

# Exposition on Psalm 46

by St. Augustine

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*St. Augustine's exposition on Psalm 46 emphasizes God's unwavering presence and strength as a refuge for believers amidst life's tribulations.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 46:1-3, Psalm 46:6-7, Psalm 46:10, Matthew 27:51, John 14:8, Romans 8:31, Romans 10:4

**Topics:** "Christ's Sacrifice", "God's Presence"

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## Description

St. Augustine preaches on the Psalms, emphasizing the revelation of secrets through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, leading to the understanding that Christ is the end of the law and the key to unlocking hidden truths. He highlights the importance of surrendering to Christ, who perfects and completes us, and the need to find refuge and strength in God amidst life's uncertainties. Augustine discusses how tribulations, especially the consciousness of sin, can only be overcome by seeking God as our helper and finding forgiveness through His grace. He concludes by pointing to the tranquility and security found in acknowledging God's presence and power in our lives.

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## Transcript

1. It is called, A Psalm, to the end, for the sons of Korah, for things secret. Secret is it then; but He Himself, who in the place of Calvary was crucified, you know, has rent the veil, Matthew 27:51 that the secrets of the temple might be discovered. Furthermore since the Cross of our Lord was a key, whereby things closed might be opened; let us trust that He will be with us, that these secrets may be revealed. What is said, To the end, always ought to be understood of Christ. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. Romans 10:4 But The End He is called, not because He consumes, but because He perfects. For ended call we the food which is eaten, and ended the coat which is woven, the former to consumption, the latter to perfection. Because then we have not where to go farther when we have come to Christ, Himself is called the end of our course. Nor ought we to think, that when we have come to Him, we ought to strive any further to come also to the Father. For this thought Philip also, when he said to Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. When he said, It suffices us, he sought the end of satisfaction and perfection. Then said He, Have I been so long time with you, and have you not known Me, Philip: he that has seen Me, has seen the Father. John 14:8-9 In Him then have we the Father, because He is in the Father, and the Father in Him, and He and His Father are One.

2. Our God is a refuge and strength Psalm 45:1. There are some refuges wherein is no strength, whereto when any flees, he is more weakened than strengthened. Thou fleest, for example, to some one greater in

the world, that you may make yourself a powerful friend; this seems to you a refuge. Yet so great are this world's uncertainties, and so frequent grow the ruins of the powerful day by day, that when to such refuge you have come, you begin to fear more than ever therein....Our refuge is not such, but our refuge is strength. When there we have fled, we shall be firm.

3. A helper in tribulations, which find us out too much. Tribulations are many, and in every tribulation unto God must we flee; whether it be a tribulation in our estate, or in our body's health, or about the peril of those dearest to us, or any other thing necessary to the sustaining of this life, refuge ought there to be none at all to a Christian man, other than his Saviour, other than his God, to whom when he has fled, he is strong. For he will not in himself be strong, nor will he to himself be strength, but He will be his strength, who has become his refuge. But, dearly beloved, among all tribulations of the human soul is no greater tribulation than the consciousness of sin. For if there be no wound herein, and that be sound within man which is called conscience, wherever else he may suffer tribulation, there will he flee, and there find God....You see, dearly beloved, when trees are cut down and proved by the carpenters, sometimes in the surface they seem as though injured and rotten; but the carpenter looks into the inner marrow as it were of the tree, and if within he find the wood sound, he promises that it will last in a building; nor will he be very anxious about the injured surface, when that which is within he declares sound. Furthermore, to man anything more inward than conscience is not found; what then profits it, if what is without is sound, and the marrow of conscience has become rotten? These are close and vehement overmuch, and as this Psalm says, too great tribulations; yet even in these the Lord has become a helper by forgiving sin. For the consciences of the ungodly hates nothing save indulgence; for if one says he has great tribulations, being a confessed debtor to the treasury, when he beholds the narrowness of his estate, and sees that he cannot be solvent; if on account of the distrainers every year hanging over him, he says that he suffers great tribulations, and does not breathe freely except in hope of indulgence, and that in things earthly; how much more the debtor of penalties out of the abundance of sins: when shall he pay what he owes out of his evil conscience, when if he pay, he perishes? For to pay this debt, is to undergo the penalties. Remains then that of His indulgence, we may be secure, yet so that, indulgence received, we return not again to contract debts....

4. Now then, such security received, what say they? Therefore will not we fear, when the earth shall be confounded Psalm 45:2. Just before anxious, suddenly secure; out of too great tribulations set in great tranquillity. For in them Christ was sleeping, therefore were they tossed: Christ awoke (as but now we heard out of the Gospel), He commanded the winds, and they were still. Matthew 8:24-26 Since Christ is in each man's heart by faith, it is signified to us, that his heart as a ship in this world's tempest is tossed, who forgets his faith: as though Christ sleeping it is tossed, but Christ awaking comes tranquillity. Nay, the Lord Himself, what said He? Where is your faith? Luke 8:25 Christ aroused, aroused up faith, that what had been done in the ship, might be done in their hearts. A helper in tribulations, which found us out too much. He caused that therein should be great tranquillity.

5. See what tranquillity: Therefore will not we fear when the earth shall be confounded, and the mountains shall be carried into the heart of the sea. Then we shall find not fear. Let us seek mountains carried, and if we can find, it is manifest that this is our security. The Lord truly said to His disciples, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Be Thou removed, and be Thou cast into the sea, and it shall be done. Haply to this mountain, He said of Himself; for He is called a Mountain: It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord shall be manifest. Isaiah 2:2 But this Mountain is placed above other mountains; because the Apostles also are mountains, supporting this Mountain.

Therefore follows, In the last days the Mountain of the Lord shall be manifest, established in the top of the mountains. Therefore passes It the tops of all mountains, and on the top of all mountains is It placed; because the mountains are preaching The Mountain. But the sea signifies this world, in comparison of which sea, like earth seemed the nation of the Jews. For it was not covered over with the bitterness of idolatry, but, like dry land, was surrounded with the bitterness of the Gentiles as with sea. It was to be, that the earth be confounded, that is, that nation of the Jews; and that the mountains be carried into the heart of the sea, that is, first that great Mountain established in the top of the mountains. For He deserted the nation of the Jews, and came among the Gentiles. He was carried from the earth into the sea. Who carrying Him? The Apostles, to whom He had said, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be you cast into the sea, and it shall be done: that is, through your most faithful preaching it shall come to pass, that this mountain, that is, I Myself, be preached among the Gentiles, be glorified among the Gentiles, be acknowledged among the Gentiles, and that be fulfilled which was predicted of Me, A people whom I have not known shall serve Me.. ..

6. The waters thereof roared, and were troubled Psalm 45:3: when the Gospel was preached, What is this? He seems to be a setter forth of strange gods: Acts 17:18 this the Athenians; but the Ephesians, with what tumult would they have slain the Apostles, when in the theatre, for their goddess Diana, they made such an uproar, as to be shouting, Great is Diana of the Ephesians! Acts 19:34 Amidst which waves and roaring of the sea, feared not they who to that refuge had fled. Nay, the Apostle Paul would enter in to the theatre, and was kept back by the disciples, because it was necessary that he should still abide in the flesh for their sakes. But yet, the waters thereof roared, and were troubled: the mountains shook at the mightiness thereof. Whose might? The sea's? Or rather God's, of whom was said, refuge and strength, a helper in tribulations, which have found us out too much? For shaken were the mountains, that is, the powers of this world. For one thing are the mountains of God, another the mountains of the world: the mountains of the world, they whose head is the devil, the mountains of God, they whose Head is Christ. But by these mountains were shaken those mountains. Then gave they their voices against Christians, when the mountains were shaken, the waters roaring; for the mountains were shaken, and there was made a great earthquake, with quaking of the sea. But against whom this? Against the City founded upon a rock. The waters roar, the mountains shake, the Gospel being preached. What then, the City of God? Hear what follows.

7. The streams of the river make glad the City of God Psalm 45:4. When the mountains shake, when the sea rages, God deserts not His City, by the streams of the river. What are these streams of the river? That overflowing of the Holy Spirit, of which the Lord said, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believes in Me, out of his bosom shall flow rivers of living water. John 7:37-38 These rivers then flowed out of the bosom of Paul, Peter, John, the other Apostles, the other faithful Evangelists. Since these rivers flowed from one river, many streams of the river make glad the City of God. For that you might know this to be said of the Holy Spirit, in the same Gospel next said the Evangelist, But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that were to believe in Him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. John 7:39 Jesus being glorified after His Resurrection, glorified after His Ascension, on the day of Pentecost came the Holy Spirit, and filled the believers, Acts 2:1-2 who spoke with tongues, and began to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Hence was the City of God made glad, while the sea was troubled by the roaring of its waters, while the mountains were confounded, asking what they should do, how drive out the new doctrine, how root out the race of Christians from the earth. Against whom? Against the streams of the river making glad the City of God. For thereby showed He of what river He spoke; that He signified the Holy Spirit, by the streams of the river make glad the City of

God. And what follows? The Most High has sanctified His tabernacle: since then there follows the mention of Sanctification, it is manifest that these streams of the river are to be understood of the Holy Spirit, by whom is sanctified every godly soul believing in Christ, that it may be made a citizen of the City of God.

8. God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved Psalm 45:5. Let the sea rage, the mountains shake; God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved. What is, in the midst of her? That God stands in any one place, and they surround Him who believe in Him? Then is God circumscribed by place; and broad that which surrounds, narrow that which is surrounded? God forbid. No such thing imagine of God, who is contained in no place, whose seat is the conscience of the godly: and so is God's seat in the hearts of men, that if man fall from God, God in Himself abides, not falls like one not finding where to be. For rather does He lift up you, that you may be in Him, than so lean upon you, as if you withdraw yourself, to fall. Himself if He withdraw, fall will you: yourself if you withdraw, fall will not He. What then is, God is in the midst of her? It signifies that God is equal to all, and accepts not persons. For as that which is in the middle has equal distances to all the boundaries, so God is said to be in the middle, because He consults equally for all. God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved. Wherefore shall she not be moved? Because God is in the midst of her. He is the Helper in tribulations that have found us out too much. God shall help her with His Countenance. What is, with His Countenance? With manifestation of Himself. How manifests God Himself, so as that we see His Countenance? I have already told you; you have learned God's Presence; we have learned it through His works. When from Him we receive any help so that we cannot at all doubt that it was granted to us by the Lord, then God's Countenance is with us.

9. The heathen are troubled Psalm 45:6. And how troubled? Why troubled? To cast down the City of God, in the midst whereof is God? To overthrow the tabernacle sanctified, which God helps with His Countenance? No: with a wholesome trouble are the heathen now troubled. For what follows? And the kingdoms are bowed. Bowed, says He, are the kingdoms; not now erected that they may rage, but bowed that they may adore. When were the kingdoms bowed? When that came to pass which was predicted in another Psalm, All kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him. What cause made the kingdoms to bow? Hear the cause. The Most High gave His Voice, and the earth was moved. The fanatics of idolatry, like frogs in the marshes, clamoured, the more tumultuously, the more sordidly, in filth and mire. And what is the brawling of frogs to the thunder of the clouds? For out of them the Most High gave His Voice, and the earth was moved: He thundered out of His clouds. And what are His clouds? His Apostles, His preachers, by whom He thundered in precepts, lightened in miracles. The same are clouds who are also mountains: mountains for their height and firmness, clouds for their rain and fruitfulness. For these clouds watered the earth, of which it was said, The Most High gave His Voice, and the earth was moved. For it is of those clouds that He threatens a certain barren vineyard, whence the mountains were carried into the heart of the sea; I will command, says He, the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. Isaiah 5:6 This was fulfilled in that which I have mentioned, when the mountains were carried into the heart of the sea; when it was said, It was necessary that the word of God should have been spoken first to you; but seeing ye put it from you, we turn to the Gentiles; Acts 13:46 then was fulfilled, I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. The nation of the Jews has just so remained as a fleece dry upon the ground. For this, you know, happened in a certain miracle, the ground was dry, the fleece only was wet, yet rain in the fleece appeared not. Judges 6:36-40 So also the mystery of the New Testament appeared not in the nation of the Jews. What there was the fleece, is here the veil. For in the fleece was veiled the mystery. But on the ground, in all the nations open lies Christ's Gospel; the rain is manifest, the Grace of Christ is bare, for it is not covered with a veil. But that the rain might come out of it, the fleece was pressed. For by pressure they from themselves excluded Christ, and the Lord now from His clouds rains on the ground,

the fleece has remained dry. But of them then the Most High gave His Voice, out of those clouds; by which Voice the kingdoms were bowed and worshipped.

10. The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our taker up Psalm 45:7. Not any man, not any power, not, in short, Angel, or any creature either earthly or heavenly, but the Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our taker up. He who sent Angels, came after Angels, came that Angels might serve Him, came that men He might make equal to Angels. Mighty Grace! If God be for us, who can be against us? The Lord of Hosts is with us. What Lord of Hosts is with us? If (I say) God be for us, who can be against us?

He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; how has He not with Him also freely given us all things. Romans 8:31-32 Therefore be we secure, in tranquillity of heart nourish we a good conscience with the Bread of the Lord. The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our taker up. However great be your infirmity, see who takes you up. One is sick, a physician is called to him. His own taken-up, the Physician calls the sick man. Who has taken him up? Even He.

A great hope of salvation; a great Physician has taken him up. What Physician? Every Physician save He is man: every Physician who comes to a sick man, another day can be made sick, beside Him. The God of Jacob is our taker up. Make yourself altogether as a little child, such as are taken up by their parents. For those not taken up, are exposed; those taken up are nursed. Do you think God has so taken you up, as when an infant your mother took you up? Not so, but to eternity.

For your voice is in that Psalm, My father and my mother forsake me, but the Lord has taken me up. 11. Come and see the works of the Lord Psalm 45:8. Now of this taking up, what has the Lord done? Consider the whole world, come and see. For if you come not, you see not; if you see not, you believe not; if you believe not, you stand afar off: if you believe, you come; if you believe, you see. For how came we to that mountain? Not on foot? Is it by ship? Is it on the wing? Is it on horses?

For all that pertain to space and place, be not concerned, trouble not yourself, He comes to you. For out of a small stone He has grown, and become a great mountain, so that He has filled all the face of the earth. Why then would you by land come to Him, who fills all lands? Lo, He has already come: watch thou. By growing He wakes even sleepers; if yet there is not in them so deep sleep, as that they be hardened even against the mountain coming; but they hear, Awake, you that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.

Ephesians 5:14 For it was a great thing for the Jews to see the stone. For the stone was yet small: and small they deservedly despised it, and despising they stumbled, and stumbling they were broken; remains that they be ground to powder. For so was it said of the stone, Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. Luke 20:18 It is one thing to be broken, another to be ground to powder. To be broken is less than to be ground to powder: but none grinds He coming exalted, save whom He broke lying low.

For now before His coming He lay low before the Jews, and they stumbled at Him, and were broken; hereafter shall He come in His Judgment, glorious and exalted, great and powerful, not weak to be judged, but strong to judge, and grind to powder those who were broken stumbling at Him. For A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, 1 Peter 2:8 is He to them that believe not. Therefore, brethren, no wonder if the Jews acknowledged not Him, whom as a small stone lying before their feet they despised.

They are to be wondered at, who even now so great a mountain will not acknowledge. The Jews at a small stone by not seeing stumbled; the heretics stumble at a mountain. For now that stone has grown, now say we unto them, Lo, now is fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel, The stone that was small became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. Daniel 2:35 Wherefore stumble ye at Him, and go not rather up to Him? Who is so blind as to stumble at a mountain? Came He to you that you should have wherewith to stumble, and not have wherewith to go up?

Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. Isaiah 2:3 Isaiah says this: Come ye, and let us go up. What is, Come ye, and let us go up? Come ye, is, Believe ye. Let us go up, is, Let us profit. But they will neither come, nor go up, nor believe, nor profit. They bark against the mountain. Even now by so often stumbling on Him they are broken, and will not go up, choosing always to stumble. Say we to them, Come ye, and see the works of the Lord: what prodigies He has set forth through the earth. Prodigies are called, because they portend something, those signs of miracles which were done when the world believed. And what thereafter came to pass, and what did they portend?

12. He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth Psalm 45:9. This not yet see we fulfilled: yet are there wars, wars among nations for sovereignty; among sects, among Jews, Pagans, Christians, heretics, are wars, frequent wars, some for the truth, some for falsehood contending. Not yet then is this fulfilled, He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth; but haply it shall be fulfilled. Or is it now also fulfilled? In some it is fulfilled; in the wheat it is fulfilled, in the tares it is not yet fulfilled.

What is this then, He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth? Wars He calls whereby it is warred against God. But who wars against God? Ungodliness. And what to God can ungodliness do? Nothing. What does an earthen vessel dashed against the rock, however vehemently dashed? With so much greater harm to itself it comes, with how much the greater force it comes. These wars were great, frequent were they. Against God fought ungodliness, and earthen vessels were dashed in pieces, even men by presuming on themselves, by too much prevailing by their own strength.

This is that, the shield whereof Job also named concerning one ungodly. He runs against God, upon the stiff neck of his shield. Job 15:26 What is, upon the stiff neck of his shield? Presuming too much upon his own protection. Were they such who said, God is our refuge and strength, a Helper in tribulations which have found us out too much? Or in another Psalm, For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. When one learns that in himself he is nothing, and help in himself has none, arms in him are broken in pieces, wars are made to cease.

Such wars then destroyed that Voice of the Most High out of His holy clouds, whereby the earth was moved, and the kingdoms were bowed. These wars has He made to cease unto the end of the earth. He shall break the bow, and dash in pieces the arms, and burn the shield with fire. Bow, arms, shield, fire. The bow is plots; arms, public warfare; shields, vain presuming of self-protection: the fire wherewith they are burned, is that whereof the Lord said, I have come to send fire on the earth; Luke 12:49 of which fire says the Psalm, There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

This fire burning, no arms of ungodliness shall remain in us, needs must all be broken, dashed in pieces, burned. Remain thou unharmed, not having any help of your own; and the more weak you are, having no arms your own, the more He takes you up, of whom it is said, The God of Jacob is our taker up....But when God takes us up, does He send us away unarmed? He arms us, but with other arms, arms Evangelical, arms of truth, continence, salvation, faith, hope, charity. These arms shall we have, but not of

ourselves: but the arms which of ourselves we had, are burnt up: yet if by that fire of the Holy Spirit we are kindled, whereof it is said, He shall burn the shields with fire; you, who wished to be powerful in yourself, has God made weak, that He may make you strong in Him, because in yourself you were made weak.

13. What then follows? Be still. To what purpose? And see that I am God Psalm 45:10. That is, Not ye, but I am God. I created, I create anew; I formed, I form anew; I made, I make anew. If you could not make yourself, how can you make yourself anew? This sees not the contentious tumult of man's soul; to which contentious tumult is it said, Be still. That is, restrain your souls from contradiction. Do not argue, and, as it were, arm against God. Else yet live your arms, not yet burned up with fire. But if they are burned, Be still; because you have not wherewith to fight. But if you be still in yourselves, and from Me seek all, who before presumed on yourselves, then shall you see that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. Just before I said, by the name of earth is signified the nation of the Jews, by the name of sea the other nations. The mountains were carried into the heart of the sea; the nations are troubled, the kingdoms are bowed; the Most High gave His Voice, and the earth was moved. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our taker up Psalm 45:11. Miracles are done among the heathen, full filled is the faith of the heathen; burned are the arms of human presumption. Still are they, in tranquillity of heart, to acknowledge God the Author of all their gifts. And after this glorifying, does He yet desert the people of the Jews? Of which says the Apostle, I say unto you, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. Romans 11:25 That is, until the mountains be carried hither, the clouds rain here, the Lord here bows the kingdoms with His thunder, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And what thereafter? And so all Israel shall be saved. Therefore, here too observing the same order, I will be exalted (says He) among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth; that is, both in the sea, and in the earth, that now might all say what follows: the God of Jacob is our taker up.

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