favorite Chapters - Psalm 46

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Preacher: Jeremy Davis

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us.!

I want to say anything about that.
What I will say is that when you go to a conference like this, you're hearing some of the best preaching in our world.
Some of the best singing and music around. And while I'm there, I'm often really grieved, kind of brokenhearted for some of the people that are in attendance.
Because I know that they are going back to difficult situations. I know that they're going back to subpar preaching or maybe unbiblical preaching or music situations that just aren't the best.
[1:19] And I'm often struck with just the realization that while these men are taking the pulpit and preaching, that we lack in nothing here thanks to, not me, but the pastors that are around me.

And when Bob Coughlin is up there leading music, I regularly think about what an incredible and a lot of times even better job John Brewer does as he's leading.
And I'm so grateful for the guys that I get to serve with because truly, they are absolutely incredible.
And I hope you realize how blessed we are to have Joey and Jeff and John and Michael here serving.
They really are, each one of them, just absolutely incredible minds, incredible leaders, pastors, and friends. And that brings me to Psalm 46. Psalm 46.
What's interesting about this preaching assignment is that there are times that we preach entire chapters for sake of time. We're trying to move through books at a certain pace to get through in a certain time frame.
[2:29] There are times that it just makes sense for us to teach through entire chapters at a time as we're teaching. But the unique thing about this assignment is that we're teaching our favorite chapters. There was no assignment given other than, here are your dates.

I want you to preach the whole chapter. Pick your favorites. And so there's a real personal aspect to what we're preaching through this series. And for me, Psalm 46, for a season of my life, I took residence there.
I'm pretty sure if you had pulled out my driver's license, instead of my home address, a number in the street, you would have just seen Psalm 46 listed. Because I spent so much time in this chapter.
And September 2023, after a series of mysterious medical emergencies and failed follow-ups and recoveries, my wife, Chelsea, was rushed to the hospital via ambulance about 11 o'clock at night.
And we got there, not sure what was going on. We discovered that Chelsea had perforated diverticulitis, which is kind of a freak thing for her at 33 years old.
[3:45] And we discovered then that her abdomen was full of infection. And she had infections surrounding many organs in her abdomen. She went into surgery.

It was a long period of time. And I took up residence here in Psalm 46. This chapter is a chapter that a lot of us have read and a lot of us have been aware of on more than one occasion.
But as I contemplated things like, is my wife going to make it through this? How do I go and explain to my kids what happened to their mother? Or how do I work full-time, be a pastor, and also raise my kids on my own?
As I start thinking about the future of health issues and all this stuff that's going on. And how do I juggle these things? I just continued to come back to this chapter because it was the only thing that really made sense for me at the time.
And a number of people in the church and all of our pastors reached out to me. Jeff had sent me a text that night, about midnight. And it simply said, praying for you.

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[4:53] And skip a line, as Jeff often does in a text message. Psalm 46. I did not sleep that night. I sat in a folding chair that was half broken and extremely uncomfortable at the foot of my wife's bed.

In the emergency room at OU, waiting for surgery staff to come in that morning so they could start surgery. Start trying to take care of her and get her better. I sat there at the foot of her bed.
My phone opened until it finally died. Just rereading this chapter over and over and over and over again. Little did I know, we have a sign in our house that actually has this whole chapter spelled out on it, written on it.
I've passed it hundreds of times and never really stopped and looked at it and realized that it was even there. And sometimes that's true for a chapter of Scripture. It's almost like you don't realize it's there until you need it.
And you need to take refuge in the lines of the verses that are there. And I found myself doing that. Last Sunday I preached out of 2 Timothy 2.
[6:03] And the very practical ways that we endure suffering. The means of grace from Christ in which we sustain through difficulties. This evening we'll return to a similar theme, however, from a very different book and a very different chapter.

And I think we'll gain a very different perspective as we look at it. Last week, admittedly, I focused more on the Lord moving us and the ways in which He moves us through difficulties. Tonight, I want to focus on God's character and who He is in the seasons of crisis in life.
And we've been there. We know the feeling of facing difficulties and hardships. And not knowing what does tomorrow look like. Psalm 46, I pray, will be a refuge to all of us.
Whether it's something you're getting ready to go through, whether it's something you're going through now. But I hope it is an encouragement for you. There's three stanzas in this psalm, each marked with Selah at the end.
Selah is like a musical notation. And it's found regularly in the Psalms. It's a form of biblical literature called Hebrew poetry. And it's often seen in the Old Testament.
[7:16] And so in reality, there's nothing strikingly unique about this chapter. But that it is very personal to me. And something that's, chapters become a favorite.

So in the future, as I reach out to you, perhaps through text. And you're going through something. I'll let you know I'm praying for you. I will likely throw in there Psalm 46.
Because it's what a brother sent to me in a time of crisis. It'll be something I want to pass to you in a time of crisis. And I believe it's something that these psalmists, the writers, are passing to us through God's word.
This is also the chapter that Martin Luther used as he wrote A Mighty Fortress. This was the inspiration for that. And it was during this season of time, us spending three weeks in the hospital, waiting for Chelsea to improve enough for her to come home, that I learned that.
And it was like suddenly, as I'm rowing these boats of rough waters, headed back to shore, Martin Luther was there with me. And the psalmist guiding us like a lighthouse, leading us back to the safe land.
[8:25] And just as we face these different situations, as we're trying to figure out what to do next. Her learning how to get up out of bed again, and how to walk back down the hallway, and how to eat again, and all of these things.

And seizures, or not seizures, surgeries and procedures, and all of this. But one thing I want you to know about this chapter, is that this is not a psalm of lament, or of sadness, or of mourning.
This is a psalm of thanksgiving. We don't know a lot about the circumstances that are going on here, but we do know that it's the first of three consecutive psalms, some 46, 47, and 48, that speak of God's rule over everything, and his power over everything.
And these psalmists are rejoicing. It's written by the sons of Korah, who were Levites. They were the gatekeepers of the tabernacle of God. They were musicians and contemporaries of David. They are also the ones who wrote, why are you cast down, O my soul?
I shall again praise him. In Psalm 42. So this isn't a psalm of sadness, or of fear, but one of joy and thanksgiving, that our God is God no matter the circumstances.
[9:46] And that's what I want you to see here, that he is God and rules over everything. So the way I'm going to do this this evening is I'm going to give you two observations, and then I think there's three characteristics, things about God that we can learn.

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So two observations just about the chapter, then three things about God. So the first observation is that we see total disaster. Go to verse two.
Actually, I'll start right there in verse one. 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 the waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.
Selah. Right there at the beginning, in verse two and in verse three, we see this picture of just total natural destruction. This has all the markings of an earthquake that has taken place and is just wreaking havoc on these people.
In Oklahoma, it is not hard for us to imagine the natural destruction that comes with the crazy weather that we have, such as a tornado or an earthquake or an ice storm or a heat wave and on and on and on because we have all of these things that go on.
[11:03] So it's not hard for us to imagine just the natural destruction that's going on. And while these psalmists may have a particular event in mind, we don't know what it is.

So for us, this is certainly metaphoric language that represents the crisis of life that we may be going through. The earth and the waters, they have a proper place, a place they're supposed to be. The earth is shifting and the waters are roaring and the mountains are trembling as a result. The LSB says that though the earth should change and perhaps you find yourself in a moment of time where you feel like the world around you has changed.
Things are not in their proper place. Things are not going the way that they should be going. This psalm is for you. Perhaps you're facing that crisis, that difficulty.
This is for you. So the psalmist has set this scene for us of natural disasters. But then down in verse six, says the nations rage, the kingdoms totter.
[12:04] He utters his voice, the earth melts. So the nations are raging and kingdoms are tottering. This is a description of war, nation against nation.

And this is again, easy for us to imagine. You flip on the news and you see that there's war going on. And it will be something that continues to go on because of sin and the brokenness of this world.
Down in verse nine, he makes war cease to the ends of the earth. Then he says, he breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots with fire. So there's bows, spears, war chariots.
The psalmist has given us an image of just complete disaster in every way as mankind fights against one another. So we have natural disasters, we have national crisis, and we have lives that are in serious danger.
And perhaps you feel that this evening. Secondly, we're given a place to turn. Right in the very first verse, the very first word, it tells us exactly where we are to turn.
[13:13] It is to God. God is our refuge and strength. And I love the Hebrew language that the psalmist uses here. He uses words that describe shelter from rain and from storms and falsehoods and danger.

The strength that is found in God also applies to material, physical, social, political, personal strength. There's a wide net of protection that is being cast here for a lot of different things that we may be facing in life.
Again, this word refuge is a place of protection from the elements of the world and the dangers of the world that surround us. Now this doesn't mean that we won't feel the effects of hardship.
This doesn't mean that we won't bear the scars, sometimes quite literally, of the things that we've walked through. And perhaps there will be times the Lord takes us home.
But this reminds us about who God is. And this psalm points to very clearly who this is all about.
[14:20] If you look at verse one, it says God is our refuge and strength. Verse four, the city of God, a holy habitation of the Most High, being God.

Verse five, God is in the midst. God will help. Verse six, he utters his voice. Verse seven, the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob. Verse eight, the works of the Lord he has brought.
Verse nine, he makes, he breaks, he burns. Verse 10, I am God. I will be exalted. Verse 11, the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob. The psalmist wants us to know from his own experience, this is all about God.
It's all pointing back to him and what he is doing. From this, we could see that this is nothing that we can help on our own.

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We don't find the strength and the way to get through all of this. God is the source of the refuge and strength. He provides the refuge and strength. It's all about who he is.
[15:21] It's not a change of our circumstances or our ability to fix a problem or a new prescription or a different relationship or family situation, our ancient tendencies or our self-help schemes.

Our help comes from God and is God himself. So he provides help. He is help. It's not about us.
In fact, we are only mentioned as doing three very simple things. Verse two says, therefore, in light of the fact that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore, three things we will do.
We will not fear in verse two. And then down in verse 10, we will be still and know that I am God. So we will not fear.
We will be still and know that he is God. God. I think the psalmist is writing all of this to us out of experience. And that's how life works is early in your life, early in your walk with the Lord, you step out in faith in different situations.
[16:30] And the older you get, you begin to step out and experience. You've experienced what the Lord has done. And that's one of the great things about the church is that as we continue to step out and experience and learn, we also share that with other people around us.

And Wednesday nights, I love walking by Grief Share because you see people who have walked through grief and now they are literally sharing that, helping other people as they deal with their grief.
And that's what the church does. We come around each other and we share these experiences of walking through difficulties and circumstances and focusing on the Lord all the while and keeping our focus and our attention in the right place.
It's kind of like when you're first married and you have that, you have that first married fight. Whether it's about the way we're gonna clean the house, the way Chelsea and I first fought or whether it's over ketchup and where you're gonna store it.
You have that first one and you're not sure if you're gonna make it through. You're just not sure. The ketchup bottle can't go in the refrigerator. Maybe I've made a mistake here.
[17:45] I'm not sure. But as you get older and you endure through more, you see those arguments start to arise and not only do you know how to navigate them better, but you also know this isn't going to destroy us.

We're gonna get through this. You gain more confidence as you go on. And the same is true with God. As we face things in life and as people around us face things in life, we gain the experience and the confidence of knowing where our faith is at.
So as we look at not fearing, at being still and knowing that he is God, each of those have a response and that's how we are going to kind of lay out the rest of this.
So we'll have three things that we learn about God based on the responses that we're supposed to have that the psalmist has laid out for us to have in the midst of trouble. So first, number one, we do not fear because God has unlimited strength.
God has unlimited strength. We've already seen that God is our strength, but the psalmist wants to give us examples of his strength. Show us where his strength is at, what it looks like. Go down to verse six.
[18:55] It says, he utters his voice, the earth melts. It's not a scream, it's not a shout. No further action is involved, just a word from God and the earth melts away.

Now this should take our minds back to Genesis one. And God said, let there be light. And there's light. Immediately. This isn't Minecraft. He's not gathering resources and trying to figure this out and build a bunch of stuff.
That's not the way this works. God says it and creation responds immediately. No hesitation. God's power on display.
And all throughout scripture, we read of God's great power and his strength. In Luke 1, 37, the angel Gabriel says to Mary, nothing will be impossible with God. In Matthew 19, 26, Jesus says to his disciples, with man, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.
Jeremiah 32, verse 17, ah, the Lord, it is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.
[20:01] Verse 21, you brought your people out of, your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm with great terror and you gave them

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this land which you swore to their fathers to give them a land flowing with milk and honey.

God is unmatched in his power and his ability and he does as he pleases. Earlier, Joey had mentioned Abner Chow, the president of TMS.
And during one of his breakout sessions, he was talking about Israel and the proper place for them and biblical theology and he made a comment about why Israel. Why did he choose Israel? And he gave this just incredible, insightful, deep answer.
He says, why Israel? Abner Chow says, and I quote, because he did. Because God does whatever he wants to do as he pleases.
Nothing will stop him. Nothing will keep him and hold him back from doing exactly what he has willed to do. So back to verse, chapter 46, verse 9, says, he makes wars cease to the end of the earth.
[21:17] He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots with fire. When he says enough, wars stop and the battles cease. God's enemies cannot prevail against him.

No one can compete with his greatness and all throughout scripture we read of this. That's power over nature and over the attacks of enemies and the warring wars. The ancient serpent, as John calls him in Revelation, will gather his army and the enemies of God in Revelation 20, verse 9, they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints, the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
When you look at that passage, notice there's no battle, there's no struggle. Here's an army that comes to attack and fire comes down. God's power is far too great.
He consumes them instantly and they're cast into fire and we do not fear because the God who's able to create the world from just a word and melt the earth when he utters, the one who can consume his enemies with fire is also the God who holds us as we walk through every circumstance of life.
John 10, verse 27, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they will follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.
[22:59] And then he doubles down on this promise in verse 29, my father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of my father's hand. I and the father are one.

And again, this doesn't mean that we won't face difficulties, that we won't be stressed as times come, but fear should never overtake us.
we should have confidence in who our God is in every circumstance of life. This keeps our mind focused with the right perspective as we face crisis, tragedy, difficulties.
John Calvin says, when the sacred poet says we will not fear, he is not to be understood as meaning that the minds of the godly are exempt from all fear as if they were destitute of feeling. There is a great difference between insensibility and the confidence of faith. He only shows that whatever may happen, they are never overwhelmed with terror, but rather gather strength and courage sufficient to allay all fear.
[24:11] Are you overwhelmed with terror and fear as you face whatever circumstance it is that you are facing? Perhaps you are grieving the loss of a loved one.

Perhaps you're sending a child off to college into the world and you're worried about what is out there, what they'll be facing. Perhaps you're starting a new job, a career, maybe you're moving to a new place, maybe you just moved here and you're stricken with fear about what the future holds. Trust that our God is stronger than all of those things and we can cherish his strength in every circumstance. Secondly, we are still because God is present and caring.
We are still because God is present and caring. Verse 1 also says that God is our refuge and strength and then it says a very present help in trouble.
And this incredible thing about our God is that while he is all powerful and ruling over everything, he also is with us and involved in the intimate details of our life and knows us in and out.
[25:22] What an incredible God. I'm reminded of Psalm 32, I'm sorry, Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you

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are with me.
Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. The Lord leads his people not from afar but like a shepherd who is guiding his sheep to calm water.
As Michael was preaching through Psalm 23, he described that that God is not just pointing to the calm water but that he is with us and guiding us to the waters.
And that's the same thing that's here. Verse four and five, there's a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her.
[26:21] She shall not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns. This is most likely, this Jerusalem that's the reference to the city of God and water is a precious resource for them.

It sustains life. And we see multiple references throughout scripture of the river's waters sustaining life such as Genesis 2.10. There's a river providing water to the Garden of Eden and in Revelation 22.1 there's a river of life that comes from God.
It represents eternal life through Christ and here in Psalm 46 it too represents God sustaining us.
Now there's a contrast here between these waters and the habitation of God among God's people and the waters that are mentioned in verse three that roar and foam.
They're dangerous and they're treacherous but God leads us to calm waters. He provides for us.
And there's a word picture here. I think the technical terminology would be a word sandwich.
So we see in verse two that there's distress going on. There's all of this natural chaos that's happening. And then in verse six there's nations raging and people fighting and there's violence and sandwiched there in between are God's people.
[27:37] And in verse five it says that God is in the midst of her. He's there with God's people while all sorts of chaos surround. And there's plenty of reason to fear.

God is there and he's attentively caring for us as the chaos surrounds us in life. He's not only with us but he also ensures that she will not be moved.
That pronoun changes in verse five. He's talking about the people of God. God's people will not ultimately perish as a result of the chaos. He will see us through the night into the morning.
And not because of our environmental efforts or political strategy but because of what God has done for us sustaining us through the night and into the next day.
Today as Christians we don't run to an earthly city. We run to the one who is the ultimate refuge and strength. A mighty fortress is our God a bulwark never failing.
[28:44] Our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing. Just ask who that may be Christ Jesus it is he. He is the one that we run to.

He is the one that we take refuge. He is that mighty fortress that supplies us with everlasting life.
And for the crisis that we face we will see the morning dawn.
and as Christ followers we will not necessarily be kept from crisis. We are not exempt from crisis. But we will be seen through the crisis.
And he will keep us and he will hold us and he will be with us as we go through it. Jude addresses his letter in verse 1 to those who are called beloved and kept for Christ Jesus.
He is there with us. verses 7 and 8 of Psalm 46 say the same thing. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.
[29:48] We rest because God is with us. We can trust that all that he does is for our good and for his glory. We are still because God is present and caring for us.

Thirdly, we know God because God is exalted in all things. We know God because God is exalted in all things.
Verse 8 says, come behold the wondrous works of who? Of the Lord. Verse 10, be still and know that I am God. So how do we go about knowing who God is?
Verse 8 tells us we behold his works. and this is exactly what God tells Israel to do all throughout the Old Testament. There's multiple references to who, you know, where were you when I created everything?
And remember when I brought you out of the land of Egypt just as we read in Jeremiah 32. Genesis 1 is a display of God's creative power and everything that he can put into motion just by his word.
[30:56] Romans 9, I'm sorry, Romans 1 verse 19 says, for what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them for his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made so they are without excuse.

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We know who God is by observing his power and what he has done and his creation that he's put on display. Jeff and I flew into California a few hours before the rest of the guys did because some of us need to be distracted by the exercise.
We can't just go to a gym so we have to be distracted and see pretty things as we're exercising. These guys can go to a gym just focus on the exercise but we need something different. So we went hiking and we went to the mountains just north of Burbank and as we're going up we kept stopping because it's just beautiful to see God's creation and every turn of the trail we'd have to stop again and we'd get our phones out and start taking more pictures because there is God's creation on display.
We could behold his works and see who God is. It's incredible but not only does he physically put himself on display, he's put himself on display in the hearts and lives of all of those who have trusted in Christ as their savior.
Back to verse 10, be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in all the earth. Everywhere.
[32:39] As Joey mentioned earlier, Abner Chow had said we proclaim the gospel everywhere because God rules everywhere and that includes within his people.

he rules and he reigns. And when we give our lives to Christ, we experience firsthand the works of our God.
We know that we are a sinful, broken, wicked people. And if God can save me, wow, he truly can do whatever he pleases.
because I am far from deserving his salvation. And that's true for each and every one of us that know Christ. We find our ultimate hope in life and in death and in the events of life in Christ Jesus.
In verse 10, he says to be still and know that I am God. Remember what verse 6 says? That he utters his voice and the earth melts.
[33:54] Verse 10, the language changes. Previously, the psalmists are speaking of the Lord. Come behold the works of the Lord. But now in verse 10, God is speaking. He says to be still.

There's no other, there's no earthly help, there's no other gods, there's no educational advantage, there's no great enlightening that needs to take place. There's one God who's over all things and rules over all things.
And when he utters his voice in his perfect timing, the chaos of the earth stops and the warning of the nations ceases.
And the calamity of fighting between man and man stops. When God gives his command, the world is still and knows who's rules over them.
One day the Lord will put an end to all sinfulness. By the power of John 1, his word, Christ Jesus will return. And he will reconcile all things back to himself.
[35:07] And those of us who know Christ will spend eternity with God in the peace and presence of our God forever.

He will see us to the morning dawn. He will take us to that place. He will keep us and nothing can remove us if we know Christ as our Savior.
the world will finally be restored back to him. And we'll live in peace forever. We will not face the storms or the nations that totter or the bow or the spear or the chariots of war.
They will be no more. It will be everlasting peace with God our Father in eternity in heaven. Again, verses 7 and 11 say the Lord of hosts is with us.
The God of Jacob is our fortress. Let's pray. Father, we come before you a mighty fortress.
[36:20] The one who protects us and keeps us and restores us and sees us through the night. God, I know that there are many people who are walking through difficulties in life, who are struggling through the circumstances that they face.

Lord, I pray that they would be reminded of who you are, that you have ultimate strength over everything, that you are present and that you are caring, and that you will be exalted in all things, that you have put yourself on display, that one day there will not be a nation that is an enemy to God, but one day every nation will bow and confess that you are Lord.
You hold us and you keep us as we walk through these circumstances. answers. Thank you.

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