SCHEMATICS:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.
God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.
Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.
Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.
He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”
The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. –Psalm 46 NIV

MEDITATION:

How’s this for a paradox; change is a constant in our world. Whether we look at political elections, employment, economics, wars, demonstrations for moving forward, and demonstrations for returning to the past state, change is all around us in the “big world.” We feel change in our daily, personal lives too. Loved ones grow into adults, adults age, jobs change, coworkers leave, industries evolve, prices rise in the grocery store and the yo-yo at the gas pump. The praise team or choir sings a new and decidedly weird song on Sunday. Over the last year can you count the times the COVID restrictions changed in your area? Who doesn’t long for a respite from all this change?

The psalmist painted a picture of change not just in human potential systems but also in the natural world around us: the earth gives way and melts, the mountains fall and quake, the seas roar. During COVID, my husband discovered the YouTuber Nick Zentner, a middle-aged geology professor at Central Washington University who posted delightfully low-tech but high enthusiasm geology lectures from his back porch. We learned about the amazing stories of the changes that shaped the Pacific northwest. Plates, volcanoes, landslides, floods, ice dams - who knew? Well, you ASA geologists did, but it was delightfully new to us. The mountains fell, and formed the Bridge of the Gods and other formations along the Columbia River. The molten earth
pushed out through volcanoes to form the Cascades. Below the ocean the earth still moves.

Stasis and change in balance are part of our cosmos, from new stars being formed, to plate tectonics, to ecological succession. Change is part of God's ongoing creative work and the fantastically beautiful structures and processes that we get to explore as scientists. He made the cosmos to change, to respond, to evolve and adapt. Change is part of God's good design.

One constant is sure, even more sure than change: in all this, God is everlasting. Our refuge, strength, help, fortress. And in all things, he protects our souls, he is with us. He is with me. He is with you.

**REFLECTION:**
What changes in your everyday life does Psalm 46 bring to mind? How is God present in those changes—as your refuge and fortress, as the agent of change, as the peacemaker, or something else? How can you find thankfulness in change?

**PRAYER:**
Lord, you are everlasting, you are my help and refuge. Open my eyes to your mighty works in the world around me today, and give your perfect peace to my heart and to this broken world. Bring me as one of the host of believers, to dwell in your city, eternally with you. And until that day, always keep before me the promise that you are ever present with me. Amen.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**
Robin Rylaarsdam is a molecular biologist turned university administrator. She is a wife, the mom of a college student whom she's very proud of and ready to cook for again at Thanksgiving, and the family dog’s favorite human. She serves as the Provost at Bethel University in Minnesota and is learning to play keyboard for her church praise team.

Questions? Reach out to us asa@asa3.org

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