

The Presence of God

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[0:00] Psalm 46 It says, God will help her when morning dawns.

The nations rage, the kingdoms totter, he utters his voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots with fire. Be still and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. This wonderful, wonderful psalm.

Often quoted during times of distress and things. But we want to look more closely at some background information starting off with. The historical placement of the psalm. Was there an event tied with it that we could make sense of?

[1:55] Well, they say it was, most scholars say it's sometime after 700 B.C. whenever this was written. And it was written after the deliverance from the hand of Sennacherib and the Assyrians.

That story is found in 2 Kings 18 and 19. The Assyrians had captured many portions of Judah already and were now laying siege on Jerusalem. Among many other things they were doing, they were sending messages to King Hezekiah trying to discourage him.

Trying to break the will of the people. They were defaming the Lord's name by saying, Look how many peoples we have already destroyed. Your God will not stop us. And these same Assyrians, for further background, after their failure to capture Jerusalem at this time, they settled in Nineveh. And that gives you a powerful back story to why Jonah had such a big prejudice against these people. Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh because this is what they did to God's people and to His name.

So this is kind of where that kind of came from. Assyrians did many things, but this was the most latest thing before Jonah meant. Okay, authorship. Three possibilities that most people agree with.

[3:01] Sons of Korah, which we see in the title. Isaiah or Hezekiah. Hezekiah was king and Isaiah was the contemporary prophet who ministered to the nation of Israel when Hezekiah was king.

And in the writings of Isaiah and as well as the spoken words of Hezekiah we find in 2 Kings. Some of the terminology is very similar. So many scholars think they could have been also authors.

We'll come back to the Sons of Korah for a little more information on them in a minute. A perspective of this. We see a lot of plurality here that God is our refuge.

Therefore we will not fear. The Lord of hosts is with us. So I see it as a psalm of corporate worship. A psalm of corporate worship. It's meant to be sung with everyone else.

It's from the perspective of God is helping all of us. The title, if you look in your Bible there, there's To the Choir Master of the Sons of Korah, according to Elamoth, and then a song.

[4:04] Well first off, to the choir master, the chief musician. Well what is he talking about there? He's talking about to the skilled individual in charge of teaching others. I guess that might be my role here.

And King David installed this office back in 1 Chronicles 15. I'll read verse 16 here. David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy.

And then in verse 22 he singled someone out. Chennaniah, leader of the Levites in music, should direct the music, for he understood it. And I think in the King James Version it says because he was skillful.

So, this psalm was written so that the choir master could make use of it. Here you go. Use this. All right. This is of the sons of Korah. Now they were appointed Levitical musicians.

Also from 1 Chronicles 9. The Korahites were in charge of the work of the service, keepers of the thresholds of the tent, as their fathers had been in charge of the camp of the Lord, keepers of the entrance.

[5 : 09] Both with the tabernacle and with the temple, the sons of Korah were descendants of Kohath. Several Levites were given different instructions. But specifically, some of the sons of Korah, verse 33 of this chapter says, Now these, the singers, the heads of fathers' houses of the Levites, were in the chambers of the temple, free from other service.

For they were on duty day and night. All they did was sing. All they did was sing praises. So when I go back to say, the authorship may not be the sons of Korah, they may not have written it, but they definitely sang it.

They were supposed to sing all the psalms. They could have written it, but they definitely sang it. So that may be where the title comes from there. Debated on both sides of that. They probably said it from memory.

Oh, probably. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. That's for a later time. I don't always think you'd have a down by. Yeah, yeah, that's right. If you did it day and night, you probably got it.

So anyway, historically, they served various offices in the tabernacle and temple. The next phrase there, according to Elmoth. Most think this is a musical term, maybe a tune name, or maybe a special instruction for how to sing it.

[6 : 21] The Hebrew word normally denotes girls or young maidens. I read this, a couple commentaries, and then I checked with my brother, I guess it was a few months ago, and he'd been going through Hebrew and said, well, yeah, that's what that word means.

I went, great. Confirmation. But that also means that it may have been sung at a higher pitch. If we're talking about girls or young maidens, maybe a higher timbre or ladies sing. So that's an idea, so we have to sing it very high.

Anyway, then the last one instruction is a song. Well, what are songs for? Meant to be sung frequently. You don't write a song and don't sing it, right? And several songs come from this, but in particular, Martin Luther's A Mighty Fortress Is Our God is inspired by this song.

A very, very theological psalm, hymn from this psalm. We're going to refer to it several times throughout our study tonight. A Mighty Fortress. Alright, so let's get into verse 1.

God is our refuge and strength. A very present help in trouble. First thing I see in this verse is imminent salvation.

[7 : 28] Imminent salvation. Salvation is here. It starts off with God is our refuge and strength. Not our armies or fortresses. Much like Psalm 20, verse 7 says, Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

Our boast is in the Lord. As Jeremiah says in Jeremiah 9, 23 and 24, Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man boast in his might.

Let not the rich man boast in his riches. But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me. That I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things I delight, declares the Lord. So it starts off right. God is our refuge and strength. But what is a refuge? A shelter, a protection from danger.

These things were built in Old Testament times to take a beating. No one could get in and they tried to barrage whatever at it. You know, it would stand firm. Well, the idea is the Lord stands against the enemy.

[8 : 35] He stands against the enemy. He is our refuge. And then he is a refuge in strength. Strength. The vigor, the mental and moral power, the firmness and courage.

But not man-centered. All strength comes from the Lord. God gives us the strength. Because man-made strength is useless, right? All of the strength is weakness, for power belongs to God alone.

So God is our refuge and strength. And the next phrase is, often, often quoted, a very present help. Now, what does that mean? He will not forsake us in our time of need.

He will not forsake us in our time of need. He's very present. He's there. But also, think of this as, you know, your trouble is out here. Here's the trouble. You're looking at it. Boy, that's trouble.

Okay? But all the while, God's right here. He's very present. He's more present than the trouble itself. So many times we focus here and forget to look right in front of our face.

[9:35] He is more present than the trouble itself. Now, Warren Wiersbe describes the trouble as people in tight places. People in Jerusalem were in a tight place.

They were surrounded by the Assyrians. They couldn't get out. And they were getting closed in on. The encouragement of Isaiah here is interesting. Isaiah said to them, Say to your master, or say to King Hezekiah, Thus says the Lord, Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me.

Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land. Verse 32, He shall not come into this city, or shoot an arrow there.

Not even one arrow. Or come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege mount against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake, and for the sake of my servant, David. So, Isaiah is saying, Yep, there's trouble. We all see it. But don't fear.

[10:39] God's right here. He's very present. Alright? Alright, verses 2 and 3. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling, Selah.

Well, we've talked about first verse, imminent salvation. God is a refuge and strength. Therefore, what do we do about that? So I see revelation, that God is a refuge and strength, and then response.

Revelation and response. What are we going to do about this? Therefore, because we have this knowledge, in response to who God has revealed Himself to be, we will not fear. And there's just a strong statement here.

We will not fear. How irrational is it to fear, if you truly believe the first statement? God is our refuge and strength. Well, why do we fear?

The psalmist is saying, this is an act of rejection of despair. I reject despair. I'm not going to despair, because I know the Lord is here. Then it says, though the mountains be moved, though its waters roar, though the mountains tremble, basically, though disasters loom upon us.

[11:55] This is very powerful, powerful imagery. So what does earth giving way refer to? Well, probably earthquake. You're standing there, and then it starts moving around. Earth's giving way.

Though mountains be moved, either after the result of an earthquake, or a volcano, or something similar. And they are moved into the sea, roaring, foaming, swelling.

And then the mountains tremble, breaking apart in the sea. And think about being right there when this is happening. How do you stop an earthquake?

I mean, what do you do? You try to get off the ground, but I mean, how do you stop a mountain from moving into the sea or breaking apart? How do you stop the sea from foaming and swelling? You're powerless.

Man is powerless to stop these events. And then, I have that little word, Selah. And what does that usually mean? It means meditate. Meditate on these things.

[12:55] Okay, think about how powerless you are. Okay, think about it. What seems unmovable, unlikely, terrible, irresolvable, irreparable, catastrophic, disastrous, and doomed, God is our refuge and strength in the face of that.

Meditate on that. Meditate on His goodness to us in the midst of that. Spurgeon has a great quote, and it's long enough, I didn't put it on your sheet, so I'll read it to you here.

In the midst of such a scene, the music may well come to a pause, both to give the singer's breath and ourselves time for meditation. The Selah. We are in no hurry, but can sit us down and wait while earth dissolves and mountains rock and oceans roar.

Ours is not the headlong rashness which passes for courage. We can calmly confront the danger and meditate upon terror, dwelling on its separate items and united forces.

The pause is not an exclamation of dismay, but merely a rest in music. We do not suspend our song in alarm, but retune our hearts with deliberation amidst the tumult of the storm.

[14:02] It were well if all of us could say, Selah, under tempestuous trials, but alas, too often we speak in our haste. Lay our trembling hands bewildered among the strings, strike the lyre with a rude crash, and mar the melody of our life song.

What is our life song? God is our refuge and strength at very present time, at very present help in trouble. So Selah. Step back and think about it when things are going haywire.

Alright, verse 4. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. I see here, indwelling grace.

Indwelling grace. Talks about a river here. Water was a precious commodity. Still is, but it really was back then. You didn't have it, you know, plumbing, Mike.

Jerusalem was not built on a river. Because of that, Hezekiah had built an underground water system from the spring of Gihon and Kidron to the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem.

[15 : 11] And because the Assyrians had surrounded the city, they very well could have cut off their water supply. So this idea of a river in Jerusalem supplying, that would have perked the ears up of the Israelites.

Really? Okay. You know, there's a river. There's sustenance here. It's saying God is their source of life. Supernaturally sustaining them. And that's the picture of grace that we see.

He's their source of life. And not only for that time, but promised for the future. Really interesting passage in Ezekiel 47 and also in Zechariah.

Now talk also about a river. I'll read this part of the passage here. Ezekiel has a vision. Then He brought me back to the door of the temple. Where is the temple? Jerusalem. And behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the temple faced east.

The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. Then He brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east.

[16 : 14] And behold, the water was trickling out on the south side. And as He kept going out further and further, He measured how deep it was and it was a deep river. Verse 7, As I went back, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other.

So there's a lot of trees, plant growth here. Then verse 12. And on the banks on both sides of the river there will grow all kinds of trees for food.

Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fall. Sounds like Psalms 1, right? Food leaf also should not wither. But they will bear fresh fruit every month because the water for them flows from the sanctuary.

Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing. So where's the water coming from? From the sanctuary. Also Zechariah 14.8, On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem.

There's no river there. The waters are going to flow out from Jerusalem. Half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter. This is also talking about God's grace to the Gentiles, to us, coming out from Jerusalem.

[17 : 23] But it's a picture of grace. A river coming from Jerusalem, sustaining in time of need.

Okay, so there's a river that makes glad, makes glad the city of God.

Joy comes from the Lord. This river is flowing through here. Joy comes from this river. Life comes from the streams of this water as we just read. And this contrast with the raging, destructive waters of the sea we just read about earlier.

It's been tearing everything up. Well, this river is sustaining, giving life. Well, who does it make glad? The city and the holy habitation? Well, think of a city.

Sometimes it's named after people. I'm not sure. Is Bartlesville named after somebody? Okay, okay. Well, this city is dedicated to God, to His praise.

It's a monument to His praise. And it's a holy habitation because He's there. It's glorified by His presence. The city of God, the holy habitation.

[18 : 22] And it's kind of a roundabout thing. The river sustains this city which is dedicated to His glory. He gives you the power to give Him glory. And it's all about Him.

Of God, of the Most High, this just reminds us that the city and the holy habitation are identified by, created by, sustained by, omnipotent God.

This is His city. He's going to take care of it. Alright? Verse 5. God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved.

God will help her when morning dawns. Well, He's there. Embedded security. God is there. He's in the midst of them.

Embedded security. Two ways to look at that. It is rooted in the Lord. The city is rooted in the Lord. And the other side of it, the Lord planted Himself there.

[19 : 18] Reminds me of John 15, 4 and 5. Abide in me and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine.

You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. So God is here. He's planted. He's rooted Himself in the city. Not to be moved. Okay, she shall not be moved. Think about it. How could enemies move this city?

They had to first remove God. How are they going to do that? God is in the midst of her. Okay, she's not going to be moved. He's there. The phrase from Mighty Fortress, He must win the battle. But also notice the terminology here. In verse 5, God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved. Shall not be moved. He will help her when morning dawns.

[20 : 18] So shall, will, and when. This is terms of future salvation. What is he saying here? Have patience for God's timing. As Psalm 27 says, Wait for the Lord.

Be strong and let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord. Lord, if God is there, if He's in charge, He's going to take care of it when He wants to take care of it.

So, well, you need to do something, God. Don't you know that's right there? He knows. He knows it's there. Help dawns in the morning. When light comes, God's deliverance is proven true.

We see the results of it. Remember the old phrase, It's always darkest just before the dawn. It's always darkest. But when that first ray of light hits, boy, it shoots right across the sky. And it's a glorious thing.

Verse 6. The nations rage. The kingdoms totter. He utters His voice. The earth melts. Well, I see here, it's kind of a strange way to look at it, but sovereign disaster.

[21 : 20] Sovereign disaster. See, the nations rage. Well, more than just the Assyrians, many ravenous peoples gathered against God's people.

And this is a picture of the roaring seas. The roaring seas, crashing about. Kingdoms totter. What is he talking about there?

Their own welfare was compromised by attacking Israel. Go back to 2 Kings 18 and 19. It happened to Assyria. Because they were so focused on Israel, they were leaving other parts unguarded. It's a picture of the mountains falling into the sea.

The next phrase, the earth melts. This is also a resultant consequence for their actions. They are destroyed. Imagine fighting against God Almighty.

You're going to lose. Every time. They are destroyed. It's a picture of the mountains breaking in the sea. So it's referring back to the earlier verse, in verse 2 and 3, that the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, that the earth gives way.

[22 : 21] Though its waters roar and foam, but the mountains tremble at its swelling. He's echoing it again with the nations that are coming against them. But I skipped a phrase in there.

He utters His voice. He utters His voice, the earth melts. Okay. God's supreme power in Israel's protection. He created the universe by His voice.

He can destroy it by the same. Cause and effect, right? And it reminds us of this stanza, and though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.

The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for Him. His rage we can endure, for lo, His doom is sure. Here's where He utters His voice. One little word shall fill Him.

One little word shall fill Him. Right? True reason for all this calamity. It's God's sovereign will. He's taking care of it.

[23 : 23] Remember how much you could influence the earthquake? You can't. We're powerless to do that. Why does He do this? He does this to prove Himself faithful.

Psalm 40, verse 11, As for you, O Lord, you will not restrain your mercy from me. Your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me. But also to teach His children true dependence upon Him.

After the children of Israel had walked through the Red Sea on dry land, and then here comes Pharaoh and his army, and Moses said to the people, Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today.

For the Egyptians who you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. Wow! How often are we silent?

The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. It echoes future here for a be still and know. Right? So it's God's sovereign will.

[24 : 27] Sovereign disaster is kind of a different way of looking at it. Now verse 7, The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. And again, a Selah. Well, this is a restatement of the title.

It's prevailing presence. Prevailing presence. He's Lord of all. He's Lord of hosts. He's talking about there over all nations. Every nation He is Lord.

The far-reaching effect of His Lordship. But also the God of Jacob. And He's referring here that He's the author of the covenant. The covenant God had made with the children of Israel.

With Jacob. This is the same God who's with you now. He's the proven faithful shepherd. He's brought you through many things. Think of the shepherd as we talked about Sunday morning with Pastor Don.

He's the good shepherd. The Lord of hosts is with us. It's the restated reason again for not fearing. We don't need to fear. He's been our help in ages past.

[25 : 30] He's our hope for years to come. Prevailing presence. But He also says God of Jacob is our fortress. And here we go. This is the title for the hymn, right? A mighty fortress is our God.

A bulwark never failing. Our helper He amidst the flood of mortal ills prevailing. Once again, it's like the first verse. A refuge, a fortress is our God.

A bulwark. What is a bulwark? Well, something big and stout, I'm guessing, right? Well, yeah.

Best way to kind of think of it, maybe the big beam that goes along the roof of your house. The big old bough of a tree. You're not going to move it. It is steady. And it stands against.

He amidst the flood. The flood. The roaring seas. The nations coming on you. Immortal ills. He prevails against it. Prevailing presence of God. And again, Selah. This verse is a restatement of verse 1.

[26 : 28] It's aptly placed to stop and ponder our God's greatness. Just think about that. He is a mighty fortress. Verse 8 and 9.

Come, behold the works of the Lord. How He has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots with fire.

In these two verses, I see very apparent authority. Apparent authority. It's very noticeable to all.

Come, behold, these words. An invitation or reminder to observe, acknowledge, and celebrate.

But celebrate what? Come, behold the works of the Lord. No one else is giving credit here. These are the acts of God. Notice in 8 and 9 how it says, He has brought desolations.

He makes wars cease. He breaks the bow. He burns the chariots with fire. This is the Lord. And it's also referring back to the covenant. The covenant promise is upheld.

[27 : 36] Israel's enemies are slain. Israel is delivered. I love the word here, and I don't know if it makes its way into all the translations, but it does in mine. Come, behold, the works of the Lord, how He has brought desolations on the earth.

Not only what He does, but notice the manner in which He does it. Our God is amazing. Watch how He does it. He has brought, He makes, He breaks and shatters, He burns.

This is very active and aggressive terminology. But it's also for a purpose. It's for His glory. It's for the ultimate renown for His actions for His people.

It's obvious that God has done this. He will receive ultimate renown for all these actions. He is saving His people. The word desolations.

Again, it's a strange thing for the psalmist to tell us to come behold, but behold destruction. Come, behold, destruction. Well, that's kind of a downer.

[28 : 43] You know, look at destruction. But He also invites us to behold peace. At the start of verse 9, He makes wars cease. So what is He really telling us to behold?

He invites us to behold God's decision in either way. There's desolations, there's wars, and then the wars cease. Well, and He did it. God did it. So the psalmist is really saying, look at the Lord here. He's the one who makes this happen. The war, bow, spear, chariots, these are the things that God destroys. And what are they? Man's tools of calamity.

But they are powerless. They are powerless compared to God. Another verse. Did we in our own strength confide? Our striving would be losing.

We're not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing. Just ask who that may be. Christ Jesus, it is He. Lord, Sabaoth, His name, from age to age, the same.

[29:42] And He must win the battle. It's the man of God's own choosing, right? Christ for us. It's God's decision to bring wars. It's God's decision to make them cease. All right.

Now, walk through what we've walked through so far. God is with us in the midst of trouble. We will not fear. Though everything goes haywire, there's grace there for us.

God is in the midst of the city. Nations rage, but He utters His voice and they're away. Behold the works of the Lord. After all this, be still. Be still and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. He is God. He is divine. What does that do for us?

It should be humbling. Humbling divinity. His divinity should humble us. Be still. That word literally means cease striving.

[30:44] Wow. He's talking to everyone. Cease striving. Pull off your hands, you enemies, from my people. And for my people, sit down and wait in patience.

As Isaiah 40 verse 31 says, But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. And Spurgeon on this particular point says, At this point in time, since none can worthily proclaim His nature, let expressive silence muse His praise. Be still and just know that He is God.

And what does that phrase mean? Understand and admit, comprehend and reconcile the fact that He is in control. I watched a clip of several very prominent preachers discussing this topic about thinking.

About thinking deeply about something. How often times we don't want to do that. Nah, that's, I rather just, okay, give me something. Spoon feed me a little bit. But meditate. The word *selah* in this happens three times.

[31:53] Stop and think about this. Be still. And know that He is God. See what He has done. It does wonders for you. And then He says, I will be exalted.

And He says it twice. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. This is God's goal. No one's going to usurp this. It will come to pass. When you read it a different way, I will be exalted.

You know, He will be. Among the nations. Through blessing or through judgment. Through blessing. And He gave the indication of the Abrahamic covenant that He will bless all nations through the seed of Abraham.

And then the judgment. I just picked one of many. When folks are disobedient to the Lord, a judgment does come. But He will be exalted because He is God and He is holy in blessing and in judgment.

Also, I will be exalted in the earth. This is the global effect of God's word. It reaches to everyone. The call to exalt God in the whole earth is also prominent.

[32:56] Psalm 86, verses 9 and 10. All the nations You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous things.

You alone are God. You alone are God. All the nations will come. Right? He has created all nations. They will exalt Him either now or later.

Either way. He alone is God. Be still and know that He is God. Our last verse tonight, The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.

It's a restatement of verse 7 exactly. What is this whole thing talking about? Emmanuel. Emmanuel. God is with us. Our imminent salvation.

Our revelation that we respond to. Our indwelling grace. Our embedded security. Our sovereign Lord over disasters. whose presence prevails upon us.

[33:55] Whose authority is ever apparent. Whose ultimate divinity brings all creation to its knees in humble adoration. This is our God. This is our God.

This God is with us. It's a final restatement of God's presence. And again, *Selah* at the end. May meditating on God's truth transform your living.

May looking at this psalm and realizing how powerful our God is. How much He loves us and takes care of us. May that transform the way you go about living. When trials come, when they're out here, do you see Him right here?

Find God in it. A few questions for introspection before we close tonight. In what is your confidence placed? Is it a job?

Is it your retirement plan? Or the approval of your friends? Or status in the community? If I took that away, what would you do?

[34:57] How would you function? When your confidence is in the Lord, He's always there. You can be confident that He is there. In difficult times do you respond to the revealed presence of God.

Look for Him. Look for Him in difficult times. And just a reminder, where can you go from the presence of the Lord? Psalm 139, verses 1-12, and then 23-24.

Let me read this for you. O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You hem me in behind and before and lay Your hand upon me. Just such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

It is high. I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there.

[36:01] If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me and the light about me be night.

Even the darkness is not dark to You. The night is bright as the day for darkness is as light with You. The last two verses. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. So I hope you take from this psalm the prevailing presence of God is the topic here and it is aptly read when times are going awry.

But read it also with this in mind. He's here for all times, good and bad. He is here helping us. So recognize the presence of God. Thank you.