

# Followers of the Way

## A present help in trouble

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### Psalm 46

I hope you've all had a good summer break and are feeling refreshed – but I wonder if, like me, there haven't been times when you've felt a bit concerned about the state of the world.

After all, in just the few short weeks over July/August, we've seen terrible wild fires across Europe and the US – most of which appear to have been the result of arson – and then the awful fire storm in Maui, killing so many, which again, it's been suggested, was started deliberately. Then too, there's been the continuing war in Ukraine, with mounting attacks on Russia ... a new Covid variant, ever higher numbers of illegal migrants crossing the Channel ... continuing financial pressures .... The list goes on and on.

But maybe you think we're worrying too much, because, whatever's going on, a huge number of people still seem to be carrying on as if everything's fine. Okay, things may be a bit difficult, they say, and some people are finding life hard – but what we've all got to understand is that life is changing! We're entering a new stage of humanity, and we'll get through all this ... into something better! Ukraine will settle down. Covid will become just like seasonal flu ... the cost of living crisis will disappear. A new world order is dawning, where we're going to be in total control, and where we can be and do whatever we want!

That's the lie Satan wants us to believe, but the reality is that we are being herded like sheep into a new ideological totalitarianism that actually benefits very few, and that's seeking to crush all dissent. As famously - infamously - stated by the World Economic Forum, we will all, except for the very rich, own nothing and be happy, because we will be cared for from cradle to grave, provided only we comply with the new world order, founded on inclusion for all and diversity – which in reality is one of the most repressive and discriminatory value systems on the planet. This is the new religion of our age.

But Christianity is not a set of ideas that can be so casually cast aside and dismissed. Christ was and is the incarnate Son of God, and in Him truth – the really 'real' – is revealed. Just as He did 2,000 years ago, Jesus challenges the world order put in place by Satan, and that's why, in the world today, we're seeing such an increasingly violent clash of kingdoms. Satan is battling to impose control and he won't give any quarter. His followers won't give any quarter.

But the real truth is that God – our Creator and Sovereign – is infinitely more powerful and, though He is giving time to allow as many people as possible opportunity to repent,

He will not allow Satan to win. Even more importantly, the One who gave His own Son that we might live, will not in this present time forsake or abandon us.

Yes, things may feel bad, but the truth is that God is very close, and the turmoil we see all around is evidence of His approach. Without doubt, by our rejection and rebellion – our insistence on having our own way – we have provoked judgment. And because goodness and evil cannot co-exist, there is a price to be paid. It's well said that God doesn't wish the death of any sinner, but He will not turn a blind eye to sin. Ahead of Christ's return in glory, when Satan's hold on creation will finally and forever be broken and he'll be cast into the lake of fire, mankind is therefore faced with a choice. And that choice is serious. It's life or death.

Whatever may happen, therefore, this is what we need to remember. In recent years, the devil has unquestionably gained ground – and this, ahead of the final battle, was foretold in Scripture. Increasing persecution and suffering ahead of the Lord's return were also foretold, but throughout it all – remembering the courage and sacrifice of those who have gone before – we are called to be faithful.

There is every likelihood the present turmoil will increase, as men and women who purpose evil battle to tighten their stranglehold on power – but God tells us to trust and not be afraid. As soldiers of Christ on active service, He calls us to be 100% obedient and to go forward fearlessly. And it's here, faced by this spreading darkness, that Psalm 46 stands as a pool of light. A promise of peace.

The origins of this psalm are unknown, though it's ascribed to the Sons of Korah. Korah, it will be remembered, led a rebellion against Moses in the wilderness, described at length in Numbers 16. Korah, a Levite, together with Dathan and Abiram, both Reubenites, appear to have been jealous of the fact that Aaron had been chosen as High Priest, so, led by Korah, they challenged Moses' leadership. But this of course was a challenge to God and, as punishment, they were swallowed up by the earth in a terrifying earthquake, that killed them instantly and destroyed all their possessions. Yet despite that early rebellion, Korah's descendants were blessed by God – Samuel, for instance, was of the line of Korah – and the Sons of Korah are recorded as amongst the Levites who sang in the Temple, with 11 psalms being specifically attributed to them – all without exception expressing gratitude, humility and trust before the awesome power of God.

Why Psalm 46 was written specifically, we don't know, though it's been suggested that it reflects the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians in the time of Hezekiah, recounted in 2 Kings 18–19; 2 Chronicles 32; and Isaiah 36–37. And certainly, the situation described does broadly seem to fit. But whatever the background and origins, the psalm is an assertion of God's absolute power and might, combined with the assurance that, whatever might happen, He is the God of power and can be trusted.

v.1 'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble...'

Whatever may happen, the psalm proclaims – even if the earth opens up and the mountains fall into the sea – *we will not fear*. But the psalm goes even further than that. The Lord Almighty is with us, it says (v.7), He is our fortress. He brings desolation on

the earth, but He also makes wars cease, and brings lasting peace. And it draws to a close with a command. V.10 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations...'

This is a message we need to take to heart today. There will not be –there cannot be – genuine peace on earth until the Lord's return, when Satan's hold is finally smashed. The reality is that over the last years and months we've found ourselves battling on an ever-growing series of fronts – and that battle's serious. We're faced today, for example, with the increasing stranglehold of ideological redefinition and choice in relation to sexuality and gender; with state sanctioned sponsorship of death, at both the beginning and end of life; and with the attempted ideological ensnarement of the nation's young, etc, etc. Faced with the new religions of sexual libertarianism and climate change, discrimination against Christians has unquestionably been growing – and there is no sign that this will lessen in the near future. But whatever may lie ahead – Psalm 46 tells us that our God is a God in whom we can trust. An ever-present help in trouble, and our strong deliverer.

As the Lord approaches for the final battle, only a fool would say that we shall be immune to the troubles now affecting the world. Financial instability and hardship, family breakdown, the growing threat of conflict and war, food shortages ... the order of the world is being up-ended. But *our duty* remains to guard the light and uphold truth. *Our duty*, whatever happens, is to reject Satan's rebranding and remain faithful ... *Our duty* is still to seek after, and attempt to rescue, the lost. Safe in the knowledge that we go under the Lord's banner and that, at the last, He will bring us safely home.