

46 God *is* our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
²Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
³*Though* its waters roar *and* be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with its swelling. *Selah*
⁴*There is* a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,
The holy *place* of the tabernacle of the Most High.
⁵God *is* in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.
⁶The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved;
He uttered His voice, the earth melted.
⁷The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. *Selah*
⁸Come, behold the works of the LORD,
Who has made desolations in the earth.
⁹He 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.
¹⁰Be still, and know that I *am* God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!
¹¹The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. *Selah*

Introduction

Psalm 46 is the Psalm that was probably the inspiration for the famous hymn written by Martin Luther.

He wrote the hymn called **“A mighty fortress is our God”**.

This song was introduced to O.I.C. by Brad Houdyshell when he preached one of his sermons on the “Reformation” a few years ago.

I am sure that you have sung this hymn many times since then?!!!

The historical background to this Psalm is probably God’s deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian army in the time of King Hezekiah.

If you want to research the background to this Psalm you will need to read a number of old Testament passages. These are:

2 Kings Chapter 18-19, 2 Chronicles Chapter 32, and finally Isaiah Chapter 36-37.

King Hezekiah was a Poet and may also have written, not only this Psalm but also Psalm 47 and Psalm 48.

It is a Psalm that celebrates God’s victory over the enemy of God’s people.

The personal pronouns in this Psalm, that is the words **our, we, and us**, direct our thinking to use this Psalm for **communal encouragement and worship.**

The emphasis in this Psalm is on the **presence of the Lord with His people.**

We notice this is v.**1, 5, 7, 11.**

We also notice the difference it makes in the lives of God's people when we **trust Him** in the challenges and difficulties of life.

The Psalm focuses on God and the difference He makes to His trusting people.

I will divide the Psalm into three sections to make it easier for us to understand.

1. God is our tower of strength – v. 1-3.

In the original Hebrew translation of this Psalm, the English word "**refuge**" means a "**shelter of refuge**" However the same word in v.7 and 11 have a slightly different meaning.

The meaning here is a "**stronghold**" or a "**high tower, like a fortress.**"

Both of these Hebrew words declare that God is a place of dependable refuge for His people when everything around them seems to be falling apart.

The Psalmist highlights two things that seem to be 100% stable.

These are mountains and the earth in v.2.

Most people agree that mountains are very safe places and the earth is usually stable.

However when you live in Japan, you know that "earthquakes" actually happen. This is why the New Living Translation says "do not fear when the earthquakes come". (v. 2)

However when the writer talks about mountains being carried into the sea, that is a much more serious problem.

As you know Japan is a country that is used to natural disasters.

Over the last 26 years the two biggest disasters have been the Hanshin Earthquake and the Tohoku earthquake.

The Tohoku earthquake triggered a Tsunami and a nuclear disaster.

In the Hanshin earthquake, 6,000 people were killed, 45,000 were made homeless, and the cost to the Japanese people was \$200 billion dollars.

This is about 22, 096, 800, 000, 00 Japanese Yen.

The Tohoku earthquake killed more people. (About 16,000)

The debt to the Japanese economy was much higher to try and deal with the situation.

On top of the natural disasters, Japan has 1,000 mud slides each year, and Typhoons that often bring damage to property and sometimes loss of life.

In this Psalm God doesn't promise Japanese Christians or Christians living in Japan that they will avoid future disasters, but He does promise that He will provide a place of refuge when we face very difficult situations in life.

These difficult situations might come in the form of a financial crisis, a physical health crisis, or even a mental or emotional crisis.

It doesn't matter where the crises comes from but it does matter how we react to that crisis.

God tells us in the Psalm to come to **Him for a refuge.**

God promises to be the place of safety in all of the challenging situations of life.

Wikipedia tells us that Osaka is the safest place to live in Japan.

However on the 18th June 2018, our home on the mountain of Ikoma shook violently.

I knew it might be a serious earthquake, so I held Wendy's hand and said, "Let us pray".

We weren't saved from the earthquake, but God gave us a peace in the earthquake. God brings us through difficult situations so that He can strengthen us, and we can go back to life with all of its dangers and uncertainties.

Psalm 29 v. 11 says

"The Lord will give strength to His people, the Lord will bless His people with peace."

The danger when we are in a crisis is to go to the wrong person for help.

In times of crisis the Jewish leaders were tempted to go to Egypt for help.

Quote Isaiah chapter 30 : v. 1-2. (New Living Translation)

"What sorrow awaits my rebellious children,"
says the LORD.

"You make plans that are contrary to mine.

You make alliances not directed by my Spirit,
thus piling up your sins.

² For without consulting me,
you have gone down to Egypt for help.

You have put your trust in Pharaoh's protection.

You have tried to hide in his shade.

When we go to God Himself and nobody else, He promises to help us.

The God of the Bible has the power and authority to do anything.

His wisdom always ensures that it is the right thing for us, even if we can't understand it at the time.

Please note that the Psalm says that God is a "**present help**" in our times of trouble.

We don't have to wait, we can go to God immediately that the crisis comes.

Personal Testimony

A few weeks ago I had a video call from my second son James. He was very upset because his wedding was cancelled, due to family members not being able to travel from France to the wedding. He was marrying a lady from France.

He had spent two years preparing and saving and arranging many things.

It was very disappointing. However I said to James, let us pray to God and see what He can do in the situation.

It is a long story, but the wedding went ahead. There were many guests from the U.K., but only two from France, the bride's Mother and Father.

God didn't answer our prayers in the way that we had hoped, but He did answer and it was a wonderful wedding.

The wedding went ahead and God was glorified. The reason is that we prayed to the God of the Bible for help.

So the first point that the Psalmist makes is that God is our tower of strength, and we must go directly to Him for His help in our time of need.

2. God is our river of joy – v. 4-7.

The picture of Psalm 46 now moves to the city of Jerusalem, where the people of God were shut inside because the Assyrian army camped around them.

Water was very precious in Israel, but Jerusalem was one of the few cities in Israel that was not built on a river.

However Hezekiah was a wise man who had built an underground water system that connected the spring of Gihon in the Kidron valley with the Pool of Siloam which was within the city walls. Because of this, water was available within the city.

If you went to Israel with OIC on the 28th April 2018, you would have had an opportunity to walk through Hezekiah's tunnel and witness first hand this wonderful provision for God's people at this time in history.

Although they were being attacked by the Assyrian army, they could still get a supply of refreshing water, through Hezekiah's tunnel, where the water flowed into Jerusalem.

The Psalmist knew that God not only provided a physical river to refresh His people in Jerusalem at that time in history, but God also provides us today with a spiritual river of refreshment.

Quote Psalm 36: v. 8 . (New Living Translation)

You feed them from the abundance of your own house, letting them drink from your river of delights.

For us today, Jesus speaks about "living water"

Quote John 7: v. 37-39. (New King James version)

³⁷ On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Historically the people of God did seek refuge in Him. They did trust in Him.

The result was that God saved Jerusalem from destruction.

The Angel of the Lord killed **185,000 Assyrian soldiers** and sent Sennacherib home.

Quote from Isaiah 37 : v. 36-37. (N.K.J.)

³⁶ Then the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when *people* arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead. ³⁷ So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned *home*, and remained at Nineveh.

It is amazing what God can do for His people when they trust in Him.

The ultimate trust for us today, is to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Salvation of our souls. The cost for our eternal souls was also death. It wasn't the death of 185,000 people, it was the **death of God's Son Jesus Christ**.

Trusting in Jesus Christ brings living water to our souls.

If you know Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, your soul can be refreshed every day, to face the challenges of life.

It is good to start the day, every day, meeting with Jesus, and asking the Holy Spirit to refresh your soul for the day ahead.

It is like having a cold shower on a hot day, or being in an air conditioned room in the Summer in Japan.

The difference is noticeable, and God's Holy Spirit refreshing our souls each day, is something that we notice for ourselves, and it is something that other people notice about us.

If you are walking with Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is refreshing your soul every day, then people will notice that you are different from them.

We don't look to the world for help, or look to other Religions, we look to the God of the Bible, and the difference is noticeable to all.

May God help us always to turn to Him in times of trouble, that we might experience refreshing from His Holy Spirit.

Yes God is our **Tower of Strength**, and God **is our river of Joy**, but God is also , **"Our God"**

3. **God is our God, He will be glorified. – v. 8-11.**

The third scene in this Psalm is on the fields surrounding Jerusalem.

This was where the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers lay dead.

Their weapons and equipment were scattered all around them.

There had been no physical battle, but the evidence was all round that God had done something amazing to encourage the faith of His people.

v. 8 says "Come behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth....."

The God of the Bible defeated and disarmed His enemies. It was all His work.

Man could not claim any credit for the defeat of the Assyrian army.

The victory was an answer to prayer.

Let us go back into history and see what Hezekiah prayed.

Quote 2 Kings 19: v. 19 -20.(N.K.J.)

¹⁹ Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You *are* the LORD God, You alone." ²⁰ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard.'

Yes God heard and answered the prayers of Hezekiah and He will hear and answer our prayers that bring glory to Him, and not to us.

In v. 10 in the N.K.J. Bible it says **"Be still and know that I am God..."**

The words **"Be still"** in Hebrew literally mean, **"take your hands off the situation and relax"**

Martin Luther translates this phrase like this:

"Be thou silent unto God and let Him mould thee"

We all like to be hands on people, who prefer to manage our own lives.

However as Christians, we should be God's servants.

We must let God manage the situation, and just obey His commands.

When we take our hands off difficult situations, and wait for God to work, we then see the wonderful things that only God can do.

In Isaiah it teaches us that God acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.

Quote Isaiah Chapter 64: v. 4. In N.K.J.

For since the beginning of the world
Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear,
Nor has the eye seen any God besides You,
Who acts for the one who waits for Him.

Waiting seems a very unproductive thing to do, but during our waiting time, God is working in our lives to prepare us for the next step that He wants us to take. The Bible teaches us that God allows us to get into “difficult places” so that our faith will grow and He will be glorified.

Conclusion & Application

The Psalm teaches us that in spite of the all the difficult things that we experience and the disasters that we fear or even have experienced, our security is in God alone. **God Himself is our refuge** where we can find shelter and safety.

God is our strength, we must trust Him to work on our behalf. We can't do it but He can do it, because He has the power to do anything.

God is our present help in trouble, He is always available and ready to help when we ask Him.

The River of God is our security. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life and spiritual refreshment, we must seek his help every day. He is the Oasis in the desert of life.

The purposes of God give us peace to be still . We wait for Him to answer our prayers, while we grow strong in getting to know Him more.

It is through our FAITH in God and in submission of our lives to Him, that we will find peace and security.

Q. So how does this apply to everybody at O.I.C. this morning?

1. **Personal situations**. - All of you will have different challenges in your lives at the moment.

It doesn't matter what those problems might be, but it does matter who you go to with those problems and challenges.

You must go directly to God in prayer, you must seek His face and seek His purposes in your trial. By fully surrendering everything to Him and trusting in Him, you will find peace and help.

2. **Corporate situation** - You are all praying for God to send you a new Pastor.

That is not wrong. However it may take time. It doesn't matter how long you wait, as long as you wait long enough for **God's choice**.

God took over 20 years to prepare me to be the Pastor of OIC for 5 years.

For me it was worth the wait.

It is my hope that as you wait for God and pray earnestly for His choice of a new Pastor, that He will grant you your request.

God may surprise you with His answer?!!!!

May God bless each one of you, as you **seek Him, as you pray, and as you wait.**

Amen.