

Harris Creek Church

Jonathan Pokluda

Series: SoundTracks

July 9, 2023

The God Who Fights For You

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its water roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields[d] with fire. He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Church good morning! Man it's great to be with you guys! Monica and I are at that age where people are having those landmark birthdays on both sides of us. So it seems like every weekend there's a 40th birthday or a 50th birthday. And people go big on those sometimes on those landmark birthdays. And so a couple of weeks ago my friend turned 40 and he wanted to go to a nice dinner. So it's a restaurant I had never heard of, never been to which is always a little bit

unsettling because you're like, "What do I wear?" We were a group of 25 so we didn't want to pull up and then be like, "Hey we can't let you in because the tall guys in flip flops." So I'm trying to do my reconnaissance—that's not why I'm wearing a blazer, some of you are like "Oh I see where this is going."—no it's just coincidence. And so we're going to this restaurant and we get there and it's nice. Like, it's one of the nicest restaurants I've ever been in. I'm almost uncomfortable nice. Mahogany everywhere. Beautiful scene, crystal, white tablecloths, all the things and it's a vibe. There's like a stage and they're playing this jazz music. And the dudes are in tuxedos singing with the old school microphone. And there's a female vocalist in a sequin gown. And the only thing you hear in there is kind of the music and the low hum of conversation. It's just a really swank place.

Well all of a sudden, everything changes. I mean, in one moment it was just like it became a different place. They pulled the people off the stage, DJ goes up there, they start playing this big song and this gang of huge men walk in, with T shirts and bald caps. And they're carrying this large silver thing and I'm like, "What is going on?" Well, it turns out that it was the Stanley Cup. And they were the Golden Knights who the day before or two days before had won the Stanley Cup. Here's a quick video. Stanley cup. (Video plays of nice restaurant with people celebrating to the song We Are The Champions by Queen)

So that was quite the vibe change, okay? And that song—that's Queen's We Are The Champions from 1977. And it has become an anthem for any time there's a National Championship, a Super Bowl, a World Series winner, a high school basketball tournament. Whatever it is, we love to play that "We are the champions..." And it's a familiar song to us. We hear it and we play it in

the wake of victory. And the reason I start there because the Psalm that we're going to look at today is a song that the church would sing in the wake of victory. In fact, it was written for a very specific victory. So as we dive into the Psalm, I'm going to have to give you the historical context as to why it was written. And we're going to kind of jump back and forth. There's more information today that I could dump on you than there's time for so try to follow along. Great opportunity to take notes if you have your Bible and a pen, you can write in the margin.

But as Christians, we're here, we're in church, Sunday morning, we believe there's a God. Most of you, the vast majority of you, are here because you're either seeking God or you say, "Oh I know Him through His son Jesus Christ. He died for my sins, raised from the dead. I have victory in Christ. I have victory—yeah I'm walking in victory in Christ." And I'm not so sure we're convinced. Because then we go and we worry, we're given to fear, we're overwhelmed by anxiety, the frustrations of this world set us off. And we say, "I'm walking in the victory of Christ until—" "And in fact this is my own story. I grew up in Church, going to church multiple times a week. And I just assumed that this is a bunch of people playing games. We come together, we sing songs, we pretend like there's a God. Because it wasn't my parents. I had amazing parents. My mom was up every single morning by the lamp in the Word. Okay? But I saw a lot of contradiction, a lot of hypocrisy, a lot of people going to church on Sunday singing, "Yes! We've overcome by the blood of the lamb! Yes Jesus! Yes victory in Christ!" And going and being overwhelmed by the concerns and the fears and the worries of this world. And I thought, "Oh, well everybody's just playing a game. It's a sham. That's what church is. We just go and we pretend, we talk about for an hour about how we have victory. And then we go and we get overwhelmed by the world. That's what Christians do." I'm out on that! I'm not going to

play that game. And the last thing that I want to do here is play that game. There's either a God or there's not. He's either in control or he's not. He either is crazy about you or he's not. And we gotta decide because if there is a God and He is in control, and He's crazy about you, then what are we worried about? Like, we're here for a moment, we're going to be with Him forever and ever and ever. We are the champions! Seems like we win... But I think we gotta ask sometimes do we really know what we say we know? Like, are we so sure?

So we're in this series SoundTracks where we're going through the Psalms. We started with Psalm 1; from Psalm 1 we went to Psalm 19, and then last week we were in Psalm 42. Well today we're going to be in Psalm 46 if you want to turn there. Psalm 46 is where we will be. And I call this message the victory that comes from God's powerful protection of His people. That we have a God, that God is powerful, and He is protecting us. And so because He has overcome evil we believe that, we walk in His victory. But what does that actually mean? We say that Jesus has won, the grave is empty, we have an inheritance of glorious riches, we're going to be with God forever and ever and ever, and yet we walk out those doors and we're overwhelmed by the worries and the fears of this world. A diagnosis, a prodigal child, a job that has evaporated, a relationship that has gone away or in trouble, a grade, a challenge, a circumstance, the death, the grief that we experience all can feel like, "Weak God!" "Are you sure you're powerful? You're protecting me? You're in control? Are you sure you love me?" And we've got to, if we come in here and we gather, again last thing I wanna do is play games. We've got to make sense of all of that.

And so, we battle those things that I just mentioned, those hardships with God's protection. With God's power. And ultimately with God's peace. And so, as we flow through this Psalm, Psalm 46 that is what we're going to look at. God's protection, God's power, and God's peace which ultimately leads to our peace. Because you facing the troubles of this life are your ultimate opportunities to show the faith that you say that you have. When you come face to face with challenges, circumstances, curveballs, and left turns, that's the opportunity to say, "Oh, now I get to display my faith that I've been building up every morning in my quiet time, every Sunday when I gather with the saints." It's not just this thing that I say that I believe, now it's my opportunity to actually exercise the faith that I say that I have. And I can show the world that.

Psalm 46 is a landmark Psalm. It was read on the tenth anniversary of 9/11 by the President of the United States of America. If you've ever sung—you grew up in church and you sang hymns—A Mighty Fortress Is Our God by Martin Luther, that was from this Psalm. If you've listened to The Worship Initiative and have an affinity for Psalm 46 by Shane and Shane, that's this Psalm. This is the one. So as we dive into it I'm going to set it up, this is what's happening on the peripheral.

This Psalm, it's the "We Are The Champions" to a battle that was fought but not necessarily by the soldiers. What happened was you have King Hezekiah, he's the king, the ruler of Judah: God's people. Jerusalem now—King Hezekiah if you know anything about the Old Testament and kings there's lots of bad ones and few good ones. He's one of the few good ones. King Hezekiah was faithful. Faithfulness marked him. And Isaiah is his prophet, so Isaiah is communicating to King Hezekiah the will of God and the words of God. Well, there's another

king, another ruler, Sennacherib is the king of Assyria. Assyria is an area that includes Nineveh. We just studied Jonah, we learned about the Ninevites, that they're bad wicked people that they skin people. That's a part of the Assyrian people. Sennacherib is from Nineveh and he's a bad dude. So, what he's doing is he's just taking over places. He's like, "My land, my people, my kingdom, my money." And he's like a mob boss because he's like, "If you don't want me to take over you've got to pay me. Put me on your payroll." Hezekiah did! Hezekiah is like, "Okay, I'm going to pay you not to take us over." But at some point Sennacherib is like, "I don't care. I'm coming for you. We're at the gates. I've got 185,000 soldiers ready to take you over." And Isaiah comes to Hezekiah and is like, "Hey man, he's here. He's out there and he's going to take us over." And Hezekiah being a man who is faithful says, "Well I must turn to God in prayer. Let me lay my strategy and plans before the Lord and seek the Lord and see what he wants from me." And there was a supernatural victory delivered to him. And in the wake of that victory, they sang Psalm 46. So we'll dive in with that in the background.

Verse 1, this is also written by the sons of Korah. Last week Dale told us who they are, they wrote Psalm 42. These were the OG worship leaders. These were the guys that would write these songs that were sung but the church at the time. And so go back and listen if you missed that.

We'll go verse 1. "**God is our refuge** (you can underline refuge) **and strength, an ever-present** (you can underline ever present) **help in trouble.**" Which means He's available any time you need him, but whether you need Him or not He's always there. He's always available. He's ever present "**Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.**" So the Psalm starts out saying here's who God is: He's a refuge, He's strength, He's

ever present. Therefore verse 2, as a result of who God is we don't fear. The reason we don't fear is because God is ever present and protecting us. And He's there when we need Him, and because He's there when we need him as a result of that reality, that thinking, that knowledge, we don't fear. Even when everything around us crumbles the Earth gives way and the mountains quake, we don't fear because of who God is. My first point: the protection of God is ever present

1. The protection of God is ever present.

Here's what I think about when I read that. If you've ever been to the swimming pool and there's a mother there with her young children and you're trying to have a conversation with her, it's almost impossible, because she's looking through you. Have you ever done this? Her kids are playing in the pool, maybe they can swim and maybe they can't and you're like, "So what did you do this weekend?" And she's like, "Oh... yeah... this weekend we...did some things... Hey Tommy stop running! So yeah... we went to the game...4th of July fireworks—Susie!" And she's just watching the kids. Right? There's not a moment of your life any point of your existence that God does not see. He's not intimately involved in. There's no time that the Creator of the heavens and the earth is not aware of. Maybe a better illustration for you is a lifeguard. A lifeguard is there to make sure that that area is safe. That people are thriving there. So what or who you turn to in times of trouble tells me everything that you actually believe about God. And it's often counter intuitive to stop and to say, "Okay Lord, before I do anything else I'm just going to pray." Sometimes you guys will ask other people to pray when you haven't prayed. "Hey, will you just pray for me? Hey, will you pray about this? Hey guys I'm going to send in a prayer request." Let me ask you a question, before we pray and rally the troops, how many hours have you spent in prayer? Have long you fasted? What is your prayers life? Because sometimes

we're like, "Hey would you pray for me?" When we haven't prayed for us. Who you turn to in times of trouble says a whole lot of what you believe about God. Alright?

Has your world ever fallen apart around you? Like, one minute you're standing on solid ground like God is good and I went to Church and praise God from whom all blessings flow... and then the next minute with a phone call, an email, a text message, a letter you open—you open a letter, you look for someone who's not there, and all of a sudden everything in your world turns. The relationship ended, the job shifted, the financial situation shifted, the bill came, the job went away, the doctor said what? I've got what?! The kid is like you're watching someone make destructive decisions and you can't control them, and you know those decisions aren't going anywhere good and it's like your world is crumbling. And who you turn to in that moment, that's what you believe. That's what you really believe. We can say we believe lots of things, but in that moment, that defines what you actually believe.

And I don't want you to—and this is a public service announcement—I don't want you to fall into the trap of blaming God. I see it all the time. "I got here and I don't want to be here, and it's your fault. It's you. How could you?" No, no. He's not the problem. He's the solution. It's not the time to bow up to the Creator of the Heavens of the Earth and let him know that His plans were not your plans and now you're so angry. It's time to say, "Help me. You can make sense of this. It's not what I wanted. This isn't where I thought I'd be. Can you please help me? I need you." He's the only one that can bring resolution to this problem. And He's your refuge. Refuge is shelter from danger, but not just a refuge, He's also your strength. His protection is always there.

My favorite trip to date, if you said, “What’s your favorite place you’ve ever been?” I would tell you Africa. So, we went there on a mission trip, but on the tail end of the mission trip, through the generosity of one of the attorneys that went I got to go on this photo safari. And I just didn’t know what I was getting into. It was just epic, like so epic no exaggeration is necessary. It was just absolutely amazing. And we land in the jungles of Africa and we’re driving to this place. And he had told me, “Hey we’re going to stay in a tent.” And as we’re driving there, there is animals everywhere. No fence but animals everywhere. And they’re all vicious looking. Like, the little animals there look like they could eat you at will. There’s a herd of hyenas and they look hungry. Then you see a warthog, a pig. Like, “Oh nice, cute little piggy.” It’s got tusks, 7 inches long protruding from its face that will tear you apart if you look at it funny. The cats there did creatine of something. They’re all huge—enormous. We see a cheetah. Like, “A cheetah! Oh, you’re fast!” That thing will eat you! A leopard! We saw a leopard! That is beautiful and terrifying. And then we see on the way to the tent the king of the jungle. And it’s just like this massive lion. You just see the muscles. I think we’ve got a picture maybe. But with every step you see that thing. And right about then—I see that thing—and I think, we’re staying in tents? So I turn to my buddy and am like, “You said we’re sleeping in tents?” And this is what he says to me, he goes, “Hey don’t worry. The lions don’t know that they can tear through the tents.” I’m like, who tested that theory? Like, they didn’t live to tell you the outcome, right? And so I’m getting a little bit of anxiety around this sleeping in a tent with all these animals around us. So when night falls you can imagine how relieved I am when there’s a guard outside my tent armed, an armed guard with a riffle. I’m like, “What’s up buddy? Hey man! Sight for sore eyes. So, you’re just assigned to my tent?” “Yeah, yes sir.” I’m like, “That is amazing news. You’re going

to be out here all night?” “Yes sir.” “Man, talk to me about that gun, you know how to work that? You practice?” He’s like, “Oh yeah, target practice, I’m very good with the gun.” I’m like, “Awesome!” Dap you up, fist bump, you are my guy! I go inside, I go to sleep I go inside, but I’ve got to stay up until midnight to call Monica because of the time change. So I’m trying to stay up till midnight, I get on the phone and I’m talking to her and I hear this “Grrrrrr. Rrrrrr.” And I’m like, “Hey babe, I’ve got to go.” And she goes, “Why?” And I said, “There’s a lion outside my tent.” Which is really cruel because those are the last words I said to her and then I hung up. I didn’t think about that—I’m sorry I didn’t think about that until way later. But then all night long I’m thinking, “Man I hope he’s not sleeping.” I hope he’s watching, I hope he’s alert. I hope he’s ready for whatever is going to come. Because whose protecting you, and their awareness, their presence; who you believe is watching over you makes all the difference—really defines your faith. And not just your faith, but your outcome of those situations. Do they have what it takes?

Our peace comes from who we believe is protecting us. And everyone here, we all have views of God that are just a little bit off. Somewhere our theology is not perfect. And it really is going to be defined by what we think is happening. Sometimes some of us will say, “Well God is doing this to me, he must be mad at me. Or God has left me, God’s not aware, or…” And all of these ideas. But what the Scripture says is God is your ever present protection is what it says here. And so we’ve got to reconcile that with what our experience is. The first thing that King Hezekiah does when he hears about Sennacherib is he lays his plans before the Lord. And I’m just amazed at how often that’s not our first move. Our first move it “Hey, let me strategize, let me call, let me check bank accounts.” Verse 4, let’s go back.

“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.” That, “God is within her she will not fall” Some of you ladies have that on your Instagram account, that’s talking about Jerusalem just so we’re clear. Before you get the tattoo, let’s make sure we understand the context. And it says, “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God.” This is really fascinating because king Hezekiah built these tunnels that became wells that stored up lots of water. So, when Sennacherib came to attack, him, he could cut off the water source for Sennacherib, but inside the city they had plenty of water to drink. Now this is all well documented both in history historical accounts, as well as in 2 Chronicles 32, and 2 Kings chapters 18 and 19. Specifically in 2 Chronicles, you see this detailed account of how they had rivers that made the heart glad because of Hezekiah’s planning. In fact, 3,000 years later, you can go to Jerusalem, and you can take the tour of, guess what, Hezekiah’s tunnels. So, here’s a picture of it. It’s still there to this day, and there’s just—I don’t want to say miles because I’m not 100% sure—but lots and lots of pathways. I’ve been in them, okay? Here’s a picture of me in those tunnels. Yeah, claustrophobic’s nightmare. But there we are, moving through Hezekiah’s tunnels, 3,000 years later time stamp. This history, this Psalm we’re reading, these rivers—I’ve been there. You can go there. You can see them. In God’s Word—that is just true.

Verse 6, **“Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall. He lifts his voice the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”** Now he says, underline fortress. So he’s saying God is powerful, that his voice melts the earth. The very Earth that he spoke into existence. It’s not enough that He’s ever present, that ever present protection in danger. He has to

have the power to protect us. Like if I say I have a bodyguard but that bodyguard is weak and scared, he's not going to be much of a bodyguard. But we have one protecting us who's not just ever present, but he's powerful. The next night—go back with me to Africa for a minute—I call Monica, hey I'm still alive. We go and have an amazing day look at animals, night falls I get back to the tent—it's a different guy. Different guy watching. He has—I'm not even kidding—a homemade bow and arrow. I'm like, "Where's your friend?" He goes, "He was assigned to a different tent." I'm like, "You guys should switch. Yeah, we became buddies yesterday, I got to know him...truly, let's get him back." Hey, you own a gun? He's like, "No, but I'm very good with the bow and arrow." I'm like, "Okay no..." Who's watching over you? Do they have the power to protect you? And what the Word is making clear to you is absolutely. God is Almighty it says. So, my second point is the power of God prevails.

2. The power of God prevails.

What I mean by prevails is stronger than every situation or circumstance that would come against Him. The power of God prevails. It says that He's almighty. That word means having complete power, and it is a name for God. We call him Almighty God, Prince of Peace, Everlasting Father, and it says here that he's not just a Refuge—that's what we read in that first stanza—but he's actually a Fortress. What is a fortress? A fortress is different than a refuge. A refuge is protection. A fortress is a place that contains warriors. Hey, we are a place of an army, so let's go back to that word almighty. In the Hebrew that's the word Jehovah Sabboath. That—Jehovah Sabboath—that means Lord of Hosts. ESV says Lord of Hosts. NLT says God of Heavenly Armies. That's what that word means. That he has an army behind him. An army of what? Angels. Let's talk about angels for a second. Angels all throughout Scripture.

Almost always when an angel shows up it's followed by two words. And you really have two options of the two words. You see it repeated. Anybody know the two words that follows the two words that follow—the angel came and it says these two words? Fear not. That's the first option. Angel shows up and it's like, "Fear not!" Why? Because they're scary! They're terrifying. Do you know what the other two words are? Anybody know? "Get up!" You know why? Because people fall down in fear. They see an angel and their legs just collapse. These are scary dudes. God, creator, is the commander and chief of an army made up of the baddest soldiers you can possibly imagine. And in fact, anytime they show up on the scene they have to say, "Don't be afraid. Calm down, calm down, calm down." Or, "Get up. Get up!" Right?

That's the soldiers in God's army. Because he is the Lord of Hosts. When we say that "Lord of Hosts." What do we mean? Commander and chief of an angelic army. But let me tell you about these angels. Here's what Sennacherib demanded of Hezekiah. He says, "Hey, you've got to surrender," and then he says he has the audacity of telling to Hezekiah's people, "Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the Lord. Hey don't let him convince you to trust in the Lord. There are 185,000 soldiers with me, what's your God gonna do?"

That night, *an* angel of the Lord shows up and kills 185,000 soldiers. Done. One angel. One soldier. Commander and chief of an army of angels. One angel shows up, fights an army of 185,000 men and they all die. And you think, "That's sweet, one of those beautiful legendary bible stories." No no, it's actually well documented. I mean, we have carvings in Egypt that talk of this story. We have writings in other historical books that tell of the story, the night when

185,000 soldiers mysteriously died. And in here, in the Word of God, we know why, we know how. That's the God that is protecting you. He has an army of those angels available to him at any moment. And it doesn't take many. Wow.

So that's why it says, verse 8, "Come and see what the LORD has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth." We are the champions. Isaiah tells Hezekiah, Sennacherib is going to be sent back to his hometown and you will be victorious. The God of angel armies is going to give you victory. 185,000 men wiped out in one evening, and Sennacherib goes back to Ninevah where he's murdered by his own sons, just as the prophet declared. Who you turn to in times of trouble tells me everything about what you believe about God.

And I've seen it—I have seen people seemingly delusional in their faith. You have cancer, oh man, God just gave me a mission field in the hospital. You're going to be sharing with all the nurses and the doctors. I don't know if you heard me. Oh I heard you. I just trust my God. It's not like he's surprised by this. And you don't get that in a moment.

Hezekiah didn't determine, "Hey do I want to trust God when Sennacherib is outside my city?" Hezekiah, he's a faithful king. He's feasted on the Word of God every day. He's worshipped in the temples every week. He removed all of the semblances of false God's in the land and says, "There's only one God that we're going to worship and it's the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And so in this moment he didn't decide, "Well do I really trust him?" He had been trusting Him day in and day out. That's why I tell you all the time, your quiet time is not this homework that you need to do just so that you can check the box and tell your lifegroup you did

it. It's a survival method, it's a survival strategy against satanic attacks.

I think sometimes we have more in common with Sennacherib than Hezekiah. Sennacherib used what was available to him, the tangible, the fleshly things that give us the illusion of control. Just checking bank accounts. He's getting physicals. He's calling relationships, "Hey are we still friends?" He's saying what do I have available to me to win? And Hezekiah's like, "I've got God. I've got God."

Every summer we go to family camp, I have the opportunity to teach at a family camp in Missouri, and a couple of summer ago we were driving home and there was some traffic on our normal route so it rerouted us through Joplin Missouri, which had recently been destroyed by a tornado. And so we were kind of reminded of that—talking about that. Then we drove down close to Moore Oklahoma, another city that had recently been destroyed by the tornado. So we had storms on the brain. Right about then as we're driving through Oklahoma, all of a sudden all of our phones start blowing up—almost like an amber alert. We look and it's like "Oh a weather warning." And then as soon as the phone started blowing up it was like the sky started opening up. And so much rain came down on the windshield it was like my wipers on high were struggling to move. They're struggling through the water. It was 0 visibility. We had to pull over. And I remember before we pulled over in my wife's suburban, the wind was moving us on the road. The gusts of wind were moving us in the suburban on the road. And then right then on the phone it says, "Flash flood warning." But I'm like, "I've seen this before, does that ever really happen?" And right when I'm thinking does that ever really happen, I see a car float by. And now I'm worried, right? And all of us in our family we respond different. My wife starts, she's

logical and strategic, she's like we need to pull over and see another way. Let's check where the storm in and where it's going. My son, he just pulls the blanket over his head, he's like, "I'll just hide." My other daughter is screaming her head off, crying, trusting her fears. Driven by emotions. Any my oldest daughter goes, "Hey! Everybody stop! Everybody stop! Everybody look at me and stop!" And she says it in such a commanding way, I'm like, "Okay, what's up?" Weston pulls the blanket out from over his head and is like, "Okay? What's up?" Finley stops crying for a second, she's like, "Look at me. Look at me. We have to pray. The winds and waves obey him. He's more powerful than the storm." Yeah He is. Yeah He is, He's more powerful than the storm. Than the illness, diagnosis, lay off, relationship, the prodigal, He's more powerful than the circumstance, the situation. Who you turn to in times of trouble says a whole lot about what you actually believe.

The victory that we live in, his protection, is not just ever present, it's powerful. Verse 9, **"He makes wars cease till the ends of the Earth; He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire."** Interesting that in the Egyptian account of this, it says that rodents showed up in the middle of the night and chewed up their spears and their bows. That they desecrated them, which is fascinating. Verse 10, **"He says, "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted among the Earth." The Lord almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."** Again it says repeated, He is our fortress. If we look at His abilities, He scorches the Earth, He breaks the tools we use to break people. He melts the best military technology of the time with fire. He makes wars cease, bringing peace. Two ways to bring peace: you can either change the heart of your enemy, or take their life. And here in this account it's B. 185,000 wiped out. 185,000 wiped out.

And he says, “Be still and know that I am God.” What does it look like living this life from a place of victory? It looks a lot like peace. Because in times of trouble, the last thing you want to do—the most counterintuitive reality—is to be still. We’re all going to nod our heads at that like, “Oh yes, be still and know...” You’re going to leave here, troubles going to hit and the last thing you’re going to think is, “I just need to go and sit in my chair and know that He is God.” But that’s what it says. Be still and know that He is God. So my third point, God’s protection and power give peace to his people.

3. God’s protection and power give peace to his people.

God’s protection and power give peace to his people. God’s protection, plus God’s power equals your peace. He is on your side. Philippians 4 says it like this, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” And the peace of God—that’s God’s peace—will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, the Sovereign one, gives us His peace when we turn to him in prayer as our first act of concern. As we turn to Him in prayer, so we don’t lean on our own control, we find peace in His control. We’re not coping by checking bank accounts, stock markets, coin base, crypto, we’re not checking relationships, make sure the job still there, the kids are still alive, this is still happening. In the first moment of trouble we turn to God. And we say, “God. This is who you are. I know you are with me. You’re a mighty fortress. You’re a shelter, a refuge, an ever present protection in times of danger. You’re powerful, whom shall I fear?” And you’re renewing your mind around that reality. You have to decide what you’re going to trust in life right now.

Hezekiah says in 2 Chronicles 32 to his people, to his army, **“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the King of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.”** And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said. He said, there are more with us, there is a stronger power with us than with him. Maybe you can’t see it but it’s the heavenly host. The Lord of Hosts. The God of angel armies.

I wasn’t a believer until my young adult years, so a lot of my stories are a lot of a misdirected youth. So lots of fights, and I wasn’t very good at it, which is really unfortunate. I got beat up a lot. But a fight account here in Waco now, college, I’m at a party pitching washers, you guys know? Anybody still do that? Pitch washers? You guys are like no, we’re corn hole people. Well, okay, back in my day we pitched washers, like throw a washer into a little hole. I’m pitching washers and this gets there and he’s the biggest dude—he’s just this massive guy. Huge! Like, just got back from the gym. Creatine for breakfast. He walks up, he’s with his friend. Walks in front of me, washer hits him in the leg, no big deal it’s a washer it’s like a quarter. He walks in front of the path where we’re throwing. He turns to me and goes, “You better watch where you’re throwing that thing!” and I’m like, “ahaha—“ I thought he was joking. I’m like, “Oh man, my bad.” And he gets up to me and goes, “You think that was funny?!” And he gets up to me and he puts his finger right here (JP points his finger in an aggressive, accusatory way), he gets physical. And I’m like, he’s got big hands, and all I can think about—I remember—I’m like, aw this is going to hurt. I don’t want this to hurt, this is going to hurt. I’m terrified, just to show you all my cards. I’m terrified. I’m like, oh this is going to hurt. It’s just him and his little friend.

Well, I'm there with all of my friends, and none of us are believers. Ya know, we're all up to no good. And one hits the elbows, the others like "Hey JPs in trouble." They all come up, there's like 16 of them. They circle...And he gives me another one, and now they're all around him, he's like, "Man! No you think somethings funny!" And I'm like, "Well, come to think of it... it's kind of funny now!" I was like, "Look around. There's more with me than there are with you." That's what Hezekiah is saying. Hey, there's more with us then there is with them. That's what Elisha said to his servant, "Hey there's more with us than there are with them. Lord open their eyes let them see your angel armies." At any given time. There's more with you than there are with them. Right?

God controls your reputation, he controls what others think of you. He controls the hearts of kings like water courses in his hands he directs them wherever he pleases. He is God. Whatever this dudes going to do to me, he's not going to do it long. Whatever he's going to do he's not going to do it long because there's more with me than there are with him. In summary, God's protection and God's power leads to our peace.

Here's what I want you to know. The song, "We Are The Champions." We love to play that song in the wake of victory, "We are the champions, y'all are the losers. We are the champions." That word champion in Hebrew it translates directly as the man who goes between the spaces. They would call it the go-between. Here's what that means. It's a person who fights a battle on behalf of an army. This was a practice at times. You saw this with Goliath. Goliath has the whole Philistine army behind him but goes, "Hey, I'll fight by myself. You send one person and we'll fight a war, just the two of us." This is the champion, the go-between. The champion from Gath

it says. David was the champion. The go-between. David was the champion of Israel. A person who 700 years after Sennacherib shows up to Judah, Hezekiah, 700 years later, just inside the very wall that he stood outside of, was a champion—Jesus Christ. He said, “I will fight a battle on behalf of all of them.” He is the go-between. He says, “I will overcome evil in one fell swoop. In one evening. The setting of the sun, all sins will be forgiven of anyone who trusts in me. I will defeat the enemy so you and I walk in victory because of the champion.” We don’t sing, “We are the champion.” We sing, “He is the champion. We know the champion. Jesus is the champion. We have the champion my friends.” Right?

We don’t have to fight till the end. We have a champion. A go-between. Someone who fought a battle on our behalf, right? They sang this song in the wake of victory to remind themselves that God has entrusted victory to them. The way that we do this today is communion. It’s how we reflect upon the Gospel. Communion is not just this traditional thing that you grew up in church doing. You can take communion all day long and it is just bad grape juice and a host that was put together in a factory. If you don’t stop and reflect on Jesus, and invite His presence, acknowledge that He lives in you and realize that He sat there with his closest friends and told them what was going to happen to Himself—that He was the champion. The go-between. The one who fought on their behalf.

And so if you’re not a believer, no sense in partaking in this. And if you know that right now you are in a conflict that’s unresolved with another brother or sister in Christ, it’s a good time to abstain and prioritize, “Will you please forgive me for...” or “I forgive you for...” But if you’re at a place where it’s time to reflect upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the night He was betrayed,

He sat among His friends the night before He was betrayed. He took the bread and He broke it. And he said, “This bread represents my body which will be broken for you. I’m going to die for you so that you can live. I’m going to take the punishment that you deserve upon myself so that you can have the inheritance that I deserve as an eternal, perfect God.” The body of Christ broken for you.

The blood of Christ represented, it would have been there by a chalice as wine—a cup that they would have all drank from. And He picks up that, He teaches from it. He teaches from it and says, “This is the cup of my new covenant. I’m going to do a new work. You no longer need to trust in the sacrifice of bulls and rams. I’m going to be the one and done. The ultimate high priest. My blood will be poured out for you, and atone now for your sins. That means covers your sins, so that when God looks at you he doesn’t see your sins, but he sees my payment. He’s reminded of the payment that he issued on behalf of me, Jesus Christ.” This blood was poured out for you. The blood of Christ.

Father, as we move to singing this song, would you help us even as we stand here to be still and know that you are God, to be reminded that you are the God of hosts. The God of angel armies. The ruler of heaven and earth, of your kingdom. And as we sit in the trials and the tribulations and the circumstances and the situations that tend to overwhelm us, would we look at the ways, would you remind us that you’re the one who calmed the sea. When we go to that quiet time with your Word would you made it a meaningful time, reminding us of who you are, what you’re capable of, your protection and your power. We’re so thankful for the champion in your Son Jesus Christ, who overcame evil on our behalf. We love you Lord, we sing to you now in Jesus’s

name.

(song interlude)

I had this interview this week in front of more people than normal I guess, and what happens is everybody will tell you, “Hey, that’s a big deal. That’s a big deal. Wow that’s a really big deal.” And they mean well, they’re not doing anything wrong by saying that, that’s a really big deal. What happens in my heart is I believe them. Ya know? It goes from, “Oh I wasn’t really thinking much about it, but now I am. That’s a big deal.” And it stirs something in me that I don’t know how to describe it other—it’s a couple parts excitement, some anxiety, there’s some fear in there. I don’t know, it’s messy. And I’m in this text and I feel like my life is in such contrast to what I’m studying. And you get to a weird place like, “God I know I believe in you, I know I shouldn’t be anxious because I believe in you and you’re the God whose ordained the outcome. And I trust in you but maybe I just don’t trust in me. And I don’t know how that works and am I going to get in the way of you?” And you just get in that weird head space. And a dear friend—this is not like a name drop or a flex, I mean like a dude that I did ministry with closely—wrote that song. And I was on the plane and was not—I don’t like to fly as it is—it was not a good plane flight. That’s the only kind I ever get. And I just jammed it. I just went on Spotify, Psalm 46. I mean do yourself a favor. The name of the song is Psalm 46. And it was like all of that just melted away. I’m not trying to be superstitious or anything, but the kindness of God was just to remove all of that and to give me rest and peace and clarity of mind. And he was just like, “Hey, just tell them about me. Just tell them about the Lord. Just tell them about me.” And so yeah. Just again, Hezekiah’s faithfulness didn’t start with Sennacherib at the wall. It starts in the daily grind

of reminding, renewing our minds of who God is. Setting our minds on the things above. That's the application this week.