

# Great Faith Over Great Fear - Psalm 46

by Michael Flowers

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*Michael Flowers emphasizes the importance of faith over fear through the lens of Psalm 46, encouraging believers to trust in God's refuge and strength amidst life's challenges.*

**Duration:** 31:06

**Scripture:** Psalm 3:6, Psalm 22:1, Psalm 35:1, Psalm 46:1, Psalm 46:8-9, Matthew 6:10

**Topics:** "Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power and victory found in the word of God. They highlight the importance of understanding the prophetic message of Jesus and the impact of his sacrifice on the cross. The speaker encourages believers to embrace spiritual violence and actively engage in the battle against anxiety and fear. They also reference Psalm 46, which Luther found comfort in during difficult times, and emphasize God's presence as a refuge and strength in times of trouble.

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## Transcript

Let's pray together before I step back. I'm going to be surrounded by you. This feels really good.

I feel safe now. Covered. This is a refuge.

Thank you, Lord, for the refuge of the city of God, because our God is our refuge and strength. And because of that, we cover one another, we protect one another, we bless one another. You promised to edify your church, to build up your church, to build your church.

And the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Thank you, Lord. We're standing here some 2,000 years after those words.

Your faithfulness endures, and your mercy endures forever. Thank you, Lord, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen, amen. If you have your Bibles, let's turn to Psalm 46. Not, you can read along here, it's a little different translation.

It looks as though it's been the end of the world here. Every time it rains, we get this beautiful manna, you know, that falls down. And we're just going to leave it there.

But there we are. We've got some manna here on the carpeting. And we've been vacuuming it up this morning.

It's just good stuff falling down out of heaven, right? Well, this is number six in our series on the Psalter, the prayer book of the Bible. This is a psalm, Psalm 46. It's called in the categories of psalms, a song of Zion.

And it's a communal psalm. It's a communal prayer. The city of God is Zion, Jerusalem.

Typologically now in Christ, in the scriptures you'll see throughout the New Testament, that Zion is referred to as the heavenly Jerusalem. We read about it this morning, coming down out of heaven. Where heaven and earth shall one day meet.

Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. That's the prayer of Jesus. We pray it all the time.

And it's happening, I believe, incrementally. It's incrementally coming down until it touches each other. Amen.

And so it's the heavenly Jerusalem above coming down. Now, as it were, at the end of the age, this psalm is talking about perhaps the end of the age. To unite with a renewed earth.

You see, the church is God's dwelling place now. The church is the temple of God. The temple was right fixed in Zion.

And it's the dwelling place of God. The temple of his Holy Spirit. And so that's the importance of all of the first person plurals in this psalm.

We, us, our. And so read this psalm as your own declaration. Your own declaration that our God reigns.

Our God reigns over all circumstances in our lives. Our God reigns over all circumstances in your life. And is the sovereign lord of all history, the alpha of history and the omega of history.

The beginning of history and the end of history. Verse one inspired. Anybody know what verse one inspired? A mighty fortress is our God.

Luther's so clung to this song. You know, Luther had a hard time. And he was in hiding much of his life.

And when he would get under the pile, as it were, Luther would just say this code word, the forty six. You know, oh, it's happening in the end. It's not Murphy's Law for him.

It's the forty six. There it is. The psalm has three sections.

It's called three strokes, if you're thinking poetry. Last week, we talked about what voice was speaking through Psalm 35 and we concluded that it was the voice of Christ as in Psalm 22. It's the voice of Christ praying through today.

This is the voice of the church, the holy city, the same voice who prays our God is our refuge. It's a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way, though the mountains are moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam.

Though the mountains tremble and its swelling, this is describing perhaps apocalyptic doom. This psalm is perhaps the end of the age. Earth gives way, mountains tremble and all is swallowed up into the heart.

I like that into the heart of the sea. That Hebrew word there for sea is Yam. And that word is an ancient Semitic word meaning sea.

It's the name of the Canaanite god of rivers and sea. Yam was also the Canaanite deity of the primordial chaos. He represented the power of tempestuous sea, untamed and raging.

And this is how the ancient Hebrews viewed the sea. It was a symbol, it was a metaphor of chaos. And God is our refuge and strength.

A very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear. Fear is a powerful word, isn't it? Fear is a powerful force.

We could read this today as just another verse of poetry, or we could connect with this and wonder, how does fear affect my life? How does it rule in my life? How does it influence my life? You see, God is our refuge and strength and we are his refugees, we are his refugees and we pray and sing. We will not fear in the midst of our fear. We will not fear in the midst of our fear.

I want to bring this into Paul's understanding of fear in the New Testament. First, Timothy one, seven, and he is ascribing fear not as a mere emotion, but as an evil spirit, something like Yom to the ancient Hebrews. The sea was metaphorical of something dark and chaotic.

And we will not respond to the emphasis of what Yom brings upon us, that chaos wants to overtake us, wants to rule over us. It's a principality in power, as it were. Paul is saying God has not given us a spirit of fear.

So he goes right through the emotional cause, the circumstances of our lives, the anxiety that we may have and we may ascribe to chemicals in our brains or circumstances in our lives that cause this great sense of anxiety. Paul says behind all of that is something very, very dark and it can be likened to Yom right into the heart of the sea. We will not fear.

He's not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and a sound mind. When we're fearful, when we're anxious, we don't have that. We don't have that soundness of mind.

Right. It's irrational in a sense. Fear is irrational sometimes.

And it's so powerful, it can overtake us. Anxiety comes in so many ways. I just did a quick scan of anxiety because I've experienced anxiety in my life.

Throughout my life, I've experienced anxiety, depression. It comes in so many specialized forms. In America alone, recent statistics report.

That there's six point eight million people who suffer with general anxiety disorder. There's six million who suffer with panic disorder. There's 15 million who suffer with social anxiety disorders.

There's 19 million who suffer specific phobias. There's two point two million who suffer with obsessive compulsive disorders. And then there's seven point seven million who suffer with post-traumatic stress disorder.

It says, though, in that article that anxiety disorders affect one in eight children as well. This is an enemy. You see, the spiritual forces behind our fears are addressed by Jesus, who prescribes He says, don't be anxious about your life.

This is the Sermon on the Mount, and so often we just view this as hippie Jesus in his sandals saying, hey, don't worry about anything, man, just it's all going to work out. Right. It's not quite hippie Jesus.

It's the one who is speaking prophetically about what would happen on the cross, spoiling principalities and powers, breaking the power of the very spirit of fear, giving you a spirit of power, love and a sound mind that's in our inheritance. And that is within our reach as we incrementally. Take the kingdom with violence, the kingdom of God suffers violence, this is violence, anxiety and fear, the kingdom of God suffers violence.

And the violent ones take it by force, this is spiritual violence that we're talking about now, we've got to get in the game of spiritual violence because we don't have a choice. It comes at us, see the statistics there. And God is saying, I am your refuge and strength, a very present help, the words of Jesus, I will be with you always, Emmanuel, God with us.

Do not be anxious about your life. And here's some of the things that cause anxiety. Jesus said, what shall we what shall you eat or what shall you drink? Red or white, right? French, Napa, whatever.

Yeah. Causes great anxiety in our culture. I used to live in Napa, so I was a part of that whole thing.

Oh, my God, what winery we're going to go to today, you know. Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body. Wow.

Well, we could just go home and chew on that one. We are so anxious about our bodies, right, and the Lord, we said many moons ago, many sermons ago, the Lord is for the body. In fact, he loves it so much after it dematerializes, he's going to go arise, come forth.

I love your body so much that we're all going to be raised to newness of life in Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life. But it's interesting that Jesus throws that in about eating and drinking and about your body. Yeah, he knows what you'll put on your clothes.

Your heavenly father knows that you need them. And here's the here's the simple remedy that Jesus is giving, and there's I mean, this is so much deeper, but. Seek first the kingdom, sit down and think about what am I prioritizing in my thoughts? You have to order your thoughts, too.

You can't seek first the kingdom if your thoughts are still given over to anxiety of many kinds. This is very difficult to seek first the kingdom. And he's saying, put that first.

And his righteousness and all these things will be yours, they're going to be added to you. And so that's that's a trust thing, isn't it? I have to do that by faith. I have to do that by faith.

Now, how do we hear that without it causing more anxiety? Now, I'm anxious that I'm anxious, I'm not supposed to be anxious and darn it, I'm anxious about that now. This preaching is not doing me any good, it's just all getting me up in a knot. We hear all this challenging stuff from Jesus and now I'm worried that I can't pull it off.

Oh, my gosh. The spirit of fear talking to us right there. It's funny because this condition of great fear.

He refers to, oh, you have little faith, great fear, little faith. Don't be anxious about anything, great anxiety, little faith, oh, you have little faith. And this is coming from the compassionate Lord who is not meant to give a message of faith that some kind of disordered faith message.

This is just right down meat and potatoes raw. Can you trust me? Can you just trust me so that anxiety dissipates in your life? I'm not trying to simplify this too much, so don't hear me that way. How did David, if you look through the rest of the Psalms now, we'll just move on because how did David deal with this? How did he overcome crippling anxiety? Psalm 34.

I wrote a song about this a long time ago and he began Psalm 34 saying, I will bless the Lord at all times. At all times. When the mountains are falling into the sea and all of that, I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

This is a discipline, poet, prophet, king type of Christ. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast, my soul shall make her boast in the Lord and the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.

When we hear this, oh, magnify the Lord with me. Can anybody say it with me? And let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord and he heard me and he delivered me from all my fear.

Thank you, God. He knows how to deal with fear. And the first thing is not empowering the anxiety and the fear, but empowering the greatness and vastness of God.

That's how it starts. I'm going to bless the Lord at all time. I will bless the Lord.

Our will is involved in this endeavor. I can remember when I came under panic attacks and I've shared this with you before and it's going to throw it in really fast and Psalm three, six, if you if you're looking at another song, if you're looking at your Psalter, Psalm three, verse six. It was in nineteen seventy nine and I was asked to be the campus worship leader on our campus and we had a meeting called Vespers and we celebrated Holy Communion and it was just amazing.

And then the campus worship leader asked me the following year, would you lead this? And I said, sure. And because I'd been a professional musician, I was so overly confident. Right, that, yeah, no problem.

And so the first time I got up to lead the worship and I I'm not a fearful person, I'm not insecure about playing when I'm playing, when I'm practicing, people can't get me to play now because I'm not I don't have any calluses, but that's my excuse. Amen. But I stood up to sing and I opened my mouth and it was a panic attack came right upon me.

And so that week, you know, I just I sang like that the whole time that night. That's my that's my debut. Right.

This is the great new worship leader that I go through the campus like, you know, going to class and so, you know, so shamed, you know, and then, you know, it went on for three Sundays and then all of a sudden I was really desperate and I was reading this very, this very Bible that I bought on that campus in 1979. I mean, this thing is just like, look at this. It's crazy.

But I pulled it out today because it was on my desk and and I turned over to that Psalm three and I dated it. Vespers, 1979. Oh, man, you know what you want to know what it says, it says, I will not fear the ten

thousands drawn up against me on every side.

That's all I had to read. And all of a sudden it became large print Bible and it dissipated the fear. And I never had another panic attack when I stepped up to worship.

That is where the word becomes the word. The living word comes on the scriptures and it has power to deliver us. I sought the Lord and he heard me and he delivered me through all my fears.

That word, that one scripture became a sacramental connection between me and the Lord where deliverance happened to me. I believe it with all my heart. That's my story, I'm sticking to it so good.

I just encourage all of you to do this, to allow the word to become the sword of the spirit. Ephesians six. Take up the word of God and that word there is not logos, but it's Ramon.

Take up the rhema of God, the spoken word, you speak the scripture in faith to those principalities and powers like fear and anxiety that come to you. It's good. It's really powerful.

Now, I'm not a you know, I'm not a psychologist or a psychiatrist, so there are a lot of other reasons for anxiety and fear and all of these things that I'm not trying to oversimplify. Yeah, just get out the scripture. But it works for me because I didn't have the kind of stuff that I needed medication for.

Sometimes we may need medication and work through this, but supplement it with this as well. That's what I'm saying. Don't neglect this along with what's needed to get you free.

Amen. Amen. I can remember moving here and I battled for five long years with depression from two thousand four to two thousand nine.

So severe anxiety. I got out of the ministry, I was in ministry for 18 years as a vineyard pastor in in San Francisco Bay Area. We moved here, sold our house, bought a couple of houses down south, and we just said, you know, we're going to start over again.

I'm going to get out of ministry. I'm going to pray. I'm going to seek the word.

I'm going to see what he has for me in this new season. And I knew I was a mess emotionally, so it's good to remove yourself when you can see that enough, you know, where someone else doesn't have to do it, you know, it's like I volunteer, I volunteer, I'm out. So I did that and I didn't know how long it was going to be.

It was five long years. Of anxiety, depression, darkness, this didn't think I was going to come out, oh, magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord for five years and he heard me and he delivered me from all my fears, we're crazy enough to plant a church.

Amen, it's awesome. Something jumped off of me and I got my life back because I felt like giving up that I didn't give up. You know, you got to do it afraid, you got to do it depressed, you got to do it in whatever shape you're in, do it.

Don't wait till the depression leaves that you don't need to do it right. You got to do it afraid. You got to serve him afraid, you got to serve him in fear until it leaves, because, you know, the spirit of fear doesn't like that.

He's going to get tired because he's going to stop getting all the attention. Right. C.S. Lewis, right before screw tape letters, those little things that hop on your shoulder and start speaking to you.

Spiritual warfare. I mean, Lewis could see that. Well, there is a river.

In the midst of all this, the good news is there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. The holy habitation of the most high, the thing is, is that Jerusalem doesn't have a river. Zion doesn't have a river flowing through it, so we must be talking about something else.

You know what I think he's talking about? Out of your innermost being, Jesus said in John 7:38, out of your innermost heart is another translation shall flow rivers of living water. Whoever believes in me as a scripture has said out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now, Jesus said this about the spirit whom those who believe in were to receive, for as yet the spirit is not being given because Jesus had not been glorified.

I just love that this stream is at once the prime evil river of paradise, the holy font of baptism and the water of eternal life. The Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life instead of our lives overtaken by fear, falling into the heart of Yom, plunging us into the dark waters of chaos. Those who trust in God are made an indestructible new temple, a heavenly indwelling of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father, the spirit of adoption has come to deliver us from all of our anxieties.

And he's given us a down payment. He's given us a foretaste of the Holy Spirit. I'm telling you, brothers and sisters, we ain't tasted nothing yet.

Oh, yes, 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. She will not be moved.

She's not going to be shaken. I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. That means you not the institution.

That means I will build my people. Build edified support, raise up the joy of the Lord is our strength. Amen.

The Lord of Hosts, you know who that is, you know how to translate that. The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of.

Angel armies. The God of angel armies, the Lord of Hosts, all the company of heaven. To myriad and thousands upon thousands of angels in Hebrews 12:21, it speaks of we've come to this heavenly Zion.

That's where we're at right now, we're before the throne of God, getting ready to say worthy is the lamb who has taken away the sin of the world. Amen. Emmanuel, God with us, has redeemed us and reconciled us to abide in the very communion of heaven, both now and unto ages.

We have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. The communion of the Trinity and all the company of heaven come, behold, the works of the Lord, how he is, and this is what this is the translation I'm going to do some work on because I just caught it, but it got me on verse eight here in the ESV, so I'm going to have to go back and check this. Come, behold, the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth.

It doesn't seem to fit there with what comes after that. And verse eight in our Coverdale translation this morning, which just goes way back, the Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Come, verse nine, I'm sorry, and look upon the works of the Lord. What awesome things he has done on earth, not desolations. And so I'm going to take that to the bank, I'm going to have to check that.

So work with me, Bill, on that. OK, a scholar out there so you can help me with this. But this song is not talking about, you know, desolations on the earth other than the transformation of the old heavens and earth being transformed into the new heavens and the earth.

And he he's going to break every mode of violence, he's going to break the bow, he's going to shatter the spear, he's going to burn the chariots. God is not a God of violence. The cross is the nonviolent act of a holy savior offering himself for the sins of the whole world.

Who does the violence? We do the violence to him. It's not God the father doing the violence to him, we crucified him and he calls us to a different way. In a nutshell, it's be still.

In the midst of all this, be still. No translation to see striving the literal in the Hebrew is put your hands down like that. We can't cause the Lord to be exalted throughout the earth, we can ourselves exalt him, but put your hands down, be still in the midst of earthquakes and tsunamis and urban violence and discouragements and anxieties and feel that I am God.

Brothers and sisters, we've got to know something. We got to know him and we check in with our feelings without knowing who God is. And we that's the way it feels.

That's the way God is. Our feelings do not inform us about who God is. Be still and know.

It's good to feel, you know, I'm a feeling being, but I have to check my feelings at the cross and exchange that for truth because my feelings lie to me all the time. Sometimes they tell me the truth. So we walk in discernment with our feelings, be still, and when you get still, you'll start hearing the lies come.

That's why we don't like silence and solitude, because we can't get the monkey mind. Under control, right, that little thing up there is just running thought stream of consciousness. I just get my pen and paper out and just write those things down until there's nothing good to write, because some of those things are good, like, oh, I forgot to do this, forgot to do that in prayer.

You know, you get these amazing insights when you try to be still. Then put that phone away, man, because no, no, no, don't don't use your phone. Don't use the scriptures on your phone when you're trying to be still.

Right. Because it's just that's an addiction we'll talk about later. Right.

But it's just like, oh, gosh, I'm just so pulled to that phone. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.

I will be exalted in the earth. Put your hands down and realize I am and I will. I am God.

I mean, I am not God. And all the striving is us trying to be God. Be still and know that I am God.

And Michael, you are not God. We don't get that. We'll go crazy trying to be God.

That's big. That's a big job description. I just want to be God.

You'll give me the desires of my heart. I want to be God. Ridiculous.

I know. The Lord of Hosts is with us. That word in Hebrew, Emmanuel, with us.

Emmanuel, what does that sound like? Emmanuel, who needs to be with us? El, God in Hebrew, Emmanuel, El, who's he talking about? Jesus, I will always be with you. Emmanuel, God with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress. Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all.

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