

God's Safehouse For The Saints

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[0 : 00] Let's read Psalm 91. This is a psalm for times of danger, times of fear.

We're not told who wrote it this time. Last week we were looking at a psalm that was written by Moses. This time we don't actually know. But we praise God. That probably means it's got even more universal application.

It's not quite so personal. But it is addressed to all of us. When after verse 2. Whenever you read the word you. It's in the singular.

In other words you take it personally. Okay so let's enjoy the wonderful truth in this psalm. He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High.

Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord. My refuge. My fortress. My God.

[1 : 05] In whom I trust. For he will deliver you. From the snare of the fowler. And from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you.

With his pinions. And under his wings. You will find refuge. His faithfulness is a shield. And buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night.

Nor the arrow that flies by day. Nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness. Nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your sight.

Ten thousand. At your right hand. But it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes. And see the recompense. Of the wicked. Because.

You have made the Lord your dwelling place. The Most High. Who is my refuge. No evil shall be allowed to befall you. No plague. Come near your tent.

[2 : 03] For he will command his angels concerning you. To guard you in all your ways. On their hands. They will bear you up.

Lest you strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion. And the adder. The young lion and the serpent. You will trample underfoot. Because. He holds fast to me in love.

Says the Lord. I will deliver him. I will protect him. Because he knows my name. When he calls to me. I will answer him. And I will be with him in trouble.

I will rescue him. And honor him. With long life. I will satisfy him. And show him. My salvation. Full of promises.

Does God keep his promises. Let's find out. In a wee while. Promises.

[3 : 03] To. Everyone who trusts. God. God. But it seems to contradict itself. And.

So we need to. Deal with that contradiction. We need to find out. What is God actually saying to us. Through this. Because it would be so easy. To misread the psalm. It would be so easy.

To come away. With. A false understanding. Of it. It seems. For the first. Maybe two thirds. Of the psalm. To be saying one thing. And then. Towards the end.

It seems to say. Something quite different. And. So. We'll trust the Lord. To help us. Unpack. What's actually going on here. The.

There was a Greek version. Of the Old Testament. That was translated. By. A team of rabbis. Oh. At least. 250 years. Before Jesus.

[3 : 58] Walked the earth. They translated. Into. The Greek. From. The Old Testament. Original Hebrew. And. In that version.

The rabbis. Actually. Assigned. This. To King David. They actually said. This. This was a. This was one of King David's psalms. Which. It's not a bad guess.

Actually. When you consider. How much of the Psalter. King David actually contributed. But. The important thing is here. Is. Is the fact that this little word.

You. That's used throughout. Is very personal. It's addressed to you. It's addressed to me. And we're meant to take it to heart. The psalmist begins.

By. By making a general statement. He makes a universal. Possibility. Offered to. Everybody. He. Who dwells. In the shelter of the most high.

[4 : 55] He who dwells. It's. Literally. The one. Sitting. The one sitting. That's all it means. Is just. Somebody. Sitting down.

Like he would. In his house. With his pipe. And his slippers. And just. At ease. At comfort. In a place. That's familiar. And secure. That's the picture. That we're getting here.

He who dwells. And. But the thing is. That those first three words. They not offer. Not only offer. A universal possibility. They actually.

Represent. A dividing line. Because. If you think about it. The person. Who dwells. And sits. At comfort. At ease. In the presence. Of God.

Will enjoy. All these benefits. That are about. To be outlined. I'm sorry. I've just realized. I've committed. A cardinal sin here. That's because.

[5 : 55] I can hear myself. Speak. So. Can you hear me now? Is that okay? Right. There's a dividing line.

Here too. It's not just a universal. Possibility. It's saying. Anyone. Anyone. Who dwells. In the shelter. In the. In the shelter. Of the most high. Anyone. So it's universal.

In its possibility. But it's also. A dividing line. Because those. Who do not. Dwell. In the shelter. Of the most high. Will not enjoy. These benefits.

So there is a very clear. Division there. What he's actually saying. Is. That. This. What he's. Written here.

Is producing. Or actually. Of the beauty of God.

[6 : 51] Those who. Those who enjoy. The benefit. The benefit of security. And protection. And those who don't. That's what he's saying. So right at the outset. Of this psalm. About. Safety.

and security and God's faithfulness and deliverance and all that, he's setting this up. He's actually saying, on the one hand, there's a universal possibility here.

Everyone, everyone, anyone who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will enjoy these benefits. But that means those who don't, won't.

So, it's very sobering, really, to take this on board because we're living in a world today where security is not easy to find.

I had a salesman come to my door some time back and he said, you've got a nice house here. He says, I see that you've got locks on the doors.

[7 : 54] He says, but clearly you could do with a lot more in the way of security. He said, I've got the premium system here, he says. I think he would like to take a look at it at the very least.

He says, this is the best it will get. I said, oh, I said, just give me a second. And I went back into the house and I brought out my Bible and I opened it at Psalm 91.

And I said, can you match this? Oh, he says, you're a Christian. I said, yeah. He says, well, I'm a Christian too. He says, maybe God sent me to sell you this.

Well, I thought, full marks for being light on his feet. But I said to him, I doubt that very much. I said, I'm not being complacent here. I said, I lock my doors like everybody else does.

I said, but there has to be a cutoff point at which you really say, I'm not trusting my technology. I'm trusting my God. I said, and you could not better what's here in Psalm 91.

[8 : 57] This is security with a capital S. This is the best there is. This is the premium version of security that you could ever buy into.

And you don't need to spend money to buy into it. You need to spend faith and trust to buy into what God is offering you. So, whoever dwells in the shelter of the most, that word shelter is interesting too.

Because in modern parlance, it's the sort of word that MI6 might use to describe a safe house. somewhere where they put somebody, he's well out of reach of the assassins who are trying to take his life.

He's fully protected. He's got all the resources of the British intelligence services behind him. And he's in a safe house. That's the picture that's here. In fact, if you read the authorized version, it probably, instead of the word shelter, says secret place of the most high.

It's a secret place. It's not a place that is obvious to anybody. You can be walking about in the supermarket in that secret place, and nobody would be any the wiser.

[10 : 10] Except they might see a smile on your face as you go about constantly realizing and constantly aware of the security that you enjoy, no matter where you are.

Now, wouldn't that be good, eh? To be able to just go around your daily business, wherever it takes you, and have a wee smile playing about the corner of your mouth all the time because you know that you're secure.

And it doesn't depend on you, not for a minute. It doesn't depend on the police service. It doesn't depend on the fire service or emergency rescue or any of those things.

It doesn't depend on airport security. It doesn't matter where you are. You're in the secret place of the most high. And that's where you sit.

You just sit there. You're at ease. You're comfortable in that setting. The secret place of the most high. And because he's the most high, that means, brothers and sisters, that you could exaggerate the dangers to your life, but you could never exaggerate your security.

[11 : 22] He's the most high. There isn't any higher security. There isn't any higher safety for your life than this one.

He's the most high. So, Satan is a master of fear. He uses fear to control people. We're seeing it in our society all the time just now.

We're seeing peer pressure being exerted on people because they're afraid of being outside of the group and being different from other people. And fear is a massive power that's used in our society to control people all the time.

But you cannot be controlled by fear if you only fear God and nothing else. Now, you might be sitting there thinking, oh, how could I ever get to that place?

How could I ever be in the place where I feared nothing at all except God? Well, for one thing, we need to ask ourselves if Jesus was unreasonable because Jesus said we should fear nothing except him.

[12 : 30] Don't fear those, he said, who can kill the body, but after that can do no more. The one you should fear is the one who can cast both body and soul into hell.

He's the one you should fear, said Jesus. So you fear God, and when you fear God and you put your trust in him, you have absolutely no basis for being afraid of anything or anyone else.

Nothing at all. Does that sound like an exaggeration? It's what the Scripture authorizes you to think, brothers and sisters. You're authorized by God's Word to think in those terms, to fear God and nothing else.

Now, it's okay to smile at this point, okay? It's okay to say hallelujah or want to dance up and down the aisles. I'm sure our deacons wouldn't take offense at that.

So there's a universal possibility being held out here, but there's also a dividing link. You can either be in the shelter of the Most High or you can be outside of that shelter.

[13 : 41] And that's the sobering truth. So there are actually two humanities living side by side, two parallel humanities on this planet.

There's one group that is in outright rebellion. It's constant rebellion, and these people have absolutely no intentions of recognizing God or obeying God or living under his authority or his guidance or his instruction.

And as long as they rebel against God, they cannot possibly enjoy the protection that's here. But there's another humanity, a humanity that is described by phrases in the New Testament like, your citizenship is in heaven.

You checked your passport lately because it should say that you're a dual citizen. Because that's the reality.

Our citizenship is in heaven. Two humanities separated by the promises here.

[14 : 55] And then the psalmist gives us his own testimony, and he says, well, this is how it works for me. As far as the Lord is concerned, he is my refuge, my fortress, my God.

He is my refuge, my fortress, my God. What a wonderful thing that is, to call God our refuge and our fortress, and to put the word my in front.

You see, if the U is singular, you have to use the word my, don't you? If the U is singular, you have to use the word my, you have to put that there.

So, I'm just going to look up something here. Just give me a sec. Okay. when it actually says that the person who dwells in the shade of the Most High will abide in the dwelling in the shelter of the Most High in that secret place will abide in the shadow of the Almighty the shade of the Almighty you know we often sing the old hymn Beneath the Cross of Jesus and it has that lovely verse that says the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land a shadow is not necessarily always a place of scary possibilities a shadow can be very welcome if you happen to be needing some relief from the burning heat of the desert sun that can be a wonderful place is to find a shadow and this is what's pictured here that God comes over you as a great shadow as a place of comfort and relief from things that would otherwise consume you and the abiding that's a lovely wee word it's a word that is sometimes associated with stubbornness or with obstinacy the person who dwells in the shelter of the Most High is stubbornly at peace in the Lord he just won't move from that place and brothers and sisters

I don't know how this relates to your own thinking but I think that the world that we live in and the powers of darkness that operate through this world that we live in the only thing they really live for is to remove us from the presence of God is to get us focused on ourselves so that we're no longer dwelling in the shelter of the Most High we're no longer in the safe house we're no longer stubbornly resting in that shaded place where God protects us from the things that would consume us it should be our testimony to be able to say to the Lord because the word Lord here if it's in your Bible the chances are it's in capital letters you see that I will say to the Lord it's in capital letters that's because it's God's personal name it's the name that he actually used when he revealed himself to Moses tell them

[18 : 35] I am has sent you this is the God who is being itself because he's the Most High he doesn't just give us shelter he is the shelter God himself is the shelter God himself is the covering that's why our security is portable 24-7 you don't have to be outside of that security at any moment of your life and especially when you're in the midst of frightening situations when John Wesley was on a ship on the way back from America a storm was so fierce it broke the main mast on the ship and people were in a state of blind panic running about the decks thinking that we're about to be drowned and lose our lives and there was a little bunch of Moravian Christians sitting in a corner of the ship and they were singing praises to God their faces were absolutely clear with peace and joy as they raised their hands and praised the God of heaven who was their refuge and their protector their God in whom they trusted and John Wesley was so impacted by these people because he was as frightened as everybody else this was before he really was converted properly and he looked at these Moravians and thought these people have something

I don't have and what did they have? They had the shadow of the Almighty over them they were dwelling in the secret place they were dwelling in the safe house and they were stubbornly abiding there they weren't about to be moved out of that safe place even by a storm and a broken main mast they weren't going to do that and so the psalmist says well here's my testimony this is what this is what it does for me I can say to the Lord I can say to the creator of the ends of the earth you are my refuge you are my fortress you are my God and I trust you and I will stubbornly stay in the place of shade that you have given me and never move from there that's a holy stubbornness folks that's a holy stubbornness and then he goes on to explain to us he says now look this is

I've told you what the facts are and I've told you what my own personal experience is so now I want to tell you what you can expect if you do what I do if you make the Lord your refuge and your fortress and trust him this is what you can expect and then he goes on to list a whole bunch of wonderful things he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler from the deadly pestilence he will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge does that does that have an echo of Jesus saying oh Jerusalem Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets how often have I wanted to gather you to myself like a hen gathers its chicks under its wings and you would not and this is exactly what the psalmist says that God wants to do with those who trust him he wants to bring those big strong wings and those mighty pinions to our help to shield us and his faithfulness is the shield that we need there's no possibility that your security will let you down if you're trusting the Lord even with a broken main mass in the middle of a storm there's no possibility that your security will let you down we'll come back to that in a minute because this is so important for us to understand you will not fear now what's he saying here he's saying you will not fear the terror of the night does he mean that you'll never have terrors in the night

I don't think he means that at all he means you'll have terrors in the night but you will not fear he means you will not fear the arrow that flies by day does he mean that there won't be any arrows flying by day in your direction no he doesn't mean that at all he means you won't fear them you'll not fear the pestilence that stalks in darkness the disease the plague the destruction that wastes at noonday you won't these things are going to come at you but you will not fear them a thousand may fall at your side ten thousand at your right hand but it will not come near you you will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked what does he mean here you see this is where the psalm begins to sound a wee bit contradictory it's not going to come near you it's not going to approach your tent what are we supposed to take out of this because if you go down further on and look at verse 15 you'll see

God making a promise here because at the end of the psalm it's God who's speaking and he says I will be with him in trouble and we think excuse me Lord but that's not what I thought we were signing up for you will be with me in trouble I thought I was going to avoid trouble is this not about avoiding trouble Lord is this not telling me that the trouble's not going to come near my tent it's not what it means at all God is saying I will be with him in trouble we need to be absolutely clear that Jesus himself said to his disciples in the world you will have trouble he said they persecuted me they will persecute you also the servant is not greater than his master you see the Bible doesn't tell us to expect a life where God just diverts all the arrows and diverts all the troubles and diverts all the disease and it never actually comes near us because what he's saying here is these things are going to come at you you're going to live a life in which you need a psalm like this there would be no point in psalm 91 if we're not going to experience any trouble if we're not going to face any danger why bother putting psalm 91 in the Bible at all now the beautiful thing here and I've just switched my place here and didn't intend to but give me a sec why bother at all to put this psalm in here what God is saying to us through this psalm is that he the most high the security above which there is no security you see think of these things that are listed here these are all these are all misfortunes and deadly things that nobody could plan for nobody could see them coming look at what he's saying here you will not fear the terror of the night nobody knows when terror is going to strike in the night you will not fear the arrow that flies by day you never know when an arrow has got your name on it do you you will not fear the pestilence that stalks in darkness nor the destruction that wastes at noonday we can't plan for these things but we have a security who does plan for these things who has seen the end from the beginning who knows what lies in darkness and light dwells with him this is this is the amazing God that we serve it says a thousand may fall at your side ten thousand at your right hand but it will not come near you you will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked because you see this is the other side of this psalm if we refuse the security the Lord is giving us

[28 : 06] God is a gentleman David Livingston said the Bible is the word of a gentleman God is a gentleman and he will not impose himself upon us he makes the offering very clear but he will not impose himself upon us and if we rebel against his rule and his authority and determine to make our own way in life then he will just stand back and allow us to have the results of our choices that doesn't mean he's not wooing us that doesn't mean that he's not sending people to us that doesn't mean that perhaps he's not even using David Andrew and his fumbling way this morning to speak a word into your life right now that might be the one word that you need to hear and it doesn't really make any difference who's standing here to deliver that word all that matters is that the power of

God is behind that word and he's applying it to your heart and your mind right now to the effect that he wants it to have Charles Spurgeon the great Victorian preacher who preached to tens of thousands every week was converted by a man who couldn't preach for toffee a man who stood up and he didn't pretend to be a preacher he was just a man who was trying to fill in for the preacher who didn't turn up but he stood there and he read the same part of the Bible over and over again and he just kept repeating it again and again and again but it was used by the living God to penetrate the hard heart of Charles Spurgeon and converted that man because you see the Bible if you've got a Bible in front of you there that's the word of God now you could go into Waterston's tomorrow or any bookshop you care to think of and say how many books have you got by the way that I could have the only books I'm really interested in are the ones where the text is living and active could you just recommend some books that have that quality about them they need to be living and active that's the only kind of text

I'm interested in and Waterston's would be completely stymied they wouldn't be able to help you except they could bring you just one book they could bring you that if they trusted it because this is the only book where we're told that the text is living and active and that God is busy in the words of this book so that when they're read out by David Andrew or a window cleaner or anybody else those words are going forth with the power of God and God says that his word when it's when it's spoken out his word will never return to him empty but will always accomplish what he sent it to do it will always prosper in the thing he sent it for and so here's here's God here in this lovely psalm he's telling us that if we will just trust him and take him at his word we can enjoy all these wonderful benefits but there will always be people who are determined not to take God at his word who believe their own word who believe their own opinion we've even got denominations right now they say oh yeah

I know what the Bible says about homosexuality but we say I'm sorry folks I just won't wash if the Bible's wrong about one thing then how do you know which other things it's wrong about and if the Bible's wrong about hell because it's an unpopular subject how do you know that it might not be wrong about heaven as well and so there's no hope after death so folks if you start picking and choosing and cherry picking the Bible you end up with no Bible that's any use to you you trust all of it or you can't trust any of it and there are millions millions billions of us down through the centuries who have put our trust in this and we've never been disappointed and people have been able to face danger and death because God has been able to come alongside them because of the trust that's there listen to what he says here he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways on their hands they will bear you up so that you do not strike your foot against a stone he will send his angels concerning you my goodness you know do you know there are some 300 references to angels in the

Bible so it's not a subject you can duck or sidestep we're not to see ourselves among those people who are always praying for angels to come and do x y or z or give us gold fillings in our teeth or whatever you know there's lots of nonsense going on in places where the Christians should know better than to be doing that kind of stuff and we don't pray to angels and we don't serve angels and we don't worship angels and we don't seek angels God is in charge of the angelic community but he has created these creatures and we're told in Hebrews that they are flames of fire ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation and there are numerous books have been written over the centuries by people who have had encounters with angels it's hard sometimes to for our heads to get around this but let me just tell you one story the Reverend

[34 : 39] John Payton was a pioneer missionary in the New Hebrides out in the middle of the Pacific and one night his mission was surrounded by hostile natives that were intent on burning him and his wife from the headquarters to the ground it was a really really frightening night he and his wife prayed all during the night and they could feel the terror eating into their bones when daylight came they were amazed to see that for reasons they couldn't explain the natives had all just melted into the undergrowth they had just gone away a year later the chief of the tribe actually came to faith in Jesus and when Payton was speaking to the chief he had to grab the opportunity to say look what happened that night you had us at your mercy you could have done with us whatever you wanted why didn't you continue the attack why didn't you press on why didn't you just burn the house to the ground with us in it and the chief said well he said who were all the men that were with you and Payton said there was no one there just myself and my wife and the chief said well he says we saw men standing guard hundreds of big men in shining garments with drawn swords in their hands and they were all around the place they seemed to circle the mission and we were terrified to come near

I think there's no doubt whatsoever that God sent his angels to protect that missionary and his wife that night and I could keep you here all day with stories of that nature God is clearly at work and he's the commander of heaven's armies and there are angels let me say something here that I think we need if we're going to benefit from Psalm 91 we need to start thinking outside of our little box and our little box says this that God uses natural means to do everything wrong Christianity is a supernatural faith I can prove it quite easily hands up if you're born again look at that a forest of hands isn't that great now do you realize that if you're born again that means that something supernatural started your

Christian life off you didn't go back to the maternity to have something done did you it wasn't an in vitro thing in a science lab somewhere no it was a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit who brought conviction to your mind and to your heart and changed you on the inside so that in terms of 2 Corinthians anyone is in Christ he is a new creation a new human being has just been born again so brothers and sisters if your Christianity started off as a supernatural intervention from the living God my goodness how difficult is it for us to believe that he would command his angels concerning you to guard you in all of your ways so that you don't strike your foot against a stone now that doesn't mean nothing bad is going to happen to you it means that nothing bad is going to happen to you without the purpose of your loving heavenly father involved in that incident and he will transform it

God himself has said to us through the apostle Paul that he works all things together for good to those who are the called according to his purpose he works all things together for good and why does he do it he does it so that we might be conformed to the likeness of his son so that through the troubles through the trials he turns these things for our benefit so that we learn to be more like Christ and we respond to crisis more like Christ and if somebody's stoning us to death just like Stephen we become so like Christ that we say Father do not hold this sin against them and all the troubles and all the trials and all the difficulties that we go through are for that purpose so here we are we're going through this wee psalm we're just about at the end of it now I will be with him in trouble why will

God be with us in trouble because we are works in progress we haven't arrived yet where God wants us to be but he is with us and Isaiah has made a promise about our saviour and by the way our saviour and our God who is our refuge our fortress our God in whom we trust are one and the same I and the father are one if you're trusting Jesus then you're dwelling in the secret place of the most high and Isaiah makes a promise about him and he says out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied what does that mean it means he's going to look at John and Margaret Kerr and he's going to look at Anne Anderson and he's going to look at Janice Roger and he's going to look at Lewis Potter and he's going to look at David Andrew and he's going to look backwards through time from Calvary and say it was all worth it look at what's been accomplished out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied and as

[41 : 02] Peter said Christ suffered once for since the righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God brothers and sisters that's Psalm 91 that's the life in the secret place of the most high it's about a life no matter what happens to us God will turn it towards our re-imagining because we were made in the image of God but sin has warped that image of God in us and so he's remaking us that's why we had to be born again so allow yourself big thoughts about your Christian faith allow yourself big thoughts about your God allow yourself big thoughts about your security and allow yourself big thoughts about what the possibilities are of a God who is in charge of the angels and who a moment's notice will send them to your side to help in any moment of need his grace will always be sufficient for you and if you don't need an angel he won't send you one but he will send you grace for the moment of need let's pray oh

Lord God our heavenly father we we just want to bless you for the mighty mighty power of your word and your presence in our lives thank you father for the bible thank you for the word of God thank you that we are in a place of astonishing security and that we could not exaggerate the security even if the enemy the father of lies exaggerates the threat to us exaggerates the danger to us and fills our heads constantly with alarm about our mortgage going up or our utility bills going up and our income becoming less and less and our security being less and less no matter what he's feeding into us no matter what he tries to get us to concentrate on father we choose by your grace to dwell in the secret place of the most high to sit at ease in your presence knowing that everything is under your control and you will be with us in trouble thank you lord we bless you for that we praise you in Jesus name and we ask that as we go from here today people who are in trouble and do not enjoy the security that we have will see that little smile playing at the corner of our lips and inquire about the confidence that we seem to have in a terrifying world bless them lord and make us a blessing to those who need to know the security that you have given us in Jesus in his name we bless you and praise you amen to you