**In Times of Strong Attack: Worship Through Plea**

**Psalm 91 (ESV)**

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The book of Psalms is a prayer book. It is a hymn book, but even more, it’s a prayer book. It teaches us how to pray. If you and I immerse ourselves in the psalms, we will learn how to pray. So often, our prayers are very shallow. And as a result of that, our worship is diminished. God gave us this entire book largely to teach us how to pray and how to worship the Lord.

We’ve been in this series on worship because worship is the center of all that we are and do. It’s the ultimate end and the ultimate outcome that gives purpose and meaning and joy in our life. We’re learning that worship is not just merely in these bright tones, but it’s also in some mournful tones. Today we’re going to look at how it’s sort of a desperate, needy tone. We’re crying out to God when there’s great trouble. Psalm 91 is one of these great psalms. It’s been beloved by God’s people from the time it was written. And to this day, it’s so very precious. We trust that it will become even more precious to us as we spend some time thinking about what God is teaching us and telling us through it.

***1*** *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.* ***2*** *I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”*

***3*** *For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.* ***4*** *He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.* ***5*** *You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,* ***6*** *nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.*

***7*** *A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.* ***8*** *You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.*

***9*** *Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—****10*** *no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.*

***11*** *For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.* ***12*** *On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.* ***13*** *You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.*

***14*** *“Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.* ***15*** *When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.* ***16*** *With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”*

What great promises!

Psalm 91 has been really dear to me all my life, but particularly, it’s been meaningful in the last three years or so. I have needed to lean into it as one of my sons, Daniel, flies a refueling tanker for the Air Force. He is often in harms way. He has been deployed four times in those past three years. He has recently received a patch for flying 100 combat missions. Many times he is in situations where he has told me, “I thought this was the last day for me upon this earth.” He’s comfortable with that. He knows that he is in God’s hands. Kimberly and I most often learn about these dangers after the fact. We find out about them after sort of the trouble has passed. But on one occasion during a deployment last year, I received a picture from Daniel. He was in the cockpit of his air plane, about ready to take off. The sun was just starting to rise on the horizon. There were beautiful mountains. It seemed so peaceful and serene. He noted what a beautiful scene he was sitting in. And upon further discussion with him, he said that he was in Afghanistan at Bagram Air Force Base. When I learned that, I had a little bit of a check, but he seemed so happy and he seemed to be texting so securely. And then he sent this little message to me. He said, “Dad, pray for us. We’re taking off from here in a few minutes and we know that we’re going to get shot at when we take off.” There are terrorists up in those mountains and it’s a close base. Big planes like this don’t often fly in. In fact, I think his was the first that ever flew into Bagram Air Force Base, because it’s hard to get out of there with staying safe. And so, that was the last text and I didn’t hear from him for about six hours.

You can imagine getting this text saying, “We’re going to get shot at.” His plane is a huge plane. It’s a really big target. It’s 182 feet long. It’s 60 feet high. It has a 165 foot wingspan. That’s a big target to be shot at. And so I’m wondering what has happened. I didn’t hear any word. My first response of course, was fear. When your children turn 27, you have as much concern for them as when they turned 7. I know this may be hard to believe for younger folks, but you who have endured this, you understand that you remember back when they were seven and they were climbing this tree. You’d look out the window and they were climbing the tree and you’d be saying, “Hey, be careful!” It’s the same kind of emotion. It’s the same kind of response you have when they are older.

After the initial fear, I opened up the Word. Like many believers before me, I found great solace in the truth of God and the character of God and in prayer. And also, I found solace in the prayers of God’s people as I shared with others to pray for him. It’s in these moments that we find God really and truly to be a fortress, to be a refuge, a safe place. He is the place to go to and find solace, to find comfort, to find a solid ground underneath our feet in times of trouble. God did protect Daniel and his crew through this danger and many others.

The focus of this psalm today is how we worship God in times of trouble. Because we do have opportunities to move away from worship or opportunities to lean into worship during times of great trouble. This psalm is very comprehensive. I think it lists seven different troubles. But I think it lists those to say this is a psalm about any trouble that any of us may experience in our life at any time. Troubles abound in this world. Job says **Job 5:7** but man is born to trouble as sparks fly upward.

As surely as when a spark gets hit it flies upward, that is the same surety that man is going to experience troubles. What kind of troubles might we experience? Well, there are a number of them. This psalm is so sweet and so helpful when you await word back from a biopsy, when you get let go from your job, when Satan assaults you through discouragement, when a friend turns against you, when you fail your final exam, when your girlfriend or boyfriend breaks up with you, when your little one is sick with a really high fever late at night, when temptation to sin presses hard against your soul, when you break your arm right before baseball season, when your beloved pet has to be put down, when your child is in a car accident, when you are sued by a business partner, when you’re ridiculed for your faith, when the rain doesn’t come and you desperately need that rain in order to nourish your crops, these and so many more.

Psalm 91 is written to help us worship God in times of trouble. We can remember this psalm. It’s really easy because we’re taught from the time we’re little that when you’re in trouble, you call 9-1-1. Psalm 91:1. There it is. 9-1-1. That’s how you remember this is a psalm for times of trouble. If we’re in trouble, what was that psalm again that is supposed to help? Psalm 91:1. Turn right there and you’ll find immense help from the Lord. I don’t think there’s any Scripture that can be more cheering to our souls in times of trouble than this one.

Our natural reaction to trouble is to look somewhere in our human capacity to fix the problem. So we make an appointment with the doctor or surgeon. We race for the phone and we call the police or the fire department or an ambulance. We apply for a loan from the bank. We look to the law courts for relief. We develop bigger and bigger weapons for our military. Now, these actions are not wrong in and of themselves, but they’re actions of man seeking to relieve himself of trouble using human resources. In themselves, these actions might be wise. But by themselves, these actions are foolish. We must never trust in these things to get us through trouble. We may use those things as God would offer them as resources, but we must never trust in them.

You see, the principle we’re going to learn from this psalm is that human resources absolutely will fail us. God alone is sufficient.The doctor sometimes can’t offer hope for the disease. The police or fire department can’t always arrive on time. The bank doesn’t always supply the need of the moment. The law courts don’t always make just decisions. And the military might of a nation sometimes is surpassed by that of another nation. So what do we do when trouble confronts us? As God’s people, we worship God. Psalm 91 calls us worship by putting our trust in God and making our appeal to Him in the midst of our distress. So the main idea we’re going to trace through this psalm is that when trouble attacks us, we do not trust in God’s methods, but in God Himself, who is faithful and true.

I would ask you this morning, are you in any present danger? If you are, God intends to use this specific danger to move you graciously toward Himself. That’s God’s intention behind that trouble. It’s to use that trouble to move you, push you closer and closer to see how sufficient He is for you in your need. If you’re not in trouble, I would say to keep this in mind. Learn now so that when trouble comes, because trouble will surely come to your life at some point. So what are we to do when we’re under attack? This psalm teaches us. If you’re taking notes, there are three actions that this psalm teaches us to take when we’re under attack.

**Action #1: Talk to God in Pledge (vv. 1-2)**

Many commentators think that this psalm was written by Moses. This three part outline is developed by the language of the psalm because in this psalm, if you’ll notice it closely, the pronouns that are being used throughout the psalm changes three different times. So in verses 1 and 2, the psalmist uses the pronoun “I.” Do you see that in verse 2?

***2*** *I will say to the LORD,*

So he is verbally announcing his pledge of faith in God. Now the second piece of this psalm is marked by the pronoun, “you.” And that’s in verses 3-13. This is actually a singular, you. He’s talking to individuals who he knows also will be in trouble. He says “This had been my experience. I’m going to trust in the Lord. Now, I want to talk to you.” And he gives a message of hope and encouragement to people who are reading. So that pronoun turns to you.

***3*** *For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler*

And then finally, the pronoun changes in verses 14-16, back to the pronoun “I.” But this time, it’s not the “I” of the writer. It is the writer putting these words in the mouth of God.God Himself is speaking in verses 14-16. And you notice that he says

***14*** *“Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him;*

That’s God speaking. “Those who are faithful and holding fast to me in love and in faith, I’m going to deliver them.” And so that’s why we have this three part outline. It follows sort of the language of the psalm itself. What are we to do when we’re in danger?

**Action 1: Talk to God in pledge. (vv.1-2)**

Look at verse 1. It sort of sets the topic for us.

***1*** *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.*

That is an amazing statement! It’s a little bit mystifying, though. It causes us to ask some questions right away. It seems at first to be a bit circular. It seems to be a bit like someone who says, “He who dwells in the house will abide in the house.” Did you catch that?

***1*** *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.*

This seems at first to be rather obvious, doesn’t it? But to the contrary, this statement is really profound! God is reminding us here that when we live our lives in God we will experience the presence of God. We will experience the security that He supplies. It’s only as we’re dwelling in God that we experience the safety, the protection, the deliverance that He offers.

The great threat that any trouble places upon our souls is to move us away from God rather than toward Him. Every time we face a trouble, we have a decision to make. Will I be moving toward God now as a result of this trouble, or will I be moving away from Him? In fear, we flee to human solutions. In anger, we stomp away from the Lord who allowed this trouble into our lives. In discouragement, we shrink into the darkness of despair. But God offers Himself. He says, “Don’t move away from me. Move toward me.” God alone is sufficient for our need.

Notice in these first two verses that God uses four different names to identify who He is to us. He says, “I am the Most High. I’m greater than any other. I am the Almighty. I’m the one who is infinite in power. I am the LORD, the faithful one, the covenant-keeping God. I am the person who is “my God.” I’m loving. I’m personal.” With these names, God is reminding us at the outset, of His very person. He’s bigger than any trouble we experience. And notice how personal Moses is with this God. Notice how Moses draws near personally to Him. He says

***2*** *I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”*

Let me ask you a question. Is God personal? Is He that personal with you? The first application we must draw from this psalm is the application to make the Lord yourrefuge by placing your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior! You see, the promise of this psalm is only for those who have made God, “my God,” who have made God very personal. He’s not just God out there. He’s not God above and God beyond, transcendent. But He’s my God, the one whom I know. He is the one who is my Father. He is the one who has adopted me into His family as I have believed in Jesus, as I have received His Son as my Lord, as my Savior.

This past week, a friend asked me to visit a man and his wife with him. They were friends of this friend. He asked me to visit because the wife is dying of cancer. She doesn’t have very long for this world. I had never met her before, but he asked me to drive out and I said, “Sure. I’d love to.” He had been witnessing to this man and his wife over the last year or so, and hadn’t seen them yet come to faith in Jesus. It had been a little bit of time since he had spoken with them, but he would send them texts regularly. He would send them texts of Scripture. “This is what you need to read.”

I didn’t know what to expect when I arrived there. The woman isn’t long for this world. She remained in bed during the entire visit. But right away, as I entered into her room with her husband and with my friend, the man took out a Bible. It’s a Bible that my friend had given him. It still had gold leaf on its pages, but you could tell he had already been using it. We asked them, “Has there been any help to you from the Bible?” He said, “Oh yes!” He opened it up right away and he had written in there Romans 10:9-10. He said, “That’s the verse. That answered all our problems. It’s a verse you sent me just two days ago.” He said, “When we read it, it was just amazing!” What does that verse say?

**Romans 10:9** because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

You will be delivered. You will be rescued from trouble.

**Romans 10:10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

As we read those verses, the woman, in her weakness, she smiled and her husband smiled. They talked about the peace and comfort that the Lord had brought to them through the Gospel, through the hope that these verses provided her.

So here is Moses’ view of troubles and Moses’ view of the world. If you take refuge in the Lord, He will always keep you safe. Nothing can harm you. Not cancer, not disease, nothing! Not things present, not things to come. Not things physical, not things spiritual. Not another person’s sin, not your own sin. Those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High abide in the shadow of the Almighty. They abide in absolute security. They experience that!

Underline that word “dwell,” because it does include believing, as we’ve had in our first application. But it also means more than believing. This verse defines for us the recipients of this promise. Who can claim these promises as their own? Well, it is those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High. These promises are accessible to every Christian, to every person, but they are not experienced by every person. This leads us to the second application. Don’t merely believe in God, but abide in Him. So, in order to abide, you have to first believe, but in believing, you’re not necessarily abiding.Do you know the difference between believing and being given salvation but also then abiding and experiencing the protection in a very active way, of the shadow of the Almighty?

This past weekend, Kimberly and I visited Jackson at his school, Truman State. He’s starting his last year of college. We stayed at a Holiday Inn Express. Do we look refreshed? (Laughter!) We stayed there and we had a little bag. We set it on the side. We dug clothes out of that bag during the little time we were there. We went down and had breakfast. We didn’t have to worry about cooking or cleaning up afterwards. And then we came home. You see, there is a difference between a hotel room and your home isn’t there? Do you know the difference between those two? Of course we do. We’ve all experienced that. You stay at a hotel room. You visit there. But you dwell, you abide in your home.

This promise is given to those who make God their dwelling place. They abide with Him. They make close fellowship with God a way of life. They’re not just treating God as an occasional Person to run to and visit from time to time when there is a specific need, maybe like a doctor’s office. But they are people who commune with God as part of their daily experience. There is a continual pursuit, an ongoing walk. So this is a promise for those who dwell in Him.

Our troubles provide unique motivation for our worship because they bring us to the end of ourselves and they offer an opportunity for us who perhaps have wandered from dwelling, from abiding, from that continual communion and fellowship and are just making visits. Sunday morning, we visit a little bit and then we walk back to normal life. Troubles don’t leave us. They are constantly there so that they wake us up at night. And they’re there when we get up in the morning. And they’re there throughout the day. And God intends for troubles to be used so that we would abide, so that we wouldn’t leave God as our house, God as our dwelling place. Look at verse 2.

***2*** *I will say to the LORD,*

Underline those words. I love that because Moses’ first action is to speak to himself about speaking to God. He says, “Here’s what I’m going to do. Self, you’re going to talk with the LORD, and this is what you’re going to say when you talk to the LORD.

***2*** *I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”*

He’s making a pledge to God. He’s saying, “God, I’m going to trust you. This is hard, but I am going to hold onto you. I’m going to cling to you.” Here’s the principle. We take shelter in God by talking to God in pledge. I know we don’t always feel like trusting God, do we? We feel like giving ourselves over to worry and anxiety and fear and human solutions. Our faith is often weak. But Moses encourages us through this prayer, to give words to whatever little faith we have. So if we have little faith, take that little faith and say, “Little faith, speak.” And this is what you want to speak. You want to speak Gospel words. You want to speak words that are loaded with Biblical truth. And here’s what I’m going to say. “Soul, I want you to remember that God is my refuge. He is my fortress. He is my God and I’m going to trust in Him.” Biblical faith makes a verbal pledge to God. It grows by being verbal.

Some might say, “I’m kind of quiet and I don’t necessarily like to talk much about my faith.” I would say you have to talk about your faith. Talk to yourself! Talk to others because that’s how faith grows. That’s how we dwell in the shelter of the Most High. He talks to God about God. It’s right for us to talk to God about our problems, but here, Moses gives us a great example by beginning in times of trouble, by talking to God about God. The content of true faith’s speech is very God-centered. It’s God-exalting. “You’re my fortress, my refuge, my God.” Moses provides us with a great example of the kind of speech that digs in and says, “I’m going to rest in God in the midst of this trouble.

There are two metaphors he uses, and you see them right there in verse 2. They’re easy to identify. He says first, “my refuge.” So when a little chipmunk is in danger, what does it do? It races into its hole and finds refuge. When a bird is in danger, it flies high up into the thickest of trees. That’s a refuge. They’re finding quickly, a refuge. And what the psalmist is saying is when I find myself in trouble, I hide myself in God. I fly up to the Lord. He is my safe space.

Again, I don’t know what kinds of dangers confront your life, this morning. We made a list of a number of them; physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, financial, all of these and many more. But I do know that if you are in Christ through faith in Him, I know that you have a refuge that is able to keep you safe. You have a refuge that is accessible to you and that you can run into and find safety.

When I was a little boy, I would pester my older brothers. I know you can’t believe that I would do that. I kind of got a kick as a little kid out of disrupting their peace through teasing them. Occasionally I would push them over the edge and they would get really, really angry at me. They were bigger than me and they would chase after me. I knew that if they caught me I would be really, really, really in painful trouble. And so what did I do? Well, I ran, but I didn’t just run anywhere because they were faster than me, too. I ran to mom. “MOM!” It doesn’t matter how much I deserved it, she was still a refuge. She wouldn’t let them do what they wanted to do to me at that moment, and I knew that. Now, she might tell me what I needed to do and correct me, but she was safe. She was secure. And if I could reach her before they reached me, then I knew that nothing was going to harm me. She was absolutely a refuge. Do we run like that to God when we’re in trouble?

Moses also says, “He’s my fortress.”A city in Old Testament times was safe if its walls were strong enough and high enough to keep the enemy out. That’s the picture. And he’s saying God is our fortress. I love Proverbs 18!

**Proverbs 18:10 NASB** The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe.

Outside the tower are dangers that will destroy us, will hurt us, will rob us, will take our life. But you get in that tower, and no enemy can come through those gates. No enemy can reach you. So the first action is to talk to God in pledge. The second action that the psalm encourages is to

**Action #2: Trust in God for Protection (vv. 3-13)**

Again, he changes the pronoun from “I” to “you.” Now he is offering individual counsel for what others who are reading this psalm should do when they encounter trouble.

***3*** *For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.*

When a person discovers God to be the answer for troubles in his or her own life, that person tells others that God is the answer for their troubles too! That’s what we do. That’s what Moses is exemplifying here. He says, “This is what I’ve found and I have to tell you all.” I want you to know that this is true for each one of you individually. God is worthy of our witness! It’s important for us not to just receive God as our safety, as our refuge, as our fortress. But it’s really important for us to share that good news.

We would be totally unloving if we saw people around us in trouble, and didn’t tell them about Christ. That’s the most unloving thing to do. Does anybody have anyone in their work place, anyone in their family, any one in their neighborhood who experiences trouble? Anybody? Yes, we all do. Would we be the kind of people who listen to their troubles, and we know that there’s a refuge, we know there’s a fortress, but we don’t tell them about it? Are we that kind of people? That’s a huge question. We must not be that kind of people, not if we care about them. There is a refuge.

Now, they might refuse the refuge. They might refuse the fortress. But at the very least, like my friend did, who has been talking to this man and his wife for over a year…The moment he discovered that she had cancer, which she’s been fighting it for over a year, he began to press into them and to continue to press into them and to tell them, “Here’s the refuge.” And for more than a year, this couple didn’t want to listen. They were still open to his friendship and open to his love, but they didn’t want to hear that. But now as things are getting really, really, really close, God has awakened them. I thank God for my friend who had the boldness to be used of God to say, “There is a very present help for you. There is a refuge. There is a fortress for you. May God increase that heart among His people! We do not need to fear any evil befalling us when God promises to deliver us. He says the Lord will deliver you.

***3*** *For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.*

He will deliver you! The future is never scary for the person who dwells in the shelter of the Most High. It’s always blessed. David is saying the same thing in Psalm 23. He says

**Psalm 23:1** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want

That’s personal. That’s a relationship through faith. I will not lack anything. And David goes on to say

**Psalm 23:4** Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

What is he saying? Well again, it’s a sheep/shepherd metaphor. He is the sheep and God is the shepherd. As a sheep, he knows that there are some places that are really scary and dangerous for sheep to be, that he has to walk through in order to get to green pastures, in order to get to quiet waters. He’s going to die in the wilderness if he doesn’t walk through this little valley that takes him to the water, that takes him to the green pasture. He has to walk through it. And as he walks through, you can imagine this little sheep walking through that valley to get to the water, and he hears the growl of a wolf. He hears the footstep of a thief with a spear in his hand, wanting some tasty lamb chops. He knows they are around him, but he has to walk through the valley. Would that be scary to you, to walk through that kind of valley if you were a sheep? It would be scary to walk through it as a man, knowing that there are people out there wanting to kill me, knowing that there are wolves out there that are hungry and wanting to attack me at any moment. But he says it’s going to happen. We’re going to have to walk through these valleys that are filled with danger, where there are wolves and thieves.

**Psalm 23:4** Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Well, you’re a little sheep. You can’t protect yourself from a wolf. You can’t protect yourself from a hunter. But I have the shepherd. And when the shepherd is right beside me, I don’t fear any evil that this valley might bring upon me because if that wolf comes, Bam! The shepherd is strong enough, the shepherd is able enough. That wolf will scatter when he gets struck by the shepherd’s rod. The thief, Bam! Over the head! He’s gone! He’s not going to come back here and take this sheep. I don’t fear any evil. Danger is all around, but I’m just walking through this place, and because the shepherd is with me, I don’t have any fear. The LORD is going to deliver us. He’s going to bring us through that dark valley. That’s why he says

**Psalm 23:6** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

That’s my future!

Do you remember in Acts 5 when Peter and John were delivered supernaturally out of prison and from execution? Do you remember that story? Do you remember that you read two chapters forward and you see Stephen getting stoned to death? The promise doesn’t promise that trouble is always going to work out the way we want it to. If I were there and Stephen were my friend, I would have wanted him to be delivered the way Peter and John were delivered, but that’s not God’s sovereign plan. You might say, “So what good is the promise then, if it doesn’t work out the way we want it to work out?” Let me ask you a question. Our thoughts are not God’s thoughts. His thoughts are higher than ours. His ways are higher than ours. We fail to remember and cling to His promises when we think that this passage says that life is always going to work out the way we want it to. Let me ask you a question. Who do you think is experiencing more joy today, Peter or Stephen? I think they’re both experiencing the same amount of joy.

Peter is up in heaven saying, “Man, do you remember that time when God reached down and opened up those gates and freed me so that I could go to that prayer meeting where they were praying for me and the whole church rejoiced over that deliverance?” Yes, that was fantastic! And Stephen says, “Do you remember that day when people were gnashing their teeth at me because I was exalting Jesus Christ? They took stones and they began to pour down rocks upon my head. I looked up and from earth, I saw heaven open up and I saw the Son of Man standing! Do you remember that? That was awesome!” Let me ask you: Did the Lord deliver them both? I tell you, yes! They need fear nothing about the future. The point is that God will deliver us. The truth is that peace is the birthright of every believer. Let’s grab hold of it.

***4*** *He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.*

The word “buckler” just means a little smaller shield that will protect against arrows.

***5*** *You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,* ***6*** *nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.*

Beloved, if we’re not experiencing peace, the answer to that is not found inside of ourselves. It’s not changing our circumstances. The answer to that is to look upward to the LORD. And that’s what this psalm does. He says, “Look up and see God as that all-sufficient God.

When Jesus was in the boat during that huge storm, the disciples were afraid of the storm. They were looking at the storm. They were looking over at Jesus and He was asleep. They were thinking, “He doesn’t care about us.” And they finally call out to Him. They should have called out to Him from the beginning. But they finally call out to Him and say

**Mark 4:38-40** And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”

To overcome fear, feed your faith in Christ. Feed your faith by reminding yourself who Jesus is and what Jesus does.

***7*** *A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.* ***8*** *You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.* ***9*** *Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place—*

That’s it again! There it is! He’s not just a God who you believe in for salvation, but the Lord is your dwelling place, your constant companion.

*the Most High, who is my refuge—****10*** *no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.*

This is the God who is the same yesterday, today and forever. This is what God’s people do. They just look up and they say, “God, I need a clear vision of you. If I have a clear vision of you, then I will find peace.”

I have a friend who understands this principle. He’s going through some troubles and he said, “Ritch, pray for me in these troubles.” He said, “Pray that I would respond now so that when God does deliver me, I won’t be embarrassed by how I was responding when I was going through this.” I love that! It’s a great thought, isn’t it? He doesn’t just want God to deliver him. He wants right now to experience God in such a way so that after he’s through it…He said, “I know God is going to deliver me from this trouble. I know He will. I just don’t want to look back and say, ‘You idiot! Why didn’t you believe then? Why didn’t you trust God then? Why didn’t you glorify God then, in that moment?’” He has a heart of worship, and that’s what drives this whole psalm. It’s a heart that says, “God, I want to worship you.” Troubles are opportunities to worship. Troubles are opportunities to look up in believing faith, trusting faith, and saying, “God, you are my refuge. You are my deliverer.”

I want to read one other thing, verses 11 and 12. They’re too good to skip. I was going to skip them just for the sake of time, but we’ll be okay, I think.

***11*** *For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.* ***12*** *On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.*

It’s interesting because this is such a great psalm. So many psalms are quoted in the New Testament. This psalm is quoted in the New Testament. Did you know that? It’s quoted by Satan. So believers don’t quote this psalm. That’s not because it’s a bad psalm, it’s just that it’s not quoted in the New Testament. Satan quotes it when Jesus is being tempted in the wilderness. And he takes this very verse to Jesus.

**Matthew 4:5-6** 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, for it is written, “‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

Do you know that Satan memorizes Scripture and he uses it? So be careful. But almost always, he twists the meaning of the verse or he leaves out portions of the verse. And that’s what he did here.

***11*** *For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you*

That’s where Satan stops. He doesn’t say “in all your ways.” You see, “in all your ways” is a reference to all the ways of the Lord. This is not a carte blanche, you can just go and be careless with your life because who cares? No, if you’re walking in the ways of the Lord, if you’re dwelling in the shelter of the Most High, this is going to be true for you. And that’s what Satan left out. He was saying, “You can just throw yourself off because God is going to protect you.”

**Matthew 4:7** Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

He answered wrong Scripture or twisted Scripture with true Scripture. And so it’s really important for us to know this amazing protection of angelic messengers, servants of God over our lives, is true. There’s not just one angel, but many angels. I don’t know what would happen to us if we could see the invisible realm. I think we’d just be blown away! But by faith I can say I know there are angels all over this room. I know there are also demons in this place. I know that God sends helpers and I’m often protected. I know every one of us are protected by these angels. That’s what he says. They interact in very specific ways in our lives, which is remarkable! But at the same time, we also know Satan wants us to think of this carelessly and Jesus is pointing out that when we are walking in the ways of the Lord, then we can trust the protection. Also, Satan doesn’t quote verse 13. Did you notice that? And there is good reason.

***13*** *You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.*

Do you know what Satan is called in the New Testament? He is called a lion that is seeking to devour, and he is called a snake. Satan does not quote that verse. He knows what that means. Let’s make sure we add verse 13 to this as well because when Satan comes after us, angels are going to be there to help us and Satan ultimately will be crushed by Christ.

**Action #3: Turn Your Heart to God’s Promises (vv. 14-16)**

***14*** *“Because he holds fast to me in love,*

God is speaking now. The psalm brings God into the drama. Because this one who dwells in the Lord and trusts in the Lord holds fast to God in love, God says

*I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.*

In other words, this person has secured himself to me. He’s mine! I will hold him fast. I will cling to him as he clings to me in faith. God promises to deliver everyperson who clings to Him and to His promises. And here’s the truth. We live on God’s promises, not on His explanations. Oftentimes, when we’re in trouble, we’re asking God for an explanation. That’s not going to feed us. That’s not going to strengthen us. We live on God’s promises, not on His explanations. That’s why He gives us promises and not explanations.

***15*** *When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.* ***16*** *With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”*

Psalm 91 is God’s 911, reminding us how to overcome in times of trouble.

Our young family, many years ago, was having a great day on the beach at Maranatha, on Lake Michigan. Suddenly, off in the distance, the sun hid behind some clouds and the wind began to blow inland. Soon the clouds that started kind of gray became dark and ominous. The kids were having so much fun on the beach and there were no clouds right over the top of us, so we decided to stay longer. Everyone else was leaving the beach. They felt the wind begin to blow in this storm. The storm gathered much more quickly than we had anticipated, and we realized we were not going to make it about a quarter of a mile back up to our room. So we were just going to have to ride out the storm.

We went underneath this little deck of the pool, and we crawled back as far as we could. It was an unbelievable storm! There was lightning flashing on the lake. The lake edge was just a couple hundred yards ahead of us. The rain was pounding almost sideways, blowing in and around us. We still though, found shelter underneath this little canopy. The harder the wind blew, the further back we got and the more we huddled closer into it and into each other. None of us dared to say, “Wooo!” and just start running out as the lightning flashed, the winds blew and the rain was so heavy. The more that trouble came, the more deep we found shelter. We were entering deeper and deeper. And that’s the response that Psalm 91 calls us to have in times of trouble.

Are there any troubles that you are experiencing right now? I want you to know that the Lord Himself is your refuge. Move deeper and deeper into Him and then you will experience the fullness of His security. You will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. What an experience this is for us! God promises it and we know it’s true.