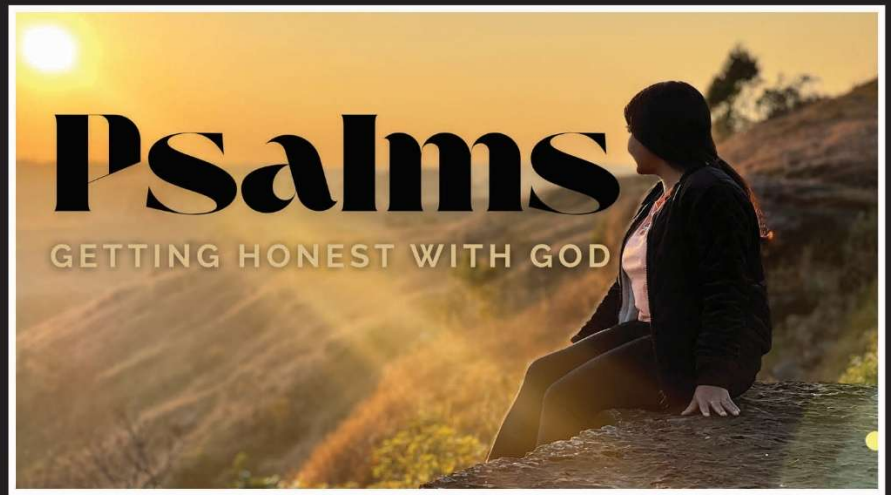




# Midweek Study

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## When Your World is Falling Apart

Psalm 46:1-11

Martin Luther<sup>1</sup>, the great Reformer of the 16th century, was no stranger to danger, trials, and moments of deep discouragement. As a leader of the Protestant Reformation, his boldness in confronting the abuses of the Church and his unwavering defense of biblical truth often put his life at risk. Luther's courage, however, was not born out of a lack of fear but out of an unshakable trust in God's sovereignty and promises. Even someone as steadfast as Luther experienced moments of doubt and despair, much like the psalmist who cried, **"Why are you cast down, O my soul?"** (Psalm 42:11).

In these moments of trial, Luther often turned to Psalm 46 for strength and encouragement. It reminded them that no matter how fierce the opposition or how dark the times, God remained their unshakable fortress.

One of Luther's closest friends and allies during the Reformation was **Philip Melancthon**, a brilliant scholar and theologian. Together, they faced tremendous challenges, including threats from the Roman Catholic Church, political instability, and even the possibility of execution. During particularly stressful times, when fear and anxiety threatened to overwhelm them, Luther would turn to Melancthon and say, **"Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm."**



Luther didn't just recite the psalm; he and his companions often sang it in the form of his own paraphrase, which later became the famous hymn **"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"**:

*A sure stronghold our God is He,  
A timely shield and weapon;  
Our help he'll be, and set us free  
From every ill can happen.*

*And were the world with devils filled,  
All eager to devour us,  
Our souls to fear shall little yield,  
They cannot overpower us.*

The background for Psalm 46 is unknown, but it was probably written after a military victory over a foreign power that attempted a siege against Jerusalem. It may have been written after the destruction of the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir (2 Chr. 20:1–30). Or perhaps it was recorded after the destruction of King Sennacherib and the Assyrian army during the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 18–19).<sup>2</sup>

**When our world seems to be falling apart, we can be secure, sustained and strengthened. God wants to be our Refuge (v.1-3) our River (v.4-7) and our Ruler (v.8-11):**

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57*, vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 344.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Lawson, *Psalms 1–75*, ed. Max Anders, vol. 11, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2004), 242–243.

## I. We are **Secure** because God is our Refuge (*Psalm 46:1-3*)

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

<sup>3</sup> Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah

- “God is a very present help in trouble” doesn't just mean He's nearby; the Hebrew implies “He lets Himself be found” when life is at its worst. His presence is not distant but accessible, even in the most dire circumstances.

## II. We are **Sustained** because God is our River (*Psalm 46:4-7*)

<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.

<sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

<sup>6</sup> The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

- He “helps her just at the break of dawn” (verse 5). The **fourth watch of the night** (just before dawn) represents God's intervention when human strength is exhausted, emphasizing His sustaining grace.

## III. We are **Strengthened** because God is our Ruler (*Psalm 46:8-11*)

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the Lord, Who has made desolations in the earth.

<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.

<sup>10</sup> Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

<sup>11</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

- The word “**be still**” (*raphah*) in verse 10 literally means “to let go” or “to relax.” It's a call to **stop striving** and acknowledge God's sovereignty.
- The name “**Lord of hosts**” (*Yahweh Sabaoth*) in verses 7 and 11 refers to God as the commander of heavenly armies, emphasizing His power to conquer and bring peace.

**A mighty fortress is our God,**

**A bulwark never failing;**

**Our helper He amid the flood**

**Of mortal ills prevailing.**

**For still our ancient foe**

**Doth seek to work us woe;**

**His craft and power are great,**

**And armed with cruel hate,**

**On earth is not his equal.**

**Did we in our own strength confide,**

**Our striving would be losing;**

**Were not the right Man on our side,**

*The Man of God's own choosing.*

*Dost ask who that may be?*

*Christ Jesus, it is He—*

*Lord Sabaoth His name,*

*From age to age the same,*

*And He must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled,*

*Should threaten to undo us,*

*We will not fear, for God hath willed*

*His truth to triumph through us.*

*The prince of darkness grim,*

*We tremble not for him;*

*His rage we can endure,*

*For lo, his doom is sure:*

*One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly powers—*

*No thanks to them—abideth;*

*The Spirit and the gifts are ours*

*Through Him who with us sideth.*

*Let goods and kindred go,*

*This mortal life also;*

*The body they may kill:*

*God's truth abideth still,*

*His kingdom is forever!*