

Under His Wings

(Psalm 91)

We recently studied Psalm 23 in the context of what significance it has in today's modern society. This morning I would like to examine another very well know psalm, one that many of us pray regularly, **Psalm 91**. Exerts from this wonderful psalm are probably etched on our minds, however, it's sometimes necessary for us to refresh this knowledge so that God can release new revelation concerning His covenant promises to us.

Verses 1 and 2, “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust’.”

There are 4 names for God mentioned in the first two verses of this psalm: 'Most High', 'Almighty', 'Lord' and 'God.' In the original Hebrew text they are four distinct words:

- **Most High** means that God is more important than anyone else.
- **Almighty** means that God is more powerful than anyone else.
- **Lord** means that God has more authority than anyone else.
- **God** means that only He can decide the future (the great 'I AM').

The psalmist states that whoever dwells in a “secret place” with the Most High (the most important person in the universe), shall live in the **safety** of the Almighty (the most powerful person in the universe). Note, the most important Person in all existence has a Secret Place for every one of us. A place in which there is refuge, comfort, peace, joy and treasures beyond compare. It is set in a location that is far above anything we can hope for, dream or imagine. Like the Holy of Holies in the temple, it is a place where God Himself dwells.

The Secret Place is a place of ultimate **trust** in God, where hope is alive. It is a place where doubts cannot dwell, where fear is not present and where confidence in the power of God to deliver is at hand. It is a place where **faith** is so strong that nothing the devil throws at us will have any power over us. The Secret Place is a place in God where we know that God has everything under control. For we are totally convinced of it in our heart and there is no worry, no concern and no fretting over our circumstances or troubles. We have a calm assurance that “all is well.” Note also, the psalmist says the Lord (the person with more authority than anyone else) is his castle, and in Him alone he **trusts**. A castle or fortress is a strong building where one is safe and protected from any attack of the enemy. Therefore, the psalmist truly believes that he will be **safe** and secure in the Secret Place.

Verse 3, “Surely He will deliver your from the snare of the fowler, and from the perilous pestilence.” A fowler catches birds using a snare, typically with a noose of wire or cord. The bird is never aware of the snare. Satan is the fowler. He is the one who will try to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). He is the one who's setting traps in order to steal your peace, steal your joy, or steal your finances. But God won't let you get caught in any trap the devil has laid. And even if you foolish or wilfully get ensnared, God says He will

deliver you!

The “perilous pestilence.” The Hebrew words “*havah deber*” mean, ‘a perverse calamity rushing upon a person like a destroying plague’. God won’t allow any sudden tragedy or disaster to come upon you. The scripture declares, “surely He will **deliver** you” from any perilous pitfalls or dangerous situations. Whether seen or unseen, natural or spiritual. To **deliver** means to save or rescue from imminent danger, which includes evil attacks on both the mind and body.

Verse 4 says, “***He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge.***” An article in National Geographic several years ago provided this heart-rending picture. After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage. One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze had arrived and the heat had singed her small body, the mother had remained steadfast. Because she had been willing to die, those under the cover of her wings would live. This is the picture that the psalmist may have had in mind when he talks of God's wings. Just like the tiny chicks in this story we all need to be sheltered, protected, covered. We all need a sense of security and a place of safety.

In today’s volatile world and fragile society, so much can go wrong. People get betrayed, they get sick, or they face disappointment after disappointment in life. There is so much conflict in the home and with loved ones. Others are hurting, lonely or ignored, and even forgotten. To mask the pain some have turned to alcohol or drugs. Many have been abused or physically mistreated as children. Not to mention all the financial pressures most families have to cope with. People everywhere need a sense of **security**. They need to find that Secret Place, a place where peace and joy *that surpasses all understanding* is ever present.

To anyone looking for a sense of real security, the psalmist’s words should be a source of comfort. Here is one of the great themes of the Bible: God is our **refuge** and **fortress**; He is our **shelter** in perilous times. “*He will cover you with His feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge.*” When writing this verse the psalmist undoubtedly had an eagle in mind. When an eagle senses danger it protectively spreads out its wings. Then its chicks quickly take cover underneath where they are safe and sheltered from harm. I read once that this move is so instinctive, that when danger approaches, an adult eagle will spread its wings even when no chicks are around.

Because of this, when the psalmist faces danger he thinks of God and compares Him to an eagle. The point is that God is our refuge and fortress; He is our shelter. He defends us, guards us, protects us, and keeps us safe during the tests and trials of life. I’m sure you have seen the sign in a window that warns would-be thieves: “*Notice. These premises are protected by ‘Such-n-Such’ Security.*” However, God's people should

also carry a warning: *"Notice. These premises are protected by Psalm 91."*

The verse then ends with this statement... ***"His truth shall be your shield and buckler."*** God's truth surrounds us with protection. The image is of something worn as an item of protective clothing. His truth (God's word) is our impenetrable armour - unyielding and totally capable of defending us. Also, a shield is what a soldier safeguards himself with. The shield is a picture of God's faithfulness. The NIV says, ***"His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart."*** Faithfulness or loyalty means that you do not stop being a friend to someone. You do not stop giving them help, whatever happens. God is a loyal and faithful friend to all who dwell in the Secret Place!

Verses 5 to 8, "You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked." The psalmist says that multitudes may fall and perish but those who trust in God will not. He says that we will stand and look with our own eyes at the wicked, as they fall prey to these traumatic events. The implication: They will be punished for their evil ways.

Verses 9 to 13, "Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot."

In Psalm 91 we read about dangers, arrows, diseases, tragedies and darkness. Yet we are told not to be afraid! If you really **trust** in God (asking Him for help and believing that He will give it) then you will have total protection from calamity and evil spirits. The psalmist describes different ways the enemy, satan, will attack you, both physically and spiritually. However, God promises complete safety and freedom. When you **abide** in Him, learn who He is and what He does, you will have His strength, His peace, His joy and a confidence to confront all these things – knowing all the time that "you are more than a conqueror." (Romans 8:37.)

In **verses 11 and 12**, the angels are God's servants that obey His word. Angels are the agents God places in charge of your destiny. You cannot see them, but they are always there to "bear you up." The Hebrew word for 'bear' is *"nasa."* Its meaning here is: "to carry" or "to lift up." The symbolism is obvious. Your guardian angels keep you from stumbling and hurting yourself. However, they are also ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). Your angels are just there to lift you up, they are also there to serve you!

In **verse 13**, we find another rich word-picture depicting the believer stepping on very evil thing that has tried to step on him or her. Both lions and snakes symbolise evil. The lion represent a great predator - a natural born killer. Very few animals can match a young lion in terms of sheer strength and agility. This verse reminds us that as we keep walking in faith, God will put the devil and his agents under our feet. The word "trample" means much more than just stepping on something. To "trample" is to inflict serious and even fatal

damage.

Cobras and serpents are reptiles (snakes). When they bite you, they inject poison into you. Destroying you from within, by shutting down your vital organs. To "tread upon" and "trample underfoot" mean that snakes will not hurt you if you love and obey God. And even if the devil tries to destroy you from within, you will still have the victory. No weapon formed against you can prosper - whether it is in the form of a predator or a reptile!

Verses 14 to 16. Here the psalmist takes on the prophetic mantle and speaks for God. These last three verses are God making promises to those dwelling in the Secret Place.

Seven times in these final verses God gives very specific promises. Seven times He says: "***I will...***" (the seventh time being implied):

- "***I will...*** deliver him." Whatever problems you are facing, God will save you from them all.
- "***I will...*** set him on high." However low or down you are feeling, God will lift you up.
- "***I will...*** answer him." God will not be silent when you call upon Him. His answer may not always be what you want or expect, but it will always be what you need.
- "***I will...*** be with him in trouble." You will not walk through trouble times alone. God is with you! You may, however, have some dark valleys to walk through.
- "***I will...*** deliver him." God will rescue you from a place of shame and establish you in a place of honour.
- "***I will...*** satisfy him with long life." God will give you long life, but you will also be satisfied with it!

"***I will...*** show him My salvation." God wants to show you (display) His salvation every day of your life. That is, all the wonderful things Jesus Christ has secured for you by going to the cross.