

“Under the Shadow of the Almighty – Part 2”

Psalm 91

(Preached at Trinity, January 8, 2012)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last time we began to unfold the glories of Psalm 91.
Psalm 91 speaks of experimental Christianity – the experience of Christianity. Most people know of Christianity in theory but not in practice or power. They know of Christ in the abstract but not by experience. My desire is for you to know the reality of Christianity, not just as a concept or a theory but as your own experience of the presence of God.
2. This psalm has provided great comfort to God's people during war, famine, disease, and poverty. Through every earthly distress we can find great comfort under the shadow of our great God.
3. As I stated last week, this psalm divides neatly into three headings:
 - I. Confidence in God's protection to those who dwell in Him – **Verses 1-2**
 - II. Contemplation of God's provision for those who trust Him – **Verses 3-13**
 - III. Conclusion of God's promise to those who love Him – **Verses 14-16**
4. If you'll notice, there is a change in the pronouns in each section.
 - In the first section we find the first person, “I” as the psalmist expresses his personal faith in God
 - In the second section we find the second person, “you” as the psalmist calls upon the reader to consider God's great provision.
 - The third section returns to the first person; this time with God declaring what He will do for the one who loves Him and calls upon Him.
5. Last week we looked at the first section:
Confidence in God's protection – **Verses 1-2** - (The “I” section – the psalmist speaks of his personal faith in God.)
 - A. His abode, his abiding place was in the secret place of God.
It is a life covered by the all powerful, infinite love of God.
Psalm 91:1 KJV - "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."
Such a life under the protection of God results in absolute confidence – **Verse 2**
 - B. As I tried to stress last week, the psalmist isn't speaking in theory. We don't want a theoretical Christianity. We want an experiential Christianity, Christianity filled with the reality of the presence of our great God, a life under God's shadow, a life under God's direction.

- C. But we must understand. This is a shelter of faith. In this world of uncertainty we can trust in God absolutely.
- As I stressed last week, I am not speaking of some health wealth Gospel that is void of the substance of a holy life in pursuit of Christ. I'm talking about a life consumed by a thirst for Christ—to want Him more, to want more of His grace.
 - I am also not discounting the sovereign purposes of God—that sometimes He designs calamity in His love for us. But when these times come can you trust that they too are mighty acts of God designed for our good?
 - I am saying that we have a mighty fortress, a mighty God. Do you trust Him?
6. After stressing his personal trust in God the psalmist calls us to a contemplation of God's provision for all others who trust Him – **Verses 3-13**
The driving pronoun in this section is “you” – what He will do for *you*
- A. **Verse 3** sets the tone for this section by describing two categories of which God provides deliverance for all who call upon His name.
1. Deliverance from the “snare of the fowler” – that is, from our enemies. We can trust ourselves into His arms. Your enemies can do no more than God permits. “So, do your worst. My God shall overcome.”
 2. Deliverance from the “noisome pestilence” – that is, from deadly disease
Psalm 91:9-10 KJV - "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."
 3. This doesn't mean that those who trust God never suffer from the evil intentions of enemies nor die from deadly disease.
But it is true that they are habitually delivered. We can all give testimony to great experiences of God's deliverance. We should pray with confidence.
 4. And it is also true that even in the midst of the trial we receive the comfort and love of our Savior
- II. A contemplation of God's provision for all others who trust Him – **Verses 3-13**
Continued . . .
- B. In **Verses 9-13** we find the condition for such blessings of protection
Psalm 91:9 KJV - "Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the most High, thy habitation"
1. These are promises to those who make God their habitation – who dwell in God
Martin Luther wrote this refers to “one who really dwells and does not merely appear to dwell and does not imagine that he dwells” in God.
 2. We are plagued by a nominal Christianity that is void of Christ and the reality of the Holy Spirit indwelling us.
Psalm 91 describes the life of one dwelling with God.
 3. **Verse 10** repeats the protection from deadly plagues
Psalm 91:10 KJV - "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."

4. It is true that this rings of Old Covenant temporal blessings. But it is also true that God cares for the temporal needs of His people today. Jim Nichols – “The Old Covenant promises focused primarily on material blessings related to living temporally in Canaan. The New Covenant promises focus on spiritual blessings, moral, experiential, and legal, related to living eternally in new heavens and earth. Church members need rains, increase from their land, fruit, and bread. They desire to live in safety, security, and peace. They are citizens of nations that at times must fight to defend their freedom, homeland, and way of life. Then they need courage and victory. Yet the New Covenant does not feature these material and earthly blessings. How then is the New Covenant superior? When God provides for the eternal needs of the soul, he presupposes his provision for the temporal needs of the body. Thus, he provides for the bodily needs of Christians as long as they live in the body and for the temporal needs of the church as long as it lives in the world.”
- Matthew 6:25-33 KJV** - "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? ²⁶ Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ²⁷ Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? ²⁸ And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: ²⁹ And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? ³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
- Philippians 4:15-19 NAU** - "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; ¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent a *gift* more than once for my needs. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. ¹⁸ But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

- C. **Verse 11** speaks of special provision through the ministry of angels – again the focus here is on our temporal, earthly needs.
- Psalm 91:11 KJV** - "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."
1. The word “charge” means command. What does God command His angels? "to keep thee in all thy ways."
NASB - "To guard you in all your ways."
 2. There is no shortage of references to these heavenly hosts – the word is found over 295 times in the Bible.
 3. Besides the continual worship of God, the angels were created by God for the express purpose of being sent forth as envoys to the earth. Angels are unique beings referred to as “ministering spirits” sent for the purpose of ministering to God’s people
Hebrews 1:14 KJV - "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"
 4. There are many examples of their aid in Scripture
Psalm 34:7 – “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”
Daniel 6:22 – “My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.”
Acts 12:7 – “And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands.”
 5. Satan quoted from **Psalm 91** as he tempted Christ in the wilderness.
 - a. He was actually tempting Christ to abandon trust in God by putting Him to the test.
 - b. Remember the condition of God’s provision in these verses are for those who make Him their habitation – Jesus stands as our high example.
 - c. Jesus rebuked Satan’s temptation and trickery
Matthew 4:6-7 KJV - "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. ⁷ Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."
 6. Trusting God does not mean testing God or living presumptuously before Him. It means living in confidence of His presence in your life.
 7. The wonderful thing about the wilderness temptation was while Satan was tempting Jesus to force the angels to come to His rescue they were there the whole time.
Matthew 4:11 KJV - "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

- D. **Verse 13** – “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.”
1. It is interesting that these are all words that have been used to describe Satan
 - a. He is described an adder or serpent – the serpent tempted Eve
 - b. He is described as a lion
1 Peter 5:8 KJV - "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"
2 Timothy 4:17 KJV - "and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."
 - c. He is described as a dragon
Revelation 12:9 KJV - "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."
 2. The psalmist assures us of complete victory over him
 “the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.”
 3. Paul gives us the same assurance
Romans 16:20 NAS - "And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

III. Conclusion of God’s promise to those who love Him – **Verses 14-16**

The final section returns to the first person—God is speaking. He is declaring His promises to those who love Him **Verse 14** - "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore"

- A. God gives a list of promises to those who love Him
1. Notice, its set up as a conditional statement:
Verse 14 - "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore"
 2. It rings with the familiarity of Romans 8:28
Romans 8:28 KJV - "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose."
 3. “therefore, I will deliver him” – a promise not only of protection from danger but ultimate deliverance – in both living and dying.
 “I will set him on high” – a promise to keep him out of the reach of his enemies.
 4. Notice, in the last part of the verse God puts a condition to it:
 "I will set him *securely* on high, because he has known My name."
 - a. This is a description of the relationship God has with His people.
 To know God describes intimacy of relationship
 To know God’s name is to know the fullness of His essence.
 This describes the unique experience of the Christian

- b. God's people share an experience with their Creator, an inseparable bond
Jeremiah 31:33 KJV - "But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."
- c. Too often we are satisfied with the mundane, with the foolishness of this world, with the temporary pleasures.
 We have tasted of the fullness of God.
Ephesians 3:19 KJV - "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."
5. **Verse 15** - "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him" –
 A promise that our prayers do not go unanswered. God will always hear our cries to Him. It gives us assurance in prayer. God hears and He answers.
6. "I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him." –
 A promise of God's powerful presence. A promise to show Himself mighty on our behalf – "I will honour him"
- a. God honors us by taking us into communion with Himself
- b. He honors us by exalting us to a high place
- c. This is a fantastic promise – the word "honor" is the word "glorify." God shares His glory with none, yet He promises high honor to His people.
God glorifies Himself by showing Himself mighty on our behalf.
7. "With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation."
 a. How does God give us long life?
 We can see this promise in the New Covenant interpretation of the Old Covenant promise.
Exodus 20:12 KJV - "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."
Ephesians 6:2-3 KJV - "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) ³ That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."
- b. It no longer refers to the temporal promise of long life in the promised land.
- c. I think we can apply it in several ways:
- Long life = everlasting life
 - Long life = quality of life
- Ps 84:10 KJV** - "For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand."
 David Brainerd died at the early age of 29 but his days were richer than a wicked man dying at that age of 100

- Long life = sufficient life. We will live out our full life according to the purpose of God – FULL OF DAYS
Matthew Henry – “they shall be continued in this world till they have done the work they were sent into this world for and are ready for heaven, and that is long enough.
1 Chronicles 29:28 KJV - "And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead."

Conclusion:

1. Most people can't believe such wonderful things. Many Christians don't believe them. So we continue our lives in fear and worry.
2. When Spurgeon had been in London for less than a year the city suffered under a severe outbreak of Asiatic cholera. Many in Spurgeon's congregation were affected and he watched several go to their graves. He was exhausted under the pastoral strain. Upon returning home from yet another funeral he saw a sign in a shoemaker's shop written in the owner's own hand – “Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.” Spurgeon was immediately and deeply encouraged. Spurgeon later wrote, “the effect upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil, and I suffered no harm.”