

Beneath Faithful Wings

Psalm 91

Biblical counsellors will tell you the first thing in helping a patient is to give them hope! Hope is before all those who are being counselled from the Bible, from our Creator, from the only Savior Jesus Christ, who is our wonderful counsellor.

But in the world there is no hope.

A group of celebrities this week came to the aid of a friend quarantined with the virus this week, and sang the song, “Imagine” by the Beatle, John Lennon.

No heaven – no hell – no religion – no countries or possessions – only peace and love! What a sad, empty and lifeless message, really.

In Psalm 91, we find enemies to God as well as things far far greater than disease or natural disasters.

We can call these “supernatural disasters”!

The idea that there is no God, no life hereafter, no judgment of all the evil in this world, and no salvation – that is perhaps the greatest disease we can imagine.

What a very different outlook has the Christian here. This is a “must” Psalm for situations like we see today.

And let us state clearly at the beginning: this is not at all an unrealistic Psalm. This is as real as it gets! Real dangers, real evils, real enemies, real threats, and real death!

Two of the greatest errors or heresies – let us call them that – are to say the Bible offers a salvation without hardship, without suffering. It doesn't. It doesn't candy-coat real evil to get to real good. When you listen to people on the T.V. tell you you can be healed and have all the money in the world if you send them some, they are not teaching you the Bible – they are lying.

It doesn't help to go to the opposite extreme either. Like Buddhism which would have you escape this world, the Bible doesn't make all things evil in this lower realm and all good is only in the next life, beyond this world.

So come today to this treasure chest, a medicine chest, overflowing for all of our needs and more!

Our first point is the great God in whom we are hidden, in verses 1-2.

Take note of the four great names of God and the four great pictures of what He is to us.

He is the Most High – over all of His works. He is the Almighty – all power abides with Him. He is Jehovah – the unchangeable I AM. And He is El – or GOD, alone!

Likewise He is a shelter, a shadow, a refuge and a fortress.

Combine these and what do you have in the Lord? A Most High Shelter; an Almighty Shadow; Jehovah Refuge – the Fortress of God Himself!

This great Castle pours over into the next two verses – He is your deliverer, your coverer, and your shield as well as your castle or bulwark.

This all can be summarized as God is **faithful** to be God to you His beloved people. God's faithfulness in verse 4 seems to be the key of everything else here.

Those and those only who dwell and abide in Him, and confesse and trust the Lord as 'My Salvation, My God, My Trust' are addressed here.

It is like you are stopped at the door here and you must show your badge to be let in – where is your faith? Where is your trust? Where does your hope lie? Is it in yourself? Is it in God only partly, along with a bunch of other trusts? Is it in another god? Is it partly in man, or ritual, or science, or some superstition?

Oh how worthy He is to be all your trust! Let us see and hold this as we enter in these dangerous days.

See him both strong and gentle for you! Both almighty as a shield and kind as a mother bird, a hen for her little chicks!

Behold three protections then in verses three through thirteen. And then four responses in the last three verses.

The Three Protections are first, Out from all kinds of Trouble; second, Kept from all kinds of Trouble; and third, Triumphant over all kinds of Trouble.

3-6 – delivered out of all kinds of trouble. Here are snares or traps, deadly diseases, terrors and arrows and plagues and destruction, day and night!

Your God can handle them all! He Himself will deliver when you fall into various dangers. There are two kinds of dangers – intentional, of

the human kind, setting traps and shooting arrows. And then there are random enemies, like disease. But ALL ENEMIES, at ALL TIMES – are in His sight and control. He never sleeps at night and daily he is your Most High Shade at noon.

This Psalm reminds you of the richness and versatility of God’s deliverances. He who is faithful can never fail you. Whatever is your enemy, He is your protection and rescue. Again, take note of the joint ministry of feather and steel! Isn’t that a wonderful combination! Feathers cannot protect but they gently comfort; shield and brick walls cannot soften your life, but they keep out the enemy. These are combined all in the Lord! No flimsy or harsh Savior here! He is omnipotent love and the kindest Strong Man to you!

With verse 7 then we find not only rescue out of danger, but being kept from danger – even though it is close to us.

Others, many others, are falling all around; the arrows and disease do their deadly work! The wicked partake, but you do not! It will not approach you – you will see it, but that is as close as it comes! This is the view of the believer!

We serve a God for whom nothing too hard; a God who has all control of all things at all times, absolutely. There is nothing outside of his almighty, all-present, all-wise and most importantly, all-good hand.

Have you ever read these lines in the largest Psalm?

⁹⁰ Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; You established the earth, and it stands. ⁹¹ They stand this day according to Your ordinances, for all things are Your servants. (Psa 119:89-91)

Verses 7-10 are wonderful – but they do not compare with what we find in 11-13.

With verse 13 we shift our eyes from all around to what is above. We see here that there are greater ones with us, more numerous ones with us, caring ones with us – angels! These fiery flames who minister to the heirs of salvation, the heirs of God, says Hebrews 1!

If the Lord Himself covers you with his wings, how can all of his holy angels not do the same? Even more than that, they are charged with your care; charged as your sentinels, your guardians. You have not only one guardian angel, but a whole host! Most of us need more than one, I think! These are your protectors, who have their mysterious hands on us. According to 1 Cor. 11, we are to worship aright in the presence of God, making the proper distinctions between men and women, because of the angels! Even your feet and your stubbed toes are their care!

Do you remember that this is the verse Satan used against Jesus? Verses 11-12? He used this to tempt him to throw himself off of the pinnacle of the temple: “do a fantastic sign once and for all to show You are the Son of God to all.” But Jesus refused, not willing to tempt God, but to trust Him in all humility instead of boasting.

It makes me wonder – Satan was once a holy angel. He originally was commissioned to bear up the feet of the humbled Son of God and to serve his lowly, saved people, down to their little toes! I wonder if that was not what factored into Lucifer saying – NO WAY! – and rebelling against God.

Now notice, if Lucifer will not serve God and His elect people, serve their feet; then he will find himself beneath the feet of the Lord's little children! Verse 13.

What a powerful and glorious effect! The curse and the cursed one and all the cursed effects of the fall, are victoriously trampled underfoot!

So see the progression in 3-13. Divine Deliverance out of Trouble; Divine Protection against all Evil; Divine Triumph over and above every and all enemies!

You – who cannot even change one hair on your head from black to white by your thoughts – He counts those very hairs on your head; protects them all; there is not a single one unnumbered! But more – not a single hair of yours will perish! A complete, total salvation of all! Your very hair will be glorified!!!!!!

In our NT days, this is even more brilliant and profound, being hid in Christ who is your life, you are secured on high with Him right now – none can touch you; nothing can come near you; nothing to separate you from His love or to charge you and carry you away – nothing! And yet – still – we are treated as sheep for the slaughter; we are specially singled out for persecution; we are kept **in** this world; AND in all of this, more than conquerors!

This brings us to the **last three verses:**

1. See first of all here YOUR DUTY –
 - a. Love him – cleave to Him – 14a [**Heart**]
 - b. Second, Know him – a God-centered knowledge: 14b Bible and faith [**Head**]

- c. Third, Call on him/worship and pray to him/your devotion – 15 – the promises of God are given to answer you in your day of trouble, and He will not only rescue but honor and glorify you! **[Hand]**
- d. Fourth, how enveloped is the believer, wrapped in God’s blankets, God’s wings, God’s mighty loving perfect faithful arms! Verse 16. Hidden in his heart! Living full and satisfying lives; living with the feast of heaven set before you! **[Hope follows Heart, Head and Hand]**

Do I need to remind you that this all is done in faith? In trust of Him? It is faith that drives out fear; He is your faithful deliverer to Your soul – 1-4; Your day – 5-6; He has your back – 7-8; your house – 9-10; Your feet – 11-13; Your life – 14-16. Rest in him! Bring forth love, understanding, worship and life for Him.

2. **Secondly here: YOUR CALL** – you are to show a good face and life to all around you! You have a feast in this fallen and broken world; invite others by your word and life to this enjoyment. When everybody else is frantic – what are you doing? 72 years ago, when the world was all afraid of the Atomic Bomb, CS Lewis wrote this, which is timely for us today.

In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb. “How are we to live in an atomic age?” I am tempted to reply: “Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of sexually transmitted disease, an age

of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents.”

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.

This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds. “On Living in an Atomic Age” (1948) in *Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays*

3. **Lastly then, YOUR WARNING** – that is, to those who like John Lennon, continue to go to the empty cupboard of man and not God; bowing down to the creature instead of the Creator. How many are

taking refuge under false wings! What awful things hinder them from fleeing to Christ!

How people trust in their own self-sufficiency, which deceives them. Highminded self-trust is the cancer of our race! By our own thoughts we make the world small and insignificant, and ourselves big and all-important! We understand everything, dispose of everything, control everything, and govern by our money everything. We live as miniature gods and isolate ourselves from the true God, the living God.

But all will bow the knee to Jesus as Lord, now or later.

How about you? Are you bowed in faith before the cross, that turns the curse into blessing? Or are you bowing to your idols of self?