Psalm 91

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Psalm 91

[1] He that dwelleth 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 will I trust.

[3] Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

[4] He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

[5] Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

[6] Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

[7] A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

[8] Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

[9] Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

[10] There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

[11] For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

[12] They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

[13] Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

[14] Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath 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 will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Introduction:

A. We had a young man known for fear and love of God saved from a terrible auto wreck this past week.

B. There is comfort in the precious promises of this psalm that each believer ought to learn for building his faith.

C. The psalm is simple, in that it has only two aspects – the character of the subject, and the blessings on him.

D. It is of grave importance that every hearer examines himself for the conditions of the psalm and the promises.
E. Otherwise, these words will be vain mumblings in the day of your calamity. The grave choice is yours today.
F. Many read this psalm as if reading the Koran, falsely believing there is value in the mere sound of the words.
G. What man would not want this psalm to apply to him? Let every hearer humble himself to the conditions of it.
H. This psalm's outline is simple, yet helpful. It is wise to get a feel for the progress of any chapter of Scripture.
    1. The "Introduction" states the psalm in brief in the third person and then claims it in the first person (v1-2).
    2. The safety of the righteous is declared wonderfully in the second person for your personal comfort (v3-8).
    3. The habitation and deliverance of the righteous, the psalm in brief, is stated in the second person (v9-10).
    4. The servants of the righteous, sent by God to deliver them, are described in the second person (v11-13).
    5. The "Conclusion" states the conditions and promises again in the third person by God Himself (v14-16).
I. The spiritually minded will want to know the specific conditions of the psalm. They are in verses 1,9, and 14.

1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

A. The first verse is a summary of the whole psalm, in that it describes the conditions and blessings.
B. The opening word is fabulous, for it refers to a single individual. The psalm is personal. Take it!
C. The Lord repeats this opening pronoun, a single individual in the third person, later (v14-16)!
D. The psalm is not for the ungodly; it is not for carnal believers. It is for those walking with God.
E. The man walking close to the most high will have the shadow of the Almighty as his protection.
F. Dwelling is a verb describing the choice to live as a permanent resident in some house or place.
G. The secret place of the most High is that special closeness to God that reflects an intimate union.
H. Intimate friends, like Jonathan and David, met for communion in secret and unknown places.
I. The Lord of hosts hides His saints in His pavilion and secret of His tabernacle (Ps 27:5; 31:20).
J. Walking with God is the daily priority of reading, prayer, confession, and singing in love to God.
K. The most High is a comforting designation for the Lord, for it implies His great power to protect.
L. The secret place of the most High brings a man under the protecting shadow of the Almighty.
M. The Almighty is another superlative name for the Lord, implying His limitless power to protect.

N. The choice to dwell in intimate closeness with God keeps you under His special protective care.
O. The shadow of a mighty rock is a picture in a dry and hot land of rest and protection (Is 32:2).
P. David often spoke of the shadow of God's wings as His protection (Ps 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7).
Q. The blessed God has a special interest in protecting those that choose to walk closely with Him.
R. New Testament saints can dwell in God and have Him dwell in them (John 14:23; I John 4:15).

2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

A. Observe the switch from the third person to the first person, as the writer takes claim himself!
B. Whoever the author, whether David or Moses (Psalm 90), they added credibility by testimony.
C. This response is that of a righteous man with a spiritual heart – the Scriptures move him to faith!
D. David loved to glory in God's great protection and provision for him by many figures (Ps 18:2).
E. David loved God as a refuge and fortress – a strong habitation – where he could resort (Ps 71:3).
F. The key here is learning to trust in God completely and pour out your heart to Him (Ps 62:5-8).

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

A. Observe the switch from the first person to the second person, which promises the psalm to you!
B. Whatever we are about to read in the second person, it is marked by a word of certainty – surely!
C. A fowler was a hunter of birds, who often used snares to trap and capture the unsuspecting birds.
D. The psalmist did not teach deliverance from literal fowlers, but rather from unseen dangers.
E. The psalmist did not teach deliverance from literal fowlers, but rather from deceitful enemies.
F. The righteous are often the object of deceit and snares by the wicked, as David (Psalm 144:7,11).
G. Consider how David gloried in escaping out the snares of fowlers with Gods help (Ps 124:6-8).
H. How is a pestilence noisome? The English word noisome (from noy, meaning annoyance, trouble; vexing, harassing, harmful, injurious) means harmful, injurious, noxious; offensive to the sense of smell; ill-smelling; disagreeable, unpleasant, offensive; annoying, troublesome.
I. The word has no relation to noise, as in crying or screaming (see Ezekiel 14:15,21; Rev 16:2).
J. There is profit for our modern eyes to see a documentary on the Influenza of 1918, in which 70 million died worldwide, 675 thousand in the U.S., and it killed primarily the healthy, aged 15-34.

4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

A. David often spoke of the shadow of God's wings as His protection (Ps 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7).
B. Moses beautifully described God's care for Israel like an eagle over her young (Deut 32:11-12).
C. The God of heaven can afford being described as a bird, since He is the Almighty God Jehovah!
D. As a mother eagle protects her eaglets with feathers and wings, so the Lord protects His children.
E. Jesus wept over Jerusalem at their resistance to finding shelter under His wings (Matthew 23:37).

F. God's feathers and wings are greater than any danger that can possibly threaten. Trust Him!
G. The truth of His promises and the truth of His doctrines will protect you from fear and heresy.
H. There is comfort for the elect in the truthfulness of God's promises (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:17-18).

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

A. Night and darkness cause all men more fear than does the day and light, but not with the Lord.
B. The fear here is the fear of the unseen, the invisible, and the unknown due to lack of sight.
C. During the darkness and cover of night, enemies can approach undetected and take away a life.
D. During the darkness and cover of night, you cannot see and know the danger lurking around you.
E. During the night a pestilence is just as active in daylight, sneaking into cities, houses, and bodies.
F. Read the terrifying description by Eliphaz of a spirit approaching him in the night (Job 4:13-16).
G. During the light and brightness of day, enemies can send an arrow that for its profile is invisible.
H. The silent flight of an arrow shot from a distance in the midst of battle was impossible to detect.
I. The horror of arrows was realized in the death of Saul and his sons (I Sam 31:1-6; II Sam 1:18).
J. The Lord used an arrow shot at a venture to kill Ahab through a joint in his armor (I Kgs 22:34).
K. The fear here is the fear of the unheard and the unknown due to lack of any identifying sound.

6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

A. The pestilence is mentioned again, for its terrible destruction without any warning or defense.
B. A plague is not slowed or stayed by the darkness; it continues stalking and taking its victims.
C. And when light appears, there is still no defense, for you cannot see it or stop it even at noonday!
D. When a plague or other terrible enemy threatens you, the Lord will protect the truly righteous.

7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

A. Though natural disasters are taking thousands on either side of the righteous, he shall stand safe!
B. You may consider this description of war or a plague, with thousands being taken on both sides.
C. Consider auto accidents! Though thousands die all around, the Lord can and will protect his own.
D. In light of this promise, consider Noah, Abraham, Lot, Rahab, David, Esther, Daniel, and others.

8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

A. God's judgment sent on the wicked will not touch the righteous – you will only see it on others.
B. Instead of realizing God's judgment that He pours out on the wicked, you will only witness it.
C. When men see God's judging the wicked, they know righteousness is worth it (Psalm 58:10-11).
D. God makes a difference between the righteous and wicked for you to see (Ps 37:34; 92:11).
E. Those who think and speak often about the Lord will see a great division (Mal 1:1-5; 3:16-18).

9 Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

A. Again we see the underlying condition to the promises, the choice to walk with God intimately.
B. Though using different words, making the Lord your habitation is dwelling in His secret place.
C. The writer of this psalm had opened with his trust in the Lord as his refuge and now repeats it.
D. The introduction put the condition in the third person, but now the condition is second person.
E. A habitation is where you stay, find comfort, go for safety, return for rest, and stay for pleasure.
F. The condition is stated again in the middle of the psalm to remind us the blessing is conditional.

10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

A. Having given the condition in the previous verse, the psalmist restated the promised protection.
B. Jabez prayed for such blessings and received them, but God gave a promise to us (I Chr 4:9-10).
C. For any exception to these absolute promises, we assume higher purposes and/or sufficient grace.
D. God tries men at times with evil befalling them, but it is for their perfection and greater reward!
E. God tries men at times with evil befalling them, but it is for correction to save from judgment.
F. God tries men at times with evil befalling them, but He can give great grace to bear it easily.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

A. God created the angels to be the servants of the elect, which office they fulfill (Hebrews 13-14).
B. Consider this verse well! The great God gives His angels orders to personally protect you.
C. He is called the Lord of hosts, because He has hosts of angels awaiting any order He might give.
D. Micaiah saw heaven opened and all the host of heaven awaiting their orders (I Kings 22:19-23).
E. Elisha asked God to open the eyes of His servant to see the protecting host (II Kings 6:16-17).
F. In comparison, buddies in combat or personal bodyguards are frivolous and ridiculous!
G. Note that this does not apply just to major events in your life, but to “all thy ways.” Glory!
H. The angel of the Lord encamps around about and delivers those that fear him (Psalm 34:7)!
I. The devil chose this passage in an attempt to seduce Jesus Christ to tempt God (Luke 4:9-12).

12 They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

A. God sent angels to Sodom to deliver Lot for the righteous Abraham (Gen 18:20-33; 19:1-23).
B. God sent an angel to deliver Hezekiah that killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night (II Kgs 19:35).
C. God sent an angel to deliver the three men from Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace (Daniel 3:28).
D. God sent an angel to deliver Daniel from hungry lions in the lions’ den of Persia (Daniel 6:22).
E. God sent angels to comfort our Lord Jesus Christ after being tempted by the devil (Matt 4:11).
F. God sent an angel to comfort the Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43).
G. God sent an angel to deliver Peter from prison, when Herod intended his death (Acts 12:5-11).

13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

A. Here are multiple metaphors of powerful, deceitful, and dangerous beasts for dangerous enemies.
B. An adder is a poisonous snake; a young lion is very strong; a dragon is any very fierce creature.
C. Observe that the promise does not say that you shall escape, but rather that you shall dominate!
D. It does not take too much consideration to recognize all three as names or images of the devil!
E. By the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gates of hell could not resist the gospel (Matt 16:18).
F. Paul promised Roman saints would soon trample Satan under foot (Rom 16:20; Rev 12:10-11).
G. Since he had relied on the fear of death for ages, the martyrs proved him powerless (Rev 12:11).
H. Satan was at work in pagan governments, but we have helping angels (Dan 10:13,20-21; 12:1).

14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

A. Note the switch from the writer speaking about God to God Himself speaking in the first person.
B. Rather than the writer promising God's deliverance in the second person, God does the promising of His own intervention in the first person to save and deliver you in the third person.
C. There are two conditions here – setting your affection on God and knowing His glorious name.
D. Loving God is the first and great commandment, for He demands and expects our first love.
E. Knowing His name is much more than knowing it mentally, but rather loving and trusting it.
F. The condition, for evidence, for a crown of righteousness is based on loving Christ (II Tim 4:8).
G. Do you know His name? Is it all your trust? Do you speak of it often with others (Mal 3:16-18)?
H. God does not miss your treatment of Him or His name. He will reward all that worship Him.

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.

A. This is not another condition, but rather a promise – I will answer the prayers of this godly man.
B. The Lord hears the prayers of the righteous, but He does not hear the prayers of the wicked (Ps 34:12-20; 66:18; 84:11; Pr 15:8; 28:9; John 9:31; I Pet 3:10-12; I John 3:22).
C. The fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, not the desperate prayer of a fool (Jas 5:16).
D. The man who loves and knows God will have God's presence in trouble. He will not be alone.
E. The God of heaven will deliver him from his trouble, and He will exalt and honour him as well.
F. True and lasting honor is only from the Lord, for the honor of this world is fleeting and flimsy.
G. If you draw night to God and humble yourself before Him, He will lift you up (James 4:8-10).
H. Consider the blessings: answered prayers, God's presence in trouble, deliverance, and honor!

16 With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

A. The righteous enjoy a salvation in many different ways in this life, and they have a life to come.

B. Solomon used many proverbs of wisdom leading to long life (Pr 3:16; 9:11; 10:27; 28:16; etc.).
C. The wicked do not live out half their days, because God and men will destroy them (Ps 55:23).
D. Many of God's saints also lived long lives in this world (Gen 25:7-8; Job 42:16-17; Luke 2:37).
E. We can never lose, nor is the promise ever wrong, for an early death here begins eternity there!
F. A righteous man desires long life for much service, as Hezekiah prayed in sickness (Is 38:18-19).

Conclusion:

A. Though some verses here (v11-12) did NOT apply to Jesus Christ, they DO apply to those walking with God.
B. These verses applied to a young brother in our church this past week, when an angel stopped a pickup truck.
C. There is no comfort here for those who have not made the Lord their habitation or the love of their life.
D. Do not ask for me to read Psalm 91 to you, if the foolish things of this life have preoccupied your heart.
E. It is the sober duty of every child of God to examine themselves as to their fulfillment of the conditions.

For Further Study:

A. Sermon Outline: "The Angels of God," which describes from many angles the Bible testimony about angels.
B. Sermon Outline: "Walking with God," which describes and illustrates what it means to walk with God in this life.
C. Read a little about the Influenza of 1918 and realize that God can bring terrible pestilences even on modern societies.