

Cling to God for Shelter

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[0 : 00] Psalm 91, let me read it out loud first. Actually, let me pray before I read it. Heavenly Father, as we read your word, as we hear your word preached, we pray that you would work powerfully as you promised through your word by your spirit.

So that what this psalm speaks of, this truth about you and your faithfulness, about your protective care, about your sovereignty, would translate to how we think, what we believe, how we live. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Psalm 91. He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say to the Lord, My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge. His faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

[1 : 30] A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.

Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place, the Most High who is my refuge. No evil shall be allowed to befall you. No plague come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against the stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder. The young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot. Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him. I will protect him because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him.

I will be with him in trouble. I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. I kind of spaced out the paragraphs and sections in Psalm 91.

[2 : 32] As you guys can actually, you will see it in your ESV Bibles as well. So verses 1 to 2 is kind of introduction. It gives the main theme of the Psalm. And then verses 3 to 13 is some other speaker trying to basically exhort another believer to trusting God for these and these following reasons.

And then verses 14 to 16 is God speaking. So you can kind of divide it into verses 1 to 13 being kind of the believer's affirmation of faith.

And then 14 to 16 being God's assurance of salvation. And so if you look at verse 1, it says, He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. On the first read that kind of sounds redundant, right?

It sounds like you're saying the same thing twice. It's like it's because dwelling in the shelter of the Most High and abiding in the shadow of the Almighty seem like two different ways of saying the exact same thing, right? And in a way it is, right?

Because it's parallelism and it's poetry. But then also second idea kind of advances the first idea a little bit further. So because it means that he who chooses to dwell in the shelter of the Most High will abide or remain in his protection.

[3 : 46] So the same idea is expressed in verse 14 where God says, Because he holds fast to me in love, that's dwelling in the shelter of the Most High, I will deliver him.

I will protect him because he knows my name. So we can summarize this whole psalm to mean that those who cling to God, who hold fast to him for shelter, will be kept under God's protection.

So that's kind of the main idea. And concerning that article of faith, because of this article of faith, our profession should be as believers. Verse 2, I will say to the Lord, My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.

I notice in verse 1, it calls, you use several different kind of titles for God. At first he says God the Most High, and then it says the Almighty, right? Both of those are names we see throughout the Old Testament, but they were also the names that the Canaanites, unbelieving Canaanites, used of their supreme deity.

They call them the Most High, the Almighty. But here the psalmist tells us that that kind of, that God, the Almighty God, the Most High God, is in fact Israel's God. Because it says in verse 2, I will say to the Lord, that's the personal name of God, right?

[4 : 58] He's saying that the true God of all creation, the Most High God, the Almighty God, is not anyone else's God, but our God, the Lord God, who delivered them out of Egypt, who saved his people.

And so, and then verses 3 to 13, continue the believers' affirmation of faith, reasons why we should believe. And it employs a series of metaphors, really vivid metaphors, that are helpful for us, and really evocative for us.

Verses 3 to 4 says that God will deliver you, when you are caught in the fowler's trap. He will deliver you from deadly diseases. And I love this image. It says, He will cover you with his pinions, another word for wings, a bird's wings.

And under his wings, you will find refuge. Various type of birds, typically the mother birds, right, use their wings to protect their young from predators.

They also use their wings to guard, shield their young from the elements like rain and wind. And that's the image that's being painted here, of God, who, like a mother bird, shelters his people, and protects them.

[6 : 05] And then God's faithfulness is here described in verse 3 as a shield and buckler, right, that shield, the bracing shield, that protects us as the arrows are flying in our direction, and spears are being hurled in our direction.

He is that shield, for his faithfulness is that shield to us. And then verses 5 to 6 continue the wonderful description of God's provident care. And there's a pattern of describing God's protection, both in the nighttime and in the daytime, in darkness, in the light of noonday.

Read with me again, verses 5 to 6. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

That's the brightest part of day, right? So this pattern of darkness and light is intended to show us that there is nothing at all that God's people need to fear at any given point, at any given time, because at all times, God is watching over us, day and night.

It's not just day and night. He's saying all time, God is watching over us. And because of that special protection, verses 7 to 8 is reality. It says, A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

[7 : 15] You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Imagine a field of battle when there's heavy casualties everywhere, right? But there's a thousand people falling here.

Ten thousand falling around us on the right side. But even then, we will not fall in the midst of that because we will only look with our eyes at the recompense that God deals on his enemies, on the wicked.

And isn't this such an amazing thing to think about, right? Because if you really believe in God's sovereignty and his providential care for us, as this psalm is talking about, that means we are just as safe, right, in, I don't know, suburban, wealthy suburban Belmont or Newton as we are in urban Roxbury or Dorchester, right?

If we really believe in God's sovereignty, oh, is that where you're in? Yeah. I don't know where that's. Oh, okay, yeah. In Boston, that's kind of probably the roughest place in Boston, yeah. And if we really believe this, that means we are just as secured by God, right, in here in the United States of America as we are in war-torn Afghanistan, right?

If we really believe that God is caring for us and we're going to be alive, right? And his intention is to keep us safe and alive in that place. And that's amazing, right? I mean, that's, because as it says in verses 9 to 10, this is the reason why that's the case.

[8 : 44] You have made the Lord your dwelling place. The Most High, who is my refuge? No evil shall be allowed to befall you. No plague come near your tent.

Because the all-powerful God and God who is all-present is our refuge, will be invulnerable, right, in that sense, as long as God intends it.

And four, again, there's a repetition of the reason for the security in verses 11 to 12. He will, for he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

On their hands, they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. All your ways doesn't refer literally to kind of physical journeys that we make, you know, or going about, striving around, whatnot, but it's a metaphorical reference to all of one's activities and conduct in life, right?

So all of ways of life. And angels appear, obviously, in many places throughout scripture, but this is the only passage in the entire Bible where the idea of a personal guardian angel is brought up, where this is thinking about the image, and we have God commands his angels concerning us specifically as believers, individually.

[9 : 58] And the idea of an image bearing us up on their hands unless we strike our foot against a stone is similar to a parent who is watching over a newly minted walking toddler, right?

Who is just stumbling about and a parent making sure that he doesn't trip over anything or sort of strike a foot against a stone and fall, right? And so that's kind of the care, that close, intimate, personal care that God commands his angels who are more powerful beings than us.

God commands his angels concerning us, for us. That's the kind of care with which God looks over us. And the result of this is verse 13.

You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot. Just like the metaphor of the journey of life used in verses 11 to 12, these are metaphorical, right? Lions and venomous snakes were well known and widely feared in the ancient Near East. They represent dangers that lurk in someone's journey, dangers that lurk in hidden places that you can encounter when you're journeying about.

[10 : 59] And so it fits with that metaphor of the journey that you just mentioned in verses 11 to 12. But because of God's protected care, his people will be protected from striking a foot against a stone or getting attacked by snakes and dangers in their walk of life.

And of course, because a lot of these are metaphorical images, they have wide-ranging application, right, to many of the dangers in our lives, disappointments that we face, threats that we face, struggles and suffering of our lives.

So that's the believer's affirmation of faith. And then after the believer's affirmation of faith, we hear God's assurance of salvation in verses 14 to 16. So God responds, Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him.

I will protect him because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will rescue him and honor him. With long life, I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.

To know God's name is to know him personally and intimately. It's to know him as your God. It's to be in covenant relationship with him. And so notice that there's the descriptive language of this relationship in the beginning of verse 14.

[12 : 14] Because he holds fast to me in love. Do you hold fast to God in love? That's what God's seeking of his people because he's promising that those who cling to God for shelter will be kept under God's protection.

And now this doesn't mean, you know, you guys should go out there and try to find snakes and try stepping on them or lions and try confronting them.

Imagine that you're Samson or, you know, or this doesn't mean that, you know, you should, you know, be irresponsibly flinging yourself, putting yourself in compromised, dangerous situations, thinking, oh, God cares for me because we learned that lesson from Jesus' temptation, didn't we? Because Satan uses this verse to tempt Jesus. Hey, throw yourself down from this high place and he will command his angels concerning you lest you strike your foot against the stone. Interestingly enough, Satan omits part of the verse.

He skips it. So if you look at Psalm 91 verses 11 to 12, right?

[13 : 19] He says, for he will command his angels concerning you for what? To guard you in all your ways in your life as you're trying to follow God, right? That's the promise that's connected to it.

But he skips that and he simply says, for he will command his angels concerning you on their hands, they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against the stone. Isn't that interesting? Right? Take it out of context and tries to manipulate it to our own use.

And that's what Satan tries to do, but Jesus says, thou shalt not test the Lord your God, right? So that's not what we're trying to, that's not what I'm trying to tell you guys to do here. But, but, and

also look at verse 15.

This teaches us why we shouldn't apply it that way because he says, when he calls to me, I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will rescue him and honor him. Notice that God doesn't promise us that our lives will be free of all kinds of troubles.

He says here, he promises to be with us in trouble. Right? He, what he does mean is that no trouble will ultimately prevail over us because he is with us because he will rescue us through them and he will honor us with his love and care.

[14 : 26] And, and like all the other passages in the scripture, this Psalm 2 points to and ultimately is fulfilled by Jesus and what he does for us because God assured his people in verse 16, right?

With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. Right? It's an interesting word to use there after talking about all these kind of life protections and salvation.

And the Hebrew word for salvation is Yeshua, right? Yesu or Jesus. That's the name, that's where we get the name Jesus. The long life and salvation of the Old Testament promises, it foreshadows the eternal resurrection life that Christ imparts to us and the salvation that he accomplishes for us on the cross by dying for our sins.

That's why Acts 4.12 says, about Jesus, there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name, name is mentioned here about knowing God's name, there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

To know God's name is to know Christ's name, to know Christ is to know God the Father. And it's only through Christ that we can experience this salvation. And notice all the parallels there. Jesus once lamented over Jerusalem, what did he say?

[15 : 35] How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings? And you are not willing. Matthew 23.37.

Verse 4 of this psalm says that God will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge. Jesus is the son of God who does this for all those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High. Similarly, this psalm says God's faithfulness is a shield and a buckler and teaches us that the arrow that flies by day will not hurt us. Ephesians 6.16 commands us in all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

Our faith in the faithfulness of God, right? The faithfulness demonstrated for us in the sacrificial love of Jesus who died for us for our sins on the cross that's what can extinguish all the accusations and lies of the evil one.

And I don't think it's coincidence that the evil one the primary metaphor that is used to describe him is that of the serpent and that of a prowling lion, right?

[16 : 37] In 1 Peter, right? That's why and that's why Jesus says to his followers in Luke 10.19, Behold, I've given you authority to tread on serpents, scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall hurt you.

The psalm is fulfilled by Jesus and those who have entrusted themselves to Jesus Christ for salvation are under God's eternal and infinite protection. And of course, that means Jesus is the one that bears the brunt of the pain, right?

Because if you're going to shield something, the shield has to absorb the pain so that you're free from it, right? If the mother hen is trying to protect her brood under her wings, she has to absorb the pain of the attack of the predators, right?

That's what Jesus did on the cross. He paid our punishment, paid our penalty so that instead of the pain that should have been inflicted on us for our sins is inflicted on him and the peace that was his becomes ours, the righteousness that was his becomes ours.

And so really the psalm becomes a message for Christians to cling to Christ because those who cling to Christ for shelter will be kept under God's protection.

[17 : 44] And