

There are fewer subjects I delight to preach about than the Church, and the primary reason for this is because God loves the Church—unfortunately, we live in a time where many professing Christians have lost interest in the Church...

It's either become optional, or else, it's been so redefined that it's unrecognizable—in contrast to this, the NT knows nothing of a Church-less Christianity—the Church is described as the hub of God's saving and redeeming purposes...

Thus, in order to capture the diversity, beauty, and importance of the Church, Scripture describes it with various imageries—it's a garden, a body, a family, a temple, and within Psalm 46, the Church is described as a city...

CHS—"The church is peculiarly the City of God, of His designing, building, election, purchasing and indwelling. It is dedicated to His praise, and glorified by His presence..."

Psalm 46 is a Psalm of confidence and trust—it reminds the people of God, that regardless what may come their way—they have a present help and refuge in their God—He dwells among them, is with them, and has promised to defend them...

The verses before us (vv4-6), describe two grand privileges of the Church—her provision (v4), and her protection (vv5-6)...

- I. The Church's Provision—v4
- II. The Church's Protection—vv5-6

I. The Church's Provision—v4

1. Here, I am referring to the river mentioned in v4—"There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God..."
2. [1] What is this river—the river is described as singular with several streams flowing out from it—"a river whose streams..."
3. Let me say rather simply—that historically and literally speaking this refers to the waters of Shiloah, which ran through the city of Jerusalem...
4. And yet, throughout Scripture, water is symbolically used to describe true life, found in Christ, and applied by the Spirit...
5. Or perhaps more simply put—the river refers to spiritual life, which entails the knowledge and enjoyment of God...
6. [a] Man was created with it, Gen.2:10—"Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads..."
7. This river nourished the garden and brought joy to man—it was symbolic of spiritual richness and fellowship...
8. Thus, when man sinned, he was banished from the garden and the river, which symbolized true and spiritual life...
9. Perhaps we could say—man was banished into the desert of this world—far from the RIVER of living water...
10. [b] Man regains it in Christ—that is, Christ is the way back into the Garden, where the water of life is found...
11. Or perhaps better put—Christ is Himself the river of life, which He communicates to and in us, by the Spirit...
12. Jn.7:37-38—"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said out of his heart will flow rivers of living water..."

13. Spiritual life, knowing and enjoying God, is in Christ—only in Christ, can man, enjoy the river of God's blessing...
14. [c] Man enjoys it in heaven, Rev.22:1—"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb..."
15. Scripture often describes heaven as a regained garden—wherein all that man lost by the fall is eternally regained...
16. There is a sense in which the entire Bible is the story of man being banished and then restored to God's river...
17. Thus, by "river with many streams" is meant—true and spiritual life, or the knowledge and enjoyment of God Himself...
18. [2] Where is this river located—the river is described as flowing through "the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High..."
19. This literally has reference to Jerusalem (the city of God), in which dwelt the temple, the dwelling place of God...
20. But spiritually, it refers to the church, which the NT describes as Mount Zion, the New Jerusalem, the City of the Living God...
21. Thus, the question becomes—Why is this river described as running through the church, or the city of God...
22. Well, I suggest the answer is found in v4a—"the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High"—God dwells in the city...
23. Because God Himself is the river—the river flows throughout the city, because God is especially present in the church...
24. The church is God's house or temple, in which He uniquely dwells—the church is His special dwelling place...
25. Ps.63:1-2—"O God, You *are* my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory..."
26. [a] The SOURCE of water—"my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water..."
27. [b] The LOCATION of water—"So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory..."
28. By "sanctuary" David meant the tabernacle—the place where God dwelt—the place where the river was found...
29. Here's the point—if fundamentally the river is God Himself, then the river is found wherever God is found...
30. Now—someone at this point might ask—But isn't God everywhere present?—and I would say—Yes He is...
31. But—God uniquely and specially dwells in the midst of His people—"Where two or three have gathered in My name, I am in their midst..."
32. Ps.46:5—"God is in the midst of her"—that is, uniquely and specially present—powerfully and covenantally present...
33. Now, I am not suggesting that this river only flows in the assembled church—no, like the river in the OT that followed the nation of Israel through the wilderness, this river, as it were, follows us everywhere we go...
34. But, what I am saying is this—this river is uniquely and largely present, in the midst of God's assembled people...
35. It's here, especially in the preaching of the word and administration of the ordinances, where we drink from this river...
36. The imagery of Psalm 63 is, the Psalmist has spend the week in the world, which is likened to a waterless land...
37. Thus, he's thirsty for God—for meeting and fellowshiping with God—but notice where he looked—the sanctuary...
38. This simply means, that it was there, within the assembly of God's people, that God uniquely and specially dwelt...

39. It was there that he saw God's glory—the beauty and perfections of God—it was there he drank from this river...
40. [3] Why does this river gladden the city of God—or, why does this river make glad or joyful God's people...
41. [a] It replenishes the city—the river of God is no small trickle, but it's a vast river with deep and flowing streams...
42. This river constantly refreshes and revives the city—there's a constant and unending supply of fresh water...
43. In many parts of the world, fresh water is rare and thus rationed—you are only allowed to drink a little a day...
44. Well, this is very unlike this river for it has an endless source, God—God Himself is the fountainhead of this river...
45. But, remember, He distributes these waters through Christ as Mediator—this river flows from God through Christ...
46. Rev.22:1—"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb..."
47. Thus, God has deposited in Christ an endless supply of water, to gladden the city of God throughout all ages...
48. [b] It nourishes the city—that is, this water brings nourishment to the city so that it's able to bring forth fruit...
49. Ps.92:12-14—"The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the LORD is upright; *He is* my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in Him..."
50. Here the imagery is changed, so that the people of God are described as trees—"planted in the house of God..."
51. That is, they are planted within the city near the river, which provides nourishment to flourish and bear fruit...
52. Notice, this promise has no end—"they shall still bear fruit in old age"—that is, the river will never run dry...
53. As long as the river flows with water they shall flourish and bear fruit—these are nourishing and fruit bearing waters...
54. [c] It satisfies the city—this water brings true and lasting contentment and satisfaction to the hearts of God's people...
55. Jn.4:13-14—"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst..."
56. This river satisfies because it meets the deepest need of a man's soul—it meets or satisfies his spiritual needs...
57. This river provides the only water that truly satisfies the soul—everything else will merely leave you thirsty...
58. Thus, it's for these reasons, and many more, that this river, running through the city of God, brings gladness to its inhabitants...

II. The Church's Protection—vv5-6

1. The Psalm writer describes the privileges of this city, not only in terms of its provision, but also its protection...
2. Most cities in olden days were fortified and protected from their enemies by high walls and powerful armies...
3. And yet, for all that, no city has ever defended itself from every enemy, but has eventually been overtaken...
4. Every great city has sooner or later been defeated and captured—all cities have come, and all cities have gone...

5. This of course is true of every city except one—the city of God—the church is the only enduring city in the world...
6. And here is why—she isn't protected by any physical wall or army—but she's protected and defended by God Himself...
7. Most armies protect their king—but in this case—the King protects the army—or, the King defends the city...
8. V5a—"God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved"—that is, she shall not be shaken so as to be destroyed...
9. V5b—"God shall help her, just at the break of dawn"—that is, God shall help her just at the rising of the sun...
10. The Psalm writer describes this entire life as one long night, throughout which God's people are constantly attacked...
11. But—there is coming the dawn, when God will help His people, so as to eternally remove and destroy her enemies...
12. V6—"The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted"—this ultimately refers to Christ's return...
13. He shall help His people so as to destroy her enemies—though she is assaulted through the night, morning is coming...
14. It's possible it refers to some past deliverance, wherein God powerfully intervened and judged His enemies...
15. But, more likely I suggest, it's a description of the church's enemies, and what Christ will do to them when He returns...
16. [1] He protects His church powerfully—by this I mean, even though our enemies are great—He is GREATER...
17. The nations and kingdoms of this world "rage" against God's city—this means, they express deep hatred for it...
18. Why do the nations and kingdoms of this world hate the church—but because they hate God and His truth...
19. Now, at this point we must remember—the nations and kingdoms of this world are a part of the kingdom of darkness...
20. The kingdom of darkness of course is ruled by Satan himself—thus, the kingdom of darkness is very powerful...
21. Simply put—if God were not among us and for us—the church would be defeated and destroyed rather easily...
22. Thus, at this point I want to digress for a few minutes, and briefly suggest three strategies of our arch enemy...
23. [a] Persecution—Satan stirs up in man, a hatred for the truth, that's expressed in physical, verbal, and social rage...
24. Simply put—Satan, through the word, does all that he can do to snuff out and silence the citizens of God's city...
25. [b] Temptation—if persecution doesn't work, Satan attacks the church by tempting it to wickedness and sin...
26. If our enemy can not scare us into silence, he attempts to lure us into carnality, spiritual indifference, and coldness...
27. [c] False teaching—here Satan infiltrates the city with false teachers, introducing deceitful and damnable heresies...
28. These three—hate, lust, and lies—are the three weapons with which, Satan attempts to destroy the city of God...
29. And O brethren, the church is unable to stand against such schemes, if it were not for God who dwells within her...
30. Martin Luther—"A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; our Helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing. For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe; his craft and power are great; and, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal. Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be

- losing; were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing. Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he, Lord Sabaoth his name, from age to age the same, and he must win the battle..."
31. [2] He protects His church corporately—by this I mean, He protects the city as a whole, including every member...
 32. Perhaps I can put it this way—He not only dwells in the midst of His church, but in the hearts of each member...
 33. Now, this does not mean, that every person who professes to be a citizen of this city, is in fact a true Christian...
 34. There are people who claim to be a part of the city, who in fact are actually hypocrites and a part of this world...
 35. But, what I am here saying is—God protects and preserves, every citizen of Zion, who actually belongs to Him...
 36. Dear Christian, surely we here find good news—you and I, will never be moved from believing and living the truth...
 37. You and I, will never be moved from our allegiance to Christ, to our love for Christ, His word, and His people...
 38. Oh for sure, we may waver—we must stumble—but we will never fall—we will never fully or lastingly be moved...
 39. What a wonderful truth to be reminded of, as today formally marks the beginning of a new chapter at Heritage RBC...
 40. And at the end of the day, what do we put our confidence in—in our own ability to keep and protect ourselves...
 41. NO—but ultimately and finally, our hope lies in Christ's promise, that He will help us—and we shall not be moved...
 42. Dear brethren, what wonderful encouragement this Psalm affords us—let me briefly apply it to three groups...
 43. [a] Pastors—it's impossible for pastors not to be concerned with the over all health and safety of Christ's church...
 44. Oh brethren, I personally have known for the past 14 years, something of what Paul calls—"the burden of the church..."
 45. But what a tremendous encouragement to know—that Christ Himself will protect His church from their enemies...
 46. The church shall never fail—oh, it's true that particular local churches may end—but the church will continue...
 47. Yes, A church may end, but THE church will continue—the true church of Christ is unstoppable and indestructible...
 48. [b] Parents—parents worry for their children—but take heart dear parent, for if your child is a citizen of Zion, she/he will be protected...
 49. Yes, dear parents we must diligently prepare our children and pray for them—but, we must trust them to Christ...
 50. Remember, Christ will protect His church both corporately and individually—He will keep every single citizen...
 51. [c] People—here I refer to fearful people who fret over their own condition—John Bunyan spoke of a Mr Fearful...
 52. Oh dear friend—Mr or Mrs Fearful—yes you are weak, yes you are needy—but the right Man is on your side...
 53. Yes, your enemies are assaulting the city—they never rest day or night—they assault with hate, lusts, and lies...
 54. But remember, v7—"The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge"—He will never fail you...
 55. [3] He protects His church jealously—by this I mean, Christ is not only the King of this city, but also her Groom...
 56. Thus, if you noticed, 3 times in v5, the city (church) is described with feminine pronouns—"God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved, God shall help her..."

57. Why is the church referred to as a woman, but because, she is not only Christ's Holy City, but His beloved Bride...
58. Dear brethren—I truly pity the fool who would mess with Christ's Bride, for one day, he will give account to Christ...
59. 1Cor.3:16-17—"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him..."
60. Lesson 1—if the citizens of the city of God have great privilege—then let us be sure we are actual and true citizens...
61. Perhaps the best test would be to ask the question—Have you bowed the knee to the King of this Holy City...
62. Isa.45:23—"To Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath. He shall say, Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength..."
63. Lesson 2—if the citizens of the city of God have great privilege—then let the enemies of God tremble in fear...
64. Rage on you nations and kingdoms of this world, for all of your hatred and persecution, the city of God endures...
65. And one day very soon, the morning is coming, the dawn with break, and at that time, you will be no more...
66. Lesson 3—if the citizens of the city of God have great privilege—then let them rest in safety, comfort, and confidence...
67. Yes brethren, there are many troubles and contentions outside this city, but within it, we find rest for our souls...
68. Lesson 4—if the citizens of the city of God have great privilege—then let the city of God rejoice and to render praise to their King...
69. Oh dear brethren, what reason we have to be a joyful and praising city—our God is in our midst—He is with us...
70. Lesson 5—if the citizens of the city of God have great privilege—then let poor sinners bow the knee to the King...
71. At present you are at war with the King—you are His enemy—you are a subject or citizen of the kingdom of darkness...
72. But here is good news—God loves His enemies—and He has made provision for them in the gospel of Christ...
73. He has given His Son to die for them, so that, if they bow the knee to Him, they too will become citizens of Zion...
74. Through down your weapons and give up your nonsense—bow the knee to Christ and confess Him as your Lord...