

This week, a change in the preaching plan because of the storms Monday and Tuesday.  
I have had enough of cleaning up tree branches. But you cannot get too much of the 91st Psalm.  
This psalm is a solace for the embattled soldier, for the family in debt, for the chronically ill.  
This psalm is for the one who has just lost his crop, his barn, his livelihood, his children.

### **What does it mean to live in the sovereign care of the Lord?**

I want you to know where this psalm is in the psalter, which is like a hymnal for Israel.

We are at the beginning of Book 4 of the Psalms.

This part of the collection was put together during the captivity of Israel in Babylon.  
Jerusalem was destroyed, the people of Israel slaves. It was a discouraging and terrible time. This is for them.

### **I. For the one who lives in the shelter of the Most High. Psalm 91:1-2**

Here is a psalm, like many in the psalter, which is filled with metaphors.

And right away we learn that this Psalm is written to a particular person.

Maybe the language at the beginning is best illuminated with a question: Where do you live?

Beresford, Centerville, Vermillion, Sioux Falls? South Dakota? The United States?

If these things are all the answer that you have, the rest of this Psalm does not apply to you.

You cannot claim it.

I am amazed at how often I hear portions of this Psalm quoted at graduations, funerals, special occasions.  
But the promises in this Psalm are not for all those whose home is in Beresford, or South Dakota, or America.

This psalm is full of tremendously encouraging words, metaphors, and promises.

But these promises are not for just any person who likes them.

No, these promises are for the person "who dwells in the shelter of the Most High."

They are for the person who lives "in the shadow of the Almighty." = under God's protection and provision.

This Psalm is for the person who has trusted in Jesus Christ and is determined to live life in Him.

Notice how the first two lines of Psalm 91 work together to describe this person.

Where he or she lives is described in two similar ways, this is typical Hebrew poetic parallelism.

He lives "in the shelter of the Most High" = He lives in God's house, under God's roof, in God's protection.

And the Lord is here described as "the Most High."

No one is higher. No one is greater. No one is more important. No one has more honor.

He lives "in the shadow of the Almighty" = If you live in someone's shadow, they are big, you are small.

And to describe God as the Almighty is to understand that He is all powerful. He reigns over all.

If I am in His shadow, you don't see me. You only see Him.

I am like a little child. He is my great Father. This is where I must live. Is this where you live?

*One of my favorite Missionary biographies is titled "the Shadw of the Almighty."*

*It was written by Elizabeth Elliot about her husband, Jim Elliot, murdered by natives in South America.*

*Her title is chosen carefully because there were some who had wondered why God had not protected Jim.*

*Her point is simple. Jim Elliot lived his entire life in the Shadow of the Almighty.*

*And God never failed watching over him, even as he died.*

*Moreover, God used Jim's death purposefully in the lives of millions. God knew what He was doing.*

*I think of Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones."*

*Everyone dies. Not everyone gets to die living under the sovereign care of Almighty God.*

*Jim lived intentionally under God's sovereign care, all the way until the very end. God took care of Him.*

And if this is where I live, the next verse describes what I say as I live there.

Psalm 91:2, "I will say to Yahweh, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!"

That great hymn, written by Martin Luther in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century is an example of one of God's children saying just this: "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing."

This was an important truth for Luther, because, at the time, half the world wanted him dead.

To have the Lord God as your refuge and fortress means that He is your defender against all calamities.

For this to be true, you must say what the person in this verse says. You must trust the Lord.  
How would a person do this? Well, you must begin. Understand the Gospel and respond to it in faith.  
Know who God is, the Most High, the Almighty Lord.  
Know who you are. You are mortal, a creature created by God. You are a sinner needing rescue.  
Know what God has done for you in Jesus Christ. He died to pay for your sins so that you could know Him.  
Respond to Him in repentance and trust. Of course, you cannot just say it. You have to mean it, live it.  
Then you can live your life in God. And what does this look like? The rest of the Psalm...

## II. You will live under His protection.

### Psalm 91:3-4

Now I want to pause for a moment and point out the use of pronouns in this psalm.

Pronouns are important. If we get them wrong, we cannot understand one another.

Verse one is in the third person. It presents a general truth that applies to all who fit the description.

Verse 2 is in the first person. These are the words of the psalmist, spoken to God.

Now, beginning in verse 3 all the way until verse 13, the psalmist is writing in the second person.

He is writing to you, and to me.

He is writing to the one who reads this psalm.

He is writing to the person who reads Scripture, lives in the Lord, and trusts in the Lord.

If this is who you are, these promises apply to you. This is who God is for you.

Now we have imagery piled upon imagery to show what you are like in the Lord living in His world.  
This is because we need to learn how to think about ourselves in this world.

Many voices are telling you how to think about yourself. Most of them are lying.

Some say that if you find that perfect person, then you will be happy, and all will be well.

Some tell you that the idea is to get a lot of money and then things will be good.

Some tell you that the world is overheating and the purpose of life is to save it.

Some say that the entire idea is to beat your political opponents into submission, then all will be well.

Some say that if you buy a Toyota, you will then be happy and drive on mountains.

So many voices are telling you how life is and what to do in it.

No, life is not like any of this.

Consider verse 3. First picture. God “delivers you from the snare of the trapper.”

Someone is out to get you, and it is not God. There are traps all around, deadly traps.

*I will never forget a part of my training with Campus Crusade for Christ over 40 years ago.*

*A teacher by the name of Dennis Rainey was leading one portion of the training.*

*He now leads the Family Life Today ministry of Cru.*

*He had set up on stage an assortment of animal traps, it is the only time I have ever seen a bear trap.*

*Then he asked for a volunteer. Of course, all the guys raised their hands. One of us was chosen.*

*That guy went up and was quickly blindfolded. Then Dennis Rainey told him to start walking.*

*Mr. Rainey had the traps labeled. One was called “worry,” another “sexual sin.”*

*One was called “love of money,” another “gossip and slander.”*

*There was “despair,” “anger,” “gluttony,” and so forth. You know where the traps are in your life.*

*As the young man walked, Mr. Rainey spoke out directions, “stop,” “go left,” “go right.”*

*He navigated that guy through all the traps to the other side.*

Is that not what God does for us in His Word?

And in more ways than just that, the Lord delivers us from the traps set all around us.

Second picture, “And from the deadly pestilence.”

This world is like living amid a terrible plague that is killing everyone, and people are scared.

I do not think we need an illustration of what this might be like.

COVID showed us our fragile condition.

Our world was panicking!!! I recall that April of 2020.

All the media pundits were visibly terrified.

It is in a world that feels like that that your God delivers you.

He is not scared, and so you need not be scared. More on this in a moment, in verses 5-10.

Before we get there, notice the metaphor of verse 4. It is vivid and beautifully encouraging.

What are you and I like in this world that God made and reigns over?

We are like a little bird in the nest under the wings of its mother.

*Someone was telling me this week of a momma bird that lives just outside their window in a planter.*

*She has a nest there and little birds now. Then the storms hit Monday night.*

*The winds buffeted the house and the trees and that nest was swaying in the terrifying winds.*

*They watched as momma bird stayed put and spread her wings over her chicks.*

*I do not know if those little birds were scared, but they weathered the storm under those protective wings.*

This is who we are with Almighty God in His great big world with terrors all around.

Better yet, He is in complete control over all things, way more than that momma bird.

Under His wings is a very safe place indeed.

You can be sure that, even if things seem to be out of control, a disaster.

The Most High, Almighty God is still there, protecting you.

And, so, (vs. 5) "you will not be afraid..."

### III. You will not be afraid.

#### Psalm 91:5-10

You will not fear arrows, pestilence, destruction, the wicked, all kinds of evil... storm damage.

Consider vs. 7: Others might be falling around you... we are in a battle. All of life is a battle.

There are casualties, collateral damage...

But, not to you. "It shall not approach you."

Who does get hit? vs. 8 "the wicked"

Why? Verse 9 reminds us of vss. 1-2 So, no evil will befall you. (vs. 10)

Why? It is because you trust in the Lord, the Most High God. He is your dwelling place, remember?

When you live in God, nothing can touch you.

Well, you might respond, "after Monday and Tuesday night I feel fairly well touched by calamity."

Yes, but it is calamity that comes under God's sovereign providential care.

This is among the "all things" in view in **Romans 8:28**.

How does this work? Well, it is important at this point to use our brains, which birds cannot do.

They have bird brains. We have people brains. A friend of mine, "Don't be a bird brain."

Realize what we are reading in this Psalm. It is what we see in the entire Bible.

There will be troubles in life. There will be traps, sickness, terrors, arrows, destruction, injury, wicked, evil.

If there were not, what would we need to trust God for?

How would we ever realize that we need Him if it were not for all these troubles?

How could we recognize our Savior if there was nothing for Him to save us from?

How could we discover that He is a mighty fortress, a refuge, if there was no attack?

We need troubles for God to get us through them and out of them.

And people are watching. Your kids are watching. What does it mean to trust the Lord? And is He faithful?

How could these questions be answered if not for terrifying troubles?

And so, all of these things that happen, that we do not like, are part of a story that God is writing with you in it.

And your faith amid trials will serve to glorify God, to show that He is trustworthy.

**1 Peter 1:3-9** Is Peter crazy? We rejoice in trials? Yes we do because we know where the story is going.

This is the whole point of you going through suffering, to come out the other side with God your Savior.

### IV. You will live in the care of His angels.

#### Psalm 91:11-13

In vss. 11-13 we have a marvelous picture of from the point of view of the spiritual realm.

And, just as throughout this Psalm it is right to understand that,

though the imagery includes all kinds of protection from the Lord,

it is certainly right to understand that His protection is from literal arrows, diseases, and battles.

So, it is right to understand here that God does have actual angels that He puts in charge of you and me.

Now, I am not advocating a guardian angel theology, that each person has a guardian angel looking out for us.

That is not here.

On the other hand, look at these verses and what they actually say.

Not for every person, that has already been made clear, but for the person who is trusting in the Lord...

What does God do? He puts His angels in charge of you.

(vs. 11) "angels" = plural! That means more than one.

And how much of the time are they there according to this passage? "all your ways" = all the time.

And what do they do? They carry you and I in their hands.

So, this is far better than a guardian angel.

If you trust in the Lord, apparently He assigns angels to you, like your own Secret service unit.

They carry you along as you go on your way, every day.

The fact is that these angels take orders not from me but from the Lord.

And it so happens that sometimes the Lord decides to allow something to happen to me for my good.

The Bible is full of examples... Job, Joseph, Peter, Paul...

God allows a difficult thing to happen, only so far as He determines,  
so that I can grow and learn and trust Him.

It is important to remember that this protection is not to be misused. Jesus shows us this in **Matt. 4:5-7**.

This is the only time in the New Testament that Satan quotes from the Scriptures.

Jesus shows us in His response to Satan that this angelic protection is no reason to sin, to disobey God,  
or try to see how much of our stupidity He can handle.

*This is no encouragement to do stupid things like getting on a ladder during the storm to clean the gutter.*

That is when the angels get paid time and a half.

But His angels are there guarding you, carrying out God's orders.

## **V. Listen to what God says about you!**

### **Psalm 91:14-16**

In verse 1 the psalmist is speaking about the one who trusts the Lord.

In verse 2 the Psalmist was speaking for himself to the Lord.

In verses 3-13 the Psalmist was speaking directly to us about the Lord and His protection.

Now in these final three verses, God Himself is speaking Himself about the one who trusts in Him.

The tone is even more personal than what we have read so far. God is speaking about you.

The first thing to say after observing this and reading these verses is this:

God takes our salvation extremely personally.

He doesn't just send angels to look after us, though that would be enough.

He is with us Himself and He wants us to know it from His own lips.

Again, this promise from God is not for just anyone.

It is for the person who loves God (vs. 14a)

It is for the person who knows God (vs. 14b)

It is for the person who calls on God (vs. 15) and trusts God.

God promises to deliver you. (vs. 14)

God promises to "set you on high." = to honor you. 1 Samuel 2:30, "Those who honor Me I will honor."

God promises to hear you when you pray. (vs. 15) To hear and answer.

God promises to be with you in trouble, and rescue you.

God promises to save you if you trust in Him. (vs. 16)

Realize that God is going to do it His way. He will write His story on your life for His glory.

There will be very dark times indeed. That makes for a good story.

God will not make your life a boring story, though there are times where we might prefer boring.

You have to trust Him, your refuge, your fortress, your Most High Almighty Lord.

That is what makes it all good, what transforms calamity into beautiful redemption.

And best of all He redeems us from sin, death, and hell by His own precious blood so we can be His forever.

We get to celebrate that now, together, even though we have troubles now, for a while. Glory is coming.