

PSALM 91 — PSALM OF PROTECTION

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I said last week that we'd look at Psalms 90 and 91.

Last week ... we covered Psalm 90. This week — Psalm 91.

One of the key “take-aways” from Psalm 90 is that though it refers to the “Biblical” three score years and ten ... hopefully we saw that was not God’s plan for mankind. That was a curse.

We also saw that there is no appointed time for man to die ... though Hebrews 9:27 is often misquoted.

Psalm 91 is a very popular psalm. Especially popular among the military. It is often referred to as the “Psalm of Protection” or the “Soldiers’ Psalm”.

Many military men carry cards with Psalm 91 printed on it. Some read it daily ... some memorise it ... others have it on dog-tags ... etc .

There are even anecdotal stories of men ... entire companies ... who’ve come through serious battles completely unscathed ... because they all quoted Psalm 91 every day. May not or may be true.

But it’s certainly an interesting and thought-provoking psalm!

Turn to Psalm 91. There appears to be 3 parties involved ... teacher ... student ... then at the end ... God steps in (keep an eye out for the changes).

Psalms 91:1-8 (NKJV)

**1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.**

**2 I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust.”**

3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler
And from the perilous pestilence.

4 He shall cover you with His feathers,
And under His wings you shall take refuge;

His truth shall be your shield and buckler. (*Buckler = small shield*)

5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,

Nor of the arrow that flies by day,

6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness,

Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

7 A thousand may fall at your side,

And ten thousand at your right hand;

But it shall not come near you.

8 **Only with your eyes shall you look,**

And see the reward of the wicked.

We can see the theme — PROTECTION.

But all that we have read there ... is contingent on verse 1 ... “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High.

The blessings and protection aren't just “automatic” ... I keep The Sabbath and Feasts and I'll be protected.

“Dwells” = reside ... settle down ... make your home there.

Not just an occasional visitor (“Hey God ... it's me again ... I've got an emergency”). You don't knock on God's door once in a blue moon!

The one who dwells ... will abide under God's shadow. (Shadow is a good place in the blazing heat!).

Psalms 91:1 (NET)

1 ... **the one who lives in the shelter of the sovereign One, and resides in the protective shadow of the mighty king** –

We are talking of someone with a close relationship with the Almighty God ... living in a place or position of protection.

This is a common theme. People back then had this in their minds ... even if we don't.

Psalms 27:1-5 (NKJV)

1 **The Lord is my light and my salvation;**

Whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the strength of my life;

Of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked came against me

To eat up my flesh,

My enemies and foes,

They stumbled and fell.

3 Though an army may encamp against me,

My heart shall not fear;

Though war may rise against me,

In this I will be confident.

4 ***One thing I have desired of the Lord,***

That will I seek:

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord

All the days of my life,

To behold the beauty of the Lord,

And to inquire in His temple.

5 ***For in the time of trouble***

He shall hide me in His pavilion;

In the secret place of His tabernacle

He shall hide me;

He shall set me high upon a rock.

Are these verses also prophetic?

Psalms 27:7-10 (NKJV)

7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice!

Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

8 ***When You said, "Seek My face,"***

My heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek." (A closer experience!
Face to face)

9 Do not hide Your face from me;

Do not turn Your servant away in anger;

You have been my help;

Do not leave me nor forsake me,

O God of my salvation.

10 ***When my father and my mother forsake me,***

Then the Lord will take care of me.

Psalms 31:14-15 (NKJV)

14 **But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord;**

I say, "You are my God."

15 **My times are in Your hand;**

Deliver me from the hand of my enemies,
And from those who persecute me.

Psalms 31:19-20 (NKJV)

19 Oh, how great is Your goodness,
Which You have laid up for those who fear You,
Which You have prepared for those who trust in You
In the presence of the sons of men!

20 ***You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence***

From the plots of man;

You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion

From the strife of tongues.

A secret place in God's presence.

Psalms 32:6-11 (NKJV)

6 For this cause **everyone who is godly shall pray to You**

In a time when You may be found;

Surely in a flood of great waters
They shall not come near him.

7 ***You are my hiding place;***

You shall preserve me from trouble;

You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.

Selah

8 ***I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;***

I will guide you with My eye. (God will guide us with His insights and vision)

9 Do not be like the horse or like the mule,
Which have no understanding,
Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle,
Else they will not come near you.

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked;

But ***he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him.***

11 Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; God

It is quite clear that many of the psalmists understood that it was good to run to God in time of trouble ... to see Him as a Refuge ... and ideally ... a place to dwell ... not just the occasional visit! A good place to live ... to dwell.

It is a matter of choice. Our choice!

Does the world dwell in this secret place? No. Does The Church? Some people do ... and some are just occasional visitors.

Revelation 2:1, 4 (NKJV)

1 **"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,**

'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

4 **Nevertheless I have this against you, that *you have left your first love.***

The whole church in Ephesus have left God. He is over there and you are somewhere else. How can you be protected if you have left your first love?

Revelation 3:14, 16-20 (NKJV)

14 **"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,**

These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

16 So then, ***because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.***

17 Because ***you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing***—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— *(probably don't even need God anymore)*

18 ***I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.***

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. ***Therefore be zealous and repent.***

20 ***Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Jesus is standing outside)***

These brethren are not dwelling with Jesus ... have no fellowship ... not dwelling with the Lord Jesus.

Ephesus and Laodicea can both choose to let Jesus in ... or not!

Psalms 91:2 (NKJV)

2 ***I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."***

I WILL SAY! This is a confession — OUT LOUD! **A statement of faith.**

We may believe "in our hearts" ... quietly ... but this suggests we SPEAK UP ... words of faith and confidence.

If we speak ... we hear. So does satan ... and the angels.

But how often do we speak out our faith? In practice ... we have a tendency to rely on others for our help ... people we can see and turn to ... rather than an invisible God.

Is that wise? Given that we can look to God and say He is my refuge and my God who will help us.

Psalms 146:3-7 (NKJV)

3 ***Do not put your trust in princes, (good advice)***

Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.

4 His spirit departs, he returns to his earth;

In that very day his plans perish.

5 ***Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in the Lord his God,***

6 Who made heaven and earth,

The sea, and all that is in them;

Who keeps truth forever,

7 Who executes justice for the oppressed,

Who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners.

Don't trust "Princes" ... or politicians ... bank managers ... world leaders ... evangelists ... ministers.

Occasionally they can help a little ... but it's limited.

But the man or woman who has a Psalm 91 attitude ... KNOWS WHERE TO PUT THEIR TRUST ... in the Everliving-God ... who has all power and wisdom.

Psalms 71:1-3 (NKJV)

1 ***In You, O Lord, I put my trust;***

Let me never be put to shame.

2 Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape;

Incline Your ear to me, and save me.

3 ***Be my strong refuge, (habitation)***

To which I may resort continually;

You have given the commandment to save me,

For ***You are my rock and my fortress.***

(AMPLIFIED)

3 ***Be to me a rock of refuge in which to dwell***

(CEV)

3 ***Be my mighty Rock, the place where I can always run for protection***

Psalms 91:3-6 (NKJV)

3 ***Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler (fowler = satan?)***

Our adversary ... who goes about like a roaring lion)

And from the perilous pestilence. (Deadly diseases)

4 He shall cover you with His feathers,

And under His wings you shall take refuge;

His truth shall be your shield and buckler. ***(His truth ... God's Word)***

5 ***You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, (obvious today!)***

Nor of the arrow that flies by day, (missiles)

6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness,

Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

Today ... terrorists can strike anywhere ... bombs ... guns ... anthrax ... smallpox ... nerve agents (like recently in Salisbury).

God offers protection "under His wings" ... verse 4. Under the wings of God. A picture of a mother bird protecting her young.

A common theme. Something people were perhaps more familiar with than in rural settings?

Psalms 61:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Hear my cry, O God;

Attend to my prayer.

2 From the end of the earth I will cry to You,
When my heart is overwhelmed;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

3 For **You have been a shelter for me,
A strong tower from the enemy.**

4 **I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.**

Selah

The Psalmists saw that ... and Jesus used the picture too ... influenced by what He saw in nature ... and His familiarity with the Psalms.

Matthew 23:37-38 (NKJV)

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! **How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,** but you were not willing!

38 See! Your house is left to you desolate;

The picture may not be as familiar to us. But worth dwelling on.

Do we see God as our Protector? A willing Protector? You don't have to force the mother bird to protect her chicks! And any sensible chick knows to run ... and where to run and hide.

Any chick that wants to be independent and look after itself ... "I'll handle this fox on my own" ... will be a dead chick! That should be a lesson for you and me. Do we want to handle situations on our own?

But it is possible that we never think of God as Protector in this way? We probably would if we spent more time in the Psalms.

Looking at the first part of Psalm 91 ... it seems that we need to be (a) aware and familiar with God's provision and protection. Are we? And (b) SAY IT ... SPEAK IT OUT! He is my God and Refuge.

It is probably best to employ both. Believe and say. Our faith is in 2 places. In our hearts and in our mouths.

2 Corinthians 4:13-14 (NKJV)

13 **And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed and therefore I spoke,” we also believe and therefore speak.**

14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.

This is the “Spirit of Faith” = in two places ... I believe and speak. In other words ... you speak what you believe.

And then of course ... don’t be unduly swayed by what you see or feel or hear around you ... it is only temporary (subject to change). God has eternal solutions. We can see that in the next passage.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NKJV)

16 **Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.**

17 **For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,**

18 **while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. *For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.***

The Psalmist in Psalm 91: “I will say”. Did he say it to God? To others? To himself? We do know he said it ... and even if no one else heard it ... certainly God ... the angels ... the demons ... heard it. Good enough!

We may not always be aware of it ... but we’re often saying things ... only at times ... very negative!

“Oh God, I’m going under. All hope is gone!”

“Oh God, I don’t believe you’ll help me this time”.

“Oh God, where can I go for help here?”

We’re no longer aware ... or have forgotten ... that God is our Protector or Refuge!

The protection in Psalm 91 is not automatic. It doesn’t just happen because we’re a “Christian” or a “Church Member” or a “Sabbath-keeper”.

The Psalmist knew his place of refuge ... he believed he was safe there ... and HE SAID IT. It looks like that is the “recipe” ... to know ... to believe and speak it out?

Psalms 91:9-13 (NKJV)

9 **Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge,**
Even the Most High, your dwelling place, (habitation)

10 **No evil shall befall you,**
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;

11 **For He shall give His angels charge over you,**
To keep you in all your ways.

12 In their hands they shall bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

13 **You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra,**
The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.

Lion (satan is like a roaring lion) ... Cobra and Serpent are likely to picture spiritual enemies (Jesus said to His disciples that He gave them “Authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy” ... see Luke 10:18. We are the ones in charge)

Now ... God says what He will do.

Psalms 91:14-16 (NKJV)

14 **“Because he has set his love upon Me,** therefore **I will deliver him;**
I will set him on high, because he has known My name.

15 He shall call upon Me, and **I will answer him;**
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honour him.

16 **With long life I will satisfy him,**
And show him My salvation.”

These verses are God speaking. “Because he has known My name” — pictures a good relationship with God ... well-acquainted.

“With long life I will satisfy him”.

Barnes Commentary: “the meaning is, I will give him length of days as he desires, or until he is satisfied with life”.

A long life until you are satisfied. If you aren't satisfied ... ask for more! At some point ... it's implied we will be satisfied ... but until then ...

This is a very encouraging Psalm ... with protection ... with blessing ... with long-life.

I can see why it's a very well-liked psalm.

But for you and me ... it's no good unless we believe it and receive it!

As with most things spiritual ... we need to renew our minds by spending good quality time in scripture ... so God and His promises are real to us. We abide or dwell in them ... they are very familiar to us.

Last week I said that in the US ... adults spend on average about 5 hours and 4 minutes per day watching the TV. On average ... Church goers spend between 5 and 30 minutes in their Bible a day — but only 1 in 5 of them! The rest spend less!!

Where are their minds dwelling?

How are we doing? Dwell in the secret place of Jehovah ... speak out our faith and confidence in Him ... and accept His protection and the offer of a long and satisfying life!