RAC.

[11:24] And they said, What road are you on? Well, Of course, I didn't actually know Because I'd taken a detour Into some country lanes. So I went into the local pub, And I asked the landlord, Excuse me, Can you tell me What road this lane is here?

He said with his Yorkshire accent, I don't know, son. We just call it the lane. Well, Excuse my Yorkshire accent, But also, He didn't even know The name of the road. So I wasn't really able To direct the RAC To come and help me. Eventually, I did get help. But that is not like our God. We don't have to describe Where we are to God. He knows our circumstances. He has a GPS tracking On us constantly. He is ever present with us. So his help, His strength, His divine comfort Is always available to us. All we have to do Is call upon him.

[12 : 29] Humbly submit ourselves To his presence in our life. You see, God's presence Is with us as Christians. We just need to open our hearts And accept it.

Accept that help. So first, God's presence. An ever-present help In times of trouble. God's presence.

God's presence. God's presence. God's presence. God's presence. So, First of all, We reflected upon God's presence. Our second point Is God's peace.

God's peace. In verse 2, We read, Therefore we will not fear Though the earth Gives way. Fear can be a Paralyzing emotion.

It can grow up Like a dark shadow Inside us And cause Christians And non-Christians To cower in the corner.

[13 : 29] To not even be able To face the new day. For Christians, Spiritually as well, We can be paralysed By our fear. We struggle to witness To those around us.

We're frightened Of their responses. And fear can Can really affect Our walk with God. Often our fears Are irrational.

They're not based upon Any evidence Or any fact. And they grow And develop Like nightmares we have. And when we wake In the morning We realise They were false.

The psalmist Begins verse 2 By using a very simple Yet fundamental word. Therefore, He turns us back And says Because of the fact That God Is your strength Your help Your refuge Therefore You do not need To fear.

You have a good And solid reason To not fear. You can enjoy The peace And comfort And joy Of God's presence.

[14 : 46] No matter No matter What your circumstances Are. I'm reminded Of the beautiful Verse in The letter to the Philippians Chapter 4 Verse 7 Paul reminds the church In Philippi That the peace Of God Will guard Their hearts And their minds God's peace.

God's peace. God's peace. Because of who God is. Because he is Our refuge. Because he is Our strength And our help.

Therefore We do not need To fear. Now it would It would be Wonderful If the Psalm Finished there In many ways But the Psalmist Wants to Deepen Our trust And understanding Of this point And using Poetical Language And hyperbole The Psalmist Goes on Further Though the Earth Gives way Though the Mountains Be moved Into the Heart of the Sea Though its Waters May foam And though The mountains Tremble At its Swelling This Language Demonstrating Though The very Ground Upon which We stand Is shaken The Waters Swell Everything Around you In Chaos Yes Yet You have God's Peace You do Not need To fear For God Is with You Even

In the Midst of Chaos In this Life We do Not need To fear We know At the Moment The world Is facing Chaos And crisis This Global Pandemic Has touched Many Lives Heart Breaking Stories And the Consequences For the Future We are Yet fully Aware We don't Know what Will happen Next And yet We do Not need To fear For God Is our Protector Our Strength And our Help God I'm Reminded Of a Story Of when John Wesley Was Preaching In Hyde Park Corner In London And in 1750 March The 8th There was An earthquake Which actually Could be Felt In London It was The second Of three Occurrences That happened Within a Few Months Quite an Unusual Event And as John was Speaking John Wesley The earth Shook And he Immediately Began to Quote Psalm 46 And many Present Were fearful And Calling Upon God For help And his Brother Actually Charles Wesley Recalled The next Day Many Turned Up At the Chapel To hear The word Of God Fearful For their Lives You see Troubles Will come Upon us In this Life The present Troubles We're Facing Are just One of Many Troubles That this World Has gone Through And there Will be Others But We can Know The peace Of God We do Not need To fear For we Have the Reassurance And knowledge Of God's

[18 : 29] Presence In our Hearts And our Lives As Christians Now this Is easy To say This is Easy words To share Much Harder To live Out I'm a Father Father Of six Children And I Do worry About

my Children And yet That is Wrong I need To entrust My children Into God's Hands And each One of Us At points Of fear Of concern We need To put All of Our life Circumstances Into the Loving Hands Of God And Recognize That we Do not Need to Fear For he Is with Us He Is guiding Us He Is leading

Us We must Rest in That peace No matter What circumstances Are around Us Rest in The peace And the Knowledge Of God Enjoy The peace Of God That he Provides I've met A few People In my Life And some You look Into their Faces And you Can see The peace Of God Their Understanding Of God In their Life Their joy In that God is Enough For them And it Is a Delight To be In the Presence Of someone Like that Often An older Saint Who's At the Latter Days Of their Life And yet So strong In faith So much Peace With God Having Journied Many Years Remained Faithful To the Knowledge Of God May each One of Us Have that Peace Of God Daily In our Lives So We've Considered God's Presence And we've Considered God's Peace And finally We'll go on To verses Four and Five Which reflect Upon God's Place The Wonderful Place Of God The Eternal City But before We do So I Just want To Ask you To take A look At yourself In your Heart We are Talking about This psalm To those Who trust In the Living God And I Do want To Challenge You God's Presence And God's Peace Is available Is there For those Who trust In the Lord Jesus Christ And Christian If you Have Already Given your Heart To Jesus If you Have Come Humbly Before The Throne Of Grace Before The Cross Of Jesus Repented And turned Away From your Own Life Your Sin And Asked Christ To be Your Saviour You Can be Assured That You Have That Presence That You Have That Peace With God But Of Course The Same Is True For Those Who Do Not Yet Know Christ God's Presence And God's Peace Is Only Available Through One Mediator The Lord Jesus Christ Many Of You Know That I Didn't Grow Up In The Church I Didn't Have A Christian Family I Came To Christ When I Was 19 Years Old I Came To Recognize My Own Sin And I Was Not Good Enough And That I Needed To Be Right With God I Needed To Be Saved By God And I Accepted Jesus As My Saviour As A Young Man And I Do Want To Challenge Anyone Listening To This Message If You Are Not Yet Truly Following The Lord Jesus Christ As Your Saviour This Presence Of God And This Peace Of God Will Not Be Available But Today You Do Have The Opportunity To Call On Christ To Even Pray Now To Ask Him Into Your Heart And To Follow Him And His Teaching And Please Tell Tell Other Christians That You Have Done This Tell The Church Here In Whitby That They May Know That You Are Now Following The Lord Jesus Christ

[23 : 31] As I Indeed Did When I Was 19 And Continue To Do So But Christian We Have The Peace Of God We Have The Presence Of God And Finally And Thirdly We Have The Wonderful Privilege To Know That Before Us Beyond This Mortal Death There Is God's Place The Eternal Dwelling Place Of God And Our Eternal Place Of Rest Reading Verses 4 And 5 There Is A River Whose Streams Make Glad The City Of God The Holy Habitation Of The Most High God Is In The Midst Of Her And She Shall Not Be Moved God Will Help Her When Her Morning Dawns A Wonderful Picture Of A City There Is A River Which Streams Make Glad The City

Of God The Psalmist Here Parallels The Previous Verses Of The Chaos Of The World The Crumbling Of The Mountains The Trembling Of The Seas And Now A Picture Of A City A Beautiful City An Eternal City The City Of God Yes The Psalmist Is Reflecting Upon Jerusalem But Not Just The Physical Jerusalem But The Eternal Jerusalem The Eternal Presence Of The Divine God The Wonderful Picture Of The Streams The Streams Flowing From The Throne Of Grace From God At The Very Center Of This Holy City And The City Being Constantly Watered By The Streams That Flow Gently From The Throne Of Grace The Very Center Of This City Is God Eternity And The New Heaven And The New Earth Are Fully Centred Upon God The Father Son And Holy Spirit And He Is The Very Center Of The Essence Of The Eternal Place The Place Where We As Christians Will Be Taken Home To I Love In Hebrews Chapter 12 Verses 22 To 24 It Reads But You Have Come To Mount Zion To The City Of The Living God The Heavenly Jerusalem And To Innumerable Angels In Festal Gathering And To The Assembly Of The First Born Who Are Enrolled In Heaven And To God The Judge Of All And To The Spirits Of The Righteous Made Perfect And To Jesus The Mediator Of A New Covenant And To The Sprinkled Blood That Speaks A Better Word Than The Blood Of Abel Through Christ's Shed Blood We Have Access To To To To To To To The Father We're Forgiven We are justified sanctified And Able To Be In The Presence Of A Holy God A Righteous God In The Heavenly Place This Is The Destination Of Our Life's Journey And wonderfully In Revelation We can Read more In Imagery

And Poetry Form But More Of This Eternal Dwelling Place In Revelation Chapter 21 The Vision Given To John In Verse 1 To 3 Then I Saw A New Heaven And A New Earth For The First Heaven And The First Earth Had Passed Away

And The Sea Was No More And I Saw The Holy City New Jerusalem Coming Down Out Of Heaven From God Prepared As A Bride Adorned For Her Husband And I Heard A Loud Voice From The Throne Saying Behold The Dwelling Place Of God Is With Man He Will Dwell With Them And They Will Be His People And God Himself Will Be With Them As Their God And I Must Read Verse 4 He Will Wipe Away Every Tear From Their Eyes And Death Shall Be No More Neither Shall There Be Mourning Nor Crying Nor Pain Anymore For The Former Things Have Passed Away Sometimes Dear Christian Scripture

[28 : 32] Speaks For Itself What Wonderful Words Of Reassurance To Us In These Days A Place Where We Can Reside In The Very Presence Of The Holy God Where There Will Be No Tears No Pain No Crying No Suffering A Place Of Peace In The Very Presence Of God For We Will Reside In The Place Of God The New Heaven And The New Earth Not Because Of Anything We Have Done But Purely By The Grace Of God Through The Eternal Sacrifice Of The Lord Jesus Christ On Calvary This Is A Wonderful Truth Christian This Is A Glorious Truth

That God Is Leading You Home You May Be Listening To This Message In A Very Nice Home You May Have A Nice Dwelling Place In Which You Are Living In But It Is Nothing Compared To The Home That God Has Prepared For You For Your Eternal Dwelling God Has Gone Ahead Of You He Has Called You To Be His Own And You Are His And He Will Call Us All Those That Are Christ's Back To The Heavenly Place To The Place Of Peace In His Presence Now That Actually Gives Us A Responsibility As Christians We Have To Now In These Days Be A Genuine Witness To The World Salt And Light For

We Are Those Who Live With This Eternal Hope We Are Those Who Have That Peace And Presence Of God In Our Hearts And God Has Entrusted Into Our Hearts And Our Minds To Be Ambassadors Of The Gospel To Proclaim The Truth Before Men That There Is The Availability Of Hope Through Christ That There Is The Availability Of For Repentance Through The Sacrifice Of Christ For We Do Not Know Those That God Has Called But We Must Proclaim The Gospel In These Days While We Have Breath And Also God Calls Us To Live A Life Honoring And Pleasing To Him For This Time On This Earth Is Just A Passing Shadow Just A Momentary Time Before God Will Call Us To Be In His Holy Presence We Must Redeem The Time Use Our Time Well Spend Time In The Word Of God Spend Time In The Presence Of God Through Prayer Spending Time Calling Out Upon God For Mercy Upon This Land And Praying For Those That We Love That We Know Who Do Not Yet Know Christ As Many Of You Know Antonia And I Reach Out To Those From Other Cultures And Share The Gospel And The Greatest Joy We Have Is When We Hear Of Someone Who's Come To Faith In Christ Last Week I Was Speaking To A Friend Of Mine Who Came To Christ Out Of Islam And

I Ran Him Up Just To Check That He's Still Journeying On In Faith And He Said It's Not Easy But Yes He Still Is Following Christ As His Saviour He Has Found Peace In Christ He Knows The Presence Of God And Ultimately Myself And Him Will Reside In The New Heaven And The New Earth It Is So Encouraging When We Hear Of Others Coming To Know Jesus And We Need To Be Fervent In Our Prayers In Reaching Out And Also Having The Faith To Tell Others Of The Hope That We Have Within Us Yes With Gentleness And Respect As 1 Peter 3 15 Teaches Us But Also To Have That Love And As Jesus Taught Even Love For Enemies Reaching

[33 : 35] Out As Christ Reached Out To Us So As We Conclude We Are Reminded In This Wonderful Psalm That We Have God's Presence He Is Our Refuge We Have God's Peace We Do Not Need To Fear And Ultimately We Will Reside In God's Place The Eternal Dwelling Place Of God The New Heaven And The New Earth And In These Days Be Reassured Whatever Circumstances You May Face God Is With You God Is With You Always From The Rising Of The Sun To The Setting Of The Sun And Beyond Through The Night He Is Present With You He Is Caring For You And He Has Your Best Interests At Heart Dear Christian The

Psalms Are So Wonderful At Encouraging Ourselves In These Days Such Beautiful Poetry And As Luther Wrote A Mighty Fortress Is Our God We Have A Fortress We Just Must Rest In His Presence And Delight In His Love For Us And Serve Him Our Living God Let Us Pray Father God We Want To Thank You And Praise You That You Are A Mighty And Awesome God We Thank You Lord That You Are Indeed Our Refuge Our Strength You Are Present Lord In Our Life And We

Have Peace With You We Need Not Fear And Lord Ultimately We Can Be Reassured That You Are Calling Us Home To Be With You In A New Heaven And A New Earth What A Wonderful Time That Will Be Lord And Until That Day May Lord We Serve You With Integrity May We Give All Our Lives Over To You And May Lord You Call Many Others To A Knowledge Of Yourself May May May May May Use guide us and lead us each and every day we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior the only Savior amen well God bless love from Antonia and myself and our children and be assured we continue daily serving God reaching out to those from other cultures and do continue to pray for our ministry in these days Lord and blessings to you look forward to the day when we can come up and enjoy the wonderful fresh Whitby air the sound of the seagulls and more importantly seeing you brothers and sisters in Christ for you are our family amen