

08/17/25 - Psalm 91 - "Almighty Protection in a Fallen World"

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Preacher: Daniel Messinger

[0 : 00] 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.

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.

[1 : 09] On your hands they will bear you up. I'm sorry, on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a 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. This was the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Good morning. Good morning. If we haven't met, my name is Daniel Messinger. I serve as a deacon here.

I was a pastoral intern a few years back. But it's a pleasure to be in this pulpit. Again, this is my third sermon here. We are doing a series through the Psalms.

[2 : 16] In particular, we're going through book four this summer. And today, we'll be talking about Psalm 91. The sermon title this morning is Almighty Protection in a Fallen World.

This psalm is a psalm of protection and safety. We don't know for sure, but it's probably a psalm of David.

And he wrote many other psalms on the Lord's protection. One of the most famous ones being Psalm 23. And many think that this psalm, Psalm 91, is messianic.

That it's about Jesus. And there's truth there. There are allusions to Jesus, as we'll see. This is a psalm about Jesus.

But this psalm is clearly applicable to all those who trust in God. I was on an airplane a month or two ago.

[3 : 24] And the passenger next to me pulled out the pamphlet from the back of the seat. Now, I thought this was a little bit odd. Because those pamphlets, it's just some basic information about the airline.

There's nothing interesting in those. Nobody reads those pamphlets. But I didn't really think anything of it until he was reading his pamphlet. And he lets out a, oh no.

Now, I couldn't think of anything he could have found on that pamphlet that would have elicited that reaction. So, I turned to him and I asked, what's wrong?

And he said, this is a Boeing. These are the ones where the doors fly off in the middle of the flight. I'm going to be honest.

I had no idea how to react to that. So, you know, I figured the chances of that happening were incredibly small. I know that flying is much safer than driving in a car.

[4 : 32] So, I didn't really think it was worth worrying about. So, I just kind of chuckled and put my earbud back in. Probably not the best response.

I'm not proud of that one. But, again, did not really know how to respond. And as funny as that interaction was for me, it does illustrate how we get anxious in our daily lives.

And one of the things that he was correct about is that our lives are fragile. We don't know what will happen, if tragedy will strike.

We get anxious and we worry about many things, some of them trivial and others extremely important. There's a lot of things that can and do go wrong.

Even to people who fully trust in the Lord. And we've seen some examples of that in our church recently. But if you dwell in God, you have nothing to fear.

[5 : 48] Not because nothing ever goes wrong, but because of the one in control of it all. That brings me to my first point, almighty protection.

Let's look again at verses 1 and 2. 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. We see right off the bat that God is a refuge and a fortress, a stronghold and a place of safety.

But even before that, look at the titles for God. Most High, Almighty. These titles declare his power to protect.

Almighty just means complete power. It means omnipotent. Now, if God is not the supreme being, or if he doesn't have complete power, he can't promise protection.

[7 : 03] Thankfully, he is almighty, which again means that he has the power to protect. Notice too that two things are required of us.

We see in verse 1 that we need to dwell in him. We also see at the end of verse 2 that we have to trust in him.

Dwelling and trusting require our participation in this protection, which is something that we'll talk more in detail about later on. In verses 3 and 4, we see a shift.

We see why the reader puts his trust in God. Let's look. He says, For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions.

Pinions are just wings. And under his wings, you will find refuge. So he kind of repeats, pinions and wings. His faithfulness is a shield and a buckler.

[8 : 06] Once again, buckler is just another word for a shield. So repeating himself, making this point, he is a shield. He covers us with his wings.

No harm will come to you when you rest in the almighty. You are perfectly safe. But not only are you safe, but you have nothing to fear either.

Look at verses 5 and 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.

It's one thing to be safe in the here and now. It's another to be completely unconcerned about anything that could happen.

That's not very characteristic of us. At least it's not very characteristic of me. We are constantly anxious about what could happen.

[9 : 14] About doors that could fly off mid-flight. Or more commonly, we are anxious about how to pay bills. Medical issues to ourselves and our friends and family.

Or even simple things like, did I leave supper in the oven too long? But the one who dwells in God has nothing to fear because he is almighty, he is in control, and will cover you in his wings.

Even when there is destruction and chaos all around, let's look at verses 7 and 8. 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. Despite the chaos that's right next to you, there's absolutely no harm and no fear of harm.

Others might fall from arrows, pestilence, or destruction. It may happen right next to you. But the one who dwells in God is just kind of sitting there, completely unharmed and unafraid.

[10 : 39] The only thing you see is the recompense of the wicked. Now, recompense in this context really means the punishment of the wicked, seeing the punishment of the wicked. And that's a bit of an odd verse.

We should always want the wicked to turn to God while they have time. We shouldn't hope for their destruction. But I think this shows, in particular, the punishment of those that seek your harm.

If someone is persecuting you and God punishes them, that's a relief. And it brings safety, the safety that is described in this passage.

A good example of this is the Egyptian plagues in Exodus. The Egyptians had enslaved the Israelites and were treating them harshly.

And God commanded the Egyptians to free his people. But they refused. So God punished the Egyptians in order to protect his chosen people.

[11 : 54] He brought plagues and suffering to those causing harm to his people. The Israelites were largely unaffected by these plagues.

They simply watched the destruction and the punishment of the Egyptians. And they experienced newfound freedom at the end and safety.

They didn't even really do anything besides trust him and obey him. And they didn't even do that particularly well. They just watched God's protection as largely passive observers.

For those who make God their dwelling, we have complete and utter protection. God has complete power, complete authority, and we are perfectly safe in him.

I want you to imagine for a second a reinforced underground bunker and the safety that that provides.

[12 : 59] Now imagine that that bunker is inside 10 other ones and you have every single Marvel character outside fighting for your safety.

And every single army from every country dedicated to your protection. Ready to use nuclear weapons if they have to, to ensure that you are safe.

Think about that. Imagine that level of protection. Now multiply that protection by a thousand.

Actually, infinity if we're being honest.

That's how safe you are when you dwell in the shelter of the Almighty. And that brings me to my second point, spiritual protection. Let's look at verses 11 and 12.

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.

[14 : 05] He will command angels to protect the one who dwells in the Lord. Now it's interesting that he speaks of angels here.

Because we were just talking about the direct protection of the Almighty. And yeah, I mean, he can command angels as well.

He can use them to protect you. But it kind of feels almost anticlimactic when we're just talking about the direct protection of God, of the Almighty.

He can protect you without their help. He doesn't need angels to protect you. But I came to realize thinking about angels can help you feel God's protection and understand God's protection in a much more real way.

the same way that envisioning Marvel characters and nuclear weapons can remind us and help us understand the scope of God's protection.

[15 : 18] Those things pale in comparison to the power of our God. But it can remind us of his true power. God doesn't need angels to accomplish his purposes.

But he does command armies. And that should help us understand the full scope of his power to protect. Especially when we remember that our primary foes are spiritual, not physical.

In our culture, we can forget Ephesians 6.12 that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

God holds power over all of these evil forces such that he can protect you from them with a word. Now, if all of this is true, why do bad things happen?

[16 : 34] Why do we suffer? Is it because we don't dwell in him as we should? Is it because we don't trust him as we should?

Is it because we're not as faithful as we should be? If God is almighty, why do we suffer? If you've been a Christian for a while, you might recognize verses 11 and 12.

Satan actually uses these verses to tempt Jesus in Matthew chapter 4. And I want you, if you have your Bibles open, turn to Matthew 4.

we're going to read verses 5 to 7 because I think that it's critical to understanding Psalm 91. Again, Satan, this is the second of three temptations that Satan uses.

In Matthew 4, chapter, Matthew chapter 4, verses 5 to 7, read, Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down.

[17 : 54] For it is written, and here's where he quotes Psalm 91, He will command his angels concerning you, and on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

Jesus said to him, Again, it is written, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test. Now, this is an interesting temptation.

Why does Satan use this verse in Psalm 91? I mean, if I was Satan, I feel like there are other places you could have picked, other verses you could have taken out of context, other things, why does he use this verse?

Well, I think the devil is far more crafty than I am. What is the temptation here? He's tempting Jesus to display his power, to prove that he is the Messiah.

And he even uses the phrase, if, to question his status, he says, if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down.

[19 : 10] No harm will come to you if you truly are the Messiah. And the place that Satan took him to, the pinnacle of the temple, it's a public place.

People could see his glory firsthand. he could be recognized as Messiah. At least, that's what the temptation promised.

But notice, Satan is taking these verses out of context. If you've been following along, you may have noticed that I skipped over verses 9 and 10.

So turn back to Psalm 91. We're going to read verses 9 and 10 now. And verse 9 is very similar to verse 1. Parallels it.

But verse 9 and 10 read, Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place, the Most High who is my refuge, no evil shall be allowed to befall you.

[20 : 14] No plague come near your tent. The point of this passage in Psalm 91 is that protection comes to people who make God their dwelling place.

Jesus was tempted to make the earth his dwelling place. To reveal his power and command worship at the expense of making God the Father his dwelling place.

you see, if the Father wanted to reveal power in this moment and show the world who Jesus really was, he could have done so.

Jesus is tempted to take matters into his own hands and claim his status regardless of the Father's plan or wishes to make the earth his dwelling place.

and to make the earth his dwelling rather than taking joy in the unity and love of the triune God.

[21 : 30] Jesus' purpose on earth was not to establish an earthly kingdom or to reign on a cushy throne. His purpose was to suffer so that he might save God's people.

Satan uses the same temptation for us. Satan is constantly tempting us to make our dwelling place here rather than in God.

He'll even use passages like Psalm 91 to make you think that you'll get whatever you want in this life. And when you don't, you must be doing something wrong.

wrong. But that's not the point. The point is not to avoid suffering or to stay comfortable. Your purpose is not to live a comfortable life, but to bring glory to God and enjoy his presence forever. We see in this passage that God is our defender. But what is he protecting you from? He doesn't always protect you from suffering.

[22 : 51] He's capable. He's almighty. And sometimes he does give us comforts and blessings. But that's not always his plan.

Because while he cares about your life on earth, that's not his ultimate goal. Think about Jesus' suffering. He was beaten, mocked, and tortured.

To the point that he cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Jesus came not to enjoy pleasures in this life on earth.

He came to suffer. And by suffering, to take victory over sin and death. Look at verse 13. You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.

Among other things, this is an allusion to Satan. Satan is described as a lion in the Bible, most notably in 1 Peter 5.8, where it says, your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

[24 : 13] But he's more commonly referred to as a serpent. In Genesis 3.15, God addresses the serpent, or Satan, saying, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. Jesus is the offspring of the woman who came to crush the serpent's head, to defeat death, so that you can be forgiven and have everlasting life.

life. That's the point. That's the only reason why any of this matters. We are likely to suffer on this earth.

But just as Jesus' suffering had a purpose, so does yours. I can't fully explain why we suffer. But I can tell you that everything happens for a reason.

All suffering is for the good of those who love him, as Romans 8.28 says. And if you trust in the Lord, he will protect you from eternal condemnation and allow you to dwell with him.

[25 : 37] That's what these promises are about. And that brings me to my third point, undeserved protection. Let's look at verses 14 and 15.

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. Now we see God speaking directly to us. He's a personal God. And we have a personal relationship with him. When I started preparing this sermon, I made a crucial error.

I didn't think this passage was about me. And yes, this passage is somewhat about Christ, but that's not even why I made this error.

[26 : 41] I saw verse 1, that this is about the one who dwells in the Almighty. Verse 9, that it's about the one who makes the Lord his dwelling.

And verse 14, that this is about the one who holds fast to him. And I looked at myself and said, that's not me.

It wasn't even a conscious thing. I didn't even realize I was doing it until part way through my preparations. That's not me. I don't seek him. So often, my goals are not about dwelling in God. It's about comfort. Sitting on the couch, watching TV with a bag of chips. it's about money. Having a perception that I'm secure in this world and can maintain my worldly lifestyle.

It's about protecting myself from tragedies in this life. Even in an airplane faced with doors flying off, I am just as guilty as the passenger next to me.

[28 : 02] Because I took comfort in statistics and the low probability of an accident. Not in my almighty God who is in control of it all.

So often, I make my dwelling place here on earth. And there's a sense in which I'm right. This is a call and a command to put your trust in him.

to cling to him and to make him your dwelling place. And if you feel like these things aren't true of you, that's a problem.

And it was a wake-up call to me. Make your life about God. Seek him like he's the only thing that matters, because ultimately he is the only thing that matters.

others. But there's another sense in which I was very wrong, because this isn't about me. Look at verse 16.

[29 : 08] With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. If you've committed your life to Jesus, you will be protected.

you are forgiven, you have salvation, you have eternal life. Remember that question from before. What is he protecting you from? Romans 8, 38 to 39 says this, for I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God might separate you from comforts, from pleasures. He might even cause suffering, but you are fully safe and protected in his care.

Moreover, God has made his dwelling place in you if you believe. That's a humbling reality.

[30 : 30] This whole passage emphasizes that you need to dwell in God, but this same God dwells in you as his temple. Regardless of how well you dwell in him or seek after him, he dwells in you, a sinner with absolutely nothing to offer him.

That's where God has chosen to dwell. That is an awesome and unbelievably humbling reality. the Holy Spirit is with you always.

If you have committed your life to Jesus, the safety and protection described in this psalm is for you. And if you haven't committed your life to Jesus, this safety is available to you.

If you call to him and hold fast to him in love, you admit that you are a sinner, desperately in need of his grace, you will have eternal life.

The safety and protection described in this psalm is for you. If only you would accept him. Not safety on this earth.

[31 : 52] You will still face trials and suffering here, but you will have safety and assurance of the life to come. it's so easy for us to cling to this world.

We worry ourselves with so many things, forgetting that God commands it all. We cling to a dwelling place on earth and not our dwelling place in him.

Worldly comfort is a facade. God, it will pass away, it will fade, and it's not promised. In fact, James 1, 2-4 says, to count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, and let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

God uses suffering to produce steadfastness in us, to help us make him our dwelling.

And if that's your primary purpose in life, suffering is worth it. Don't trouble yourself with the things of this world.

[33 : 27] don't be anxious about what will happen to you, or your family, or your friends. Don't be anxious about how you look, or about how people will perceive you, what they think about you.

Don't be anxious about how you can afford groceries. Don't even be anxious about death. Don't be anxious about doors flying off your airplane.

Because your life is not in the hands of Boeing, or the maintenance workers, or the pilots, or anyone else.

It's in the hands of God. as Philippians 4, 6-7 says, do not be anxious about anything. It doesn't stop there, as if we're just supposed to turn off the anxiety part of our brain.

It continues, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

[34 : 39] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Peace doesn't come by turning off anxiety.

It comes by dwelling in Christ. That's why we take an active role in this. That's why we need to dwell in him.

him. That's why we need to cling to him, to call to him. Because when everything in your life is about your relationship to God, nothing can shake you.

That's not to say we can't enjoy or desire earthly blessings, but that shouldn't be your primary purpose. It's also not to say that we can't grieve.

Or that we can't mourn the tragedies of this life. There are plenty of godly examples of grief in the Bible. But we don't grieve like the world without hope.

[35 : 53] We grieve with hope. And as we go through life, it's important to make God our purpose on earth, to make him our dwelling place.

Otherwise, we will be anxious. We will cling to worldly things as if it has eternal significance. Our worlds will crumble around us because we've made them about us.

We've made our dwelling place here on earth, on sand. Build your dwelling on the rock. don't build your dwelling on sand, on things of this world, money or status or comfort or pleasure because one day or another your house will fall and you will be left with nothing.

Build your house on God and make him your dwelling. we've had several tragedies in the church recently.

If you're struggling with tragedy, one that's known to the church body or one that's unknown, build your house on the rock. Cling to him and make him your dwelling place.

[37 : 19] Look to your eternal home, not your temporary one. If you're not dealing with tragedy, what will you do if tragedy strikes?

Do you dwell in God such that you'll sing it is well with my soul even as the world crashes and burns around you because you know that God is in control and he will preserve your soul.

Or will you languish in misery forever questioning God's almighty protection? And finally, what will you do if God spares you from tragedy?

Will you live with a feeling of entitlement or false worldly security making your blessings your purpose?

that's the category that I often fall into. Or will you thank God for his rich blessings even in this life holding his gifts with an open hand and looking towards the promise of an eternal rest?

[38 : 43] There are many things that happen in our sinful world. Many tragedies, hardships, much suffering, but we have an almighty God capable of protecting us.

He loved us so much that he sent his son to suffer that we might be protected from our own sin and eternal condemnation.

Because of this, for those who cling to Jesus and make him our dwelling, we have an assured eternal protection.

I want to end by reading Isaiah 26, 3-4, because it perfectly summarizes this whole sermon. They're speaking of God, and they say, you keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you.

Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock. Let's pray. Amen.