

The LORD Is My Refuge!

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[0 : 00] We come to the Lord's Word this morning. We're in the book of Psalms. So you can open your Bible up to Psalms. We're in Psalm 91. Psalm 91.

And I know I usually read through the psalm at the beginning, but this time we're going to kind of read through it as we go. Let's jump in. The first thing that we notice about this psalm is that there is no superscription at the top.

So we don't know who wrote this. We don't know what the occasion is. And we don't know whether it's a song or just a piece of poetry, a blessing or something perhaps.

So we just have to be content with not knowing some of these things. And we have to take this psalm as it comes to us. There seems to be four parts to this psalm. The first two verses, if you could have your Bible open in front of you, you can kind of see there's often a break there.

The psalm contains the opening statement where the author expresses his confidence in God.

Then the next part, verses 3 to 8, is packed full of these will statements.

[1 : 10] And the psalmist makes numerous statements about how things will go for the person who takes refuge in God. Then in verse 9, the author restates the main theme of the psalm and reminds us of just who these promises are for.

And then he goes on to give more will statements and describes how things will go for the person who really trusts in the Lord. And then finally, the last part of the psalm, verses 14 to 16, the will statements continue, but the one who is saying them changes.

Now it's the Lord who is speaking about how he will act in response to the prayers and plights of his people. And the main theme of this psalm, the great declaration of it, is that God is the protector of his people.

So let's see this and hear this from the words of the psalmist, starting in verses 1 and 2. Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. So the psalmist has something to say.

[2 : 31] He has a statement to make, and it comes to us in verse 2. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress. These two words, refuge and fortress, speak of the safety and the protection that are found in the Lord.

Now, it's probably difficult for us to relate to these two words a little bit, because we've all been blessed to know relative peace in our lifetimes. But if you read through the story of Israel in the Old Testament, you'll see that many of those ancient days were full of war, battles, bloodshed, violence. The surrounding nations and peoples would raid and pillage Israel and each other. And so the fortified city, the city of refuge, was a big deal back then.

That was the place that you and your family would run to when you saw the enemy army coming or raiders coming. And the sturdy walls would give you protection against soldiers and chariots.

Think of the stories of Joshua and the battle at Jericho or Jerusalem. Both were fortified cities known for their great thick walls and their towers for defense.

[4 : 02] And at various times in Israel's history, there were many cities like these fortified with walls. This was common to them. So what is the psalmist declaring here in verse 2?

He's saying, when I'm looking for shelter, a hiding place, a safe place, where do I go? Where do I run to? Not an earthly city, but a person.

My God. He is my protector. He is the one who keeps me safe. And I trust in His protection. This is the theme of the entire psalm.

God is the trustworthy, dependable protector of His people. And now He launches into these will statements.

These first few will statements in verses 3 and 4 are about what God will do for those who trust in Him. Verse 3. Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

[5 : 09] He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings you will find refuge. His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

So these are the kinds of things that God will do for those who trust in Him. He will save you from the fowler's snare. The psalmist uses metaphorical language here and it's drawing on the situation of birds.

A fowler is a hunter of birds and in this context using a snare or a trap to hunt for birds. So the enemy is on the prowl like a hunter and we are like the bird.

But God is the one who will save us from the enemy and His trap. In verse 4. More bird metaphor. He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings you will find refuge. I love this picture. The picture here is that God will take you under His loving care and protection like a mother bird does its helpless little babies.

[6 : 19] He will draw you close. He will keep you safe. He will be a hiding place for you in the time of trouble. The main point here in all of this is that God is not the kind of God who will simply let His people be caught and killed by enemies and predators while He turns a blind eye.

He will intervene. He will save us. He will protect us because He cares for us like we are His very own. I love the statement here at the end of verse 4.

His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. A rampart is a protective wall. So God's faithfulness is like a shield or barrier that protects us from harm and danger.

God can be dependent on to keep His promises. He is the one who comes between us and trouble like a deflecting shield, like an impenetrable barrier.

Then in verses 5 to 8 the psalmist switches from He will to now you will. So verses 3 and 4 it was God will save you. He will protect you.

[7 : 40] He will shield you. And now in verses 5 it's you will not fear the terror of night nor the arrow that flies by day. you will not fear the pestilence that stalks in the darkness nor the plague that destroys at midday.

A thousand may fall at your side ten thousand at your right hand but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

So with God protecting you this is how it will go for you. And He gives two more will statements.

We'll just look at the first one the big one. You will not fear and then He lists off some common dangers of the day.

You will not fear them because remember the Lord is your shield. He is your protector. Let's look at some of these common dangers or threats. He says you will not fear the terror of night.

If we compare this to another place in the Bible where this phrase is used it likely refers to the frequent threat of bandits or thugs or criminals thieves who would use the cover of darkness to attack to rob to pillage to kill.

[9 : 07] He says you will not fear the arrow that flies by day.

This probably referring to the arrow shot by archers in battle. You will not fear the pestilence that stalks in the darkness nor the plague that destroys at midday.

Both of these are referring to fatal diseases things that spread invisibly. Usually the kind that result in death.

Verse 7 A thousand may fall at your side ten thousand at your right hand but it will not come near you. Now some people think that this refers to like a battle people falling in battle but most likely it refers to the plague to pestilence no matter how many there are around you getting sick dropping down from the plague you will not fear because it will not come near you.

Now we may wonder why all the switching back and forth between night and day darkness and midday remember this is a poem this is poetry and this is a poetic device called merism where you kind of use both parts but your whole point is about the whole we're more familiar with the expression maybe that you know I was praying day and night that God would do this what we really mean is all the time around the clock and so it seems that this is the same kind of idea that he's giving here God's trustworthy dependable protection enables us to live without fear around the clock whether it's at night and the dangers of night or during the day and the things that can happen in the day in a similar fashion we shouldn't look at these particular dangers as being the only things that God protects us from

[11:19] I mean these are just a few samples of the possible dangers but the overall point is that God protects his people from all kinds of danger all kinds of harm he is the shield that comes between us and these things in life now I know that already some of you might be thinking and the question might be coming up what about when bad things like these do happen to the righteous to God's people we're going to get to that question in a couple minutes here but let's not miss let's not fail to hear the main point of this section is that God protects his people around the clock from all kinds of troubles and dangers verse 9 if you say the Lord is my refuge and you make the most high your dwelling no harm will overtake you no disaster will come near your tent for he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone you will tread on the lion and the cobra you will trample the great lion and the serpent so the psalmist makes it clear this protection is not enjoyed by everyone it's only those who say the Lord is my refuge it's only those who make the most high their dwelling those who trust in him those who live in him that's who these promises of protection are for and then the psalmist goes on to make more wonderful declarations about how the Lord protects his people if you say the

Lord is my refuge if you make him your dwelling no harm will overtake you no disaster will come near your tent why not because he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways and his angels will do the job they will see to it that you do not come to harm verse 13 takes it a step beyond that even it's not just about survival it's not just about bare minimum protection it will also be about triumph over the enemy you will tread on the lion and the cobra you will trample the great lion and the serpent so God not only protects his people but he also in the end will give them victory over their enemies over the things that threaten and endanger us now let's come to this question that I know is probably percolating in some of our minds what about the suffering of the righteous because many look at these promises and say oh that's not true that sounds too good to be true if this is true that no harm will overtake you no disaster will come near your tent what about all the faith filled people who have suffered and died from things like these and this is a difficult question to answer in fact the entire book of Job is devoted to this question what about when the righteous suffer calamity and it's no fault of their own if God always protects his people all the time from all kinds of things like these what about

Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers and got stuck in jail for years what about King David who was hunted and persecuted by his wicked father-in-law for years what about the righteous prophets who were killed slaughtered by the Israelites what about the apostles many of whom were killed because of their devotion to Jesus and it's here that we have to come to grips with five things five things that will help us read this the right way number one God can and does do all these things literally at times at various times in history verses six and seven speak of the pestilence and the plague not even coming near people dropping from it all around and yet there you are standing safe is this not exactly what happened when the Israelites were in Egypt the last several plagues God targeted specifically only on the Egyptians they literally looked around them and they saw the people the damage the ruin the death and there they were standing safely in the land of Goshen all was well so yes God can do this each of these things literally and he has or look at verse 13 you will tread on the lion you will trample the great lion it was David who told King Saul that the Lord one time helped him to strike down a lion while he was just a young boy and he was tending his father's sheep Daniel was thrown into a whole den of lions and God gave him victory over them and how did he do it by sending his angel to shut the mouths of the lion so God can and has done these kinds of things literally but the second thing to remember is that this is poetry he's bringing all of these things together poetically to make a point to illustrate the many different ways that God can and does protect his people the point's not that God never allows plagues to make his people sick or die the points that God ordinarily protects his people from all kinds of things throughout their lives this doesn't mean that we'll never get sick we all know that truth be told we won't really know until the end when we are with God looking back on our lives just how many disasters he spared us from how many car accidents we would have been in had God not interrupted us and made us late how many times on the job we could have been fatally injured had his angels not been present there intervening in the moment in the ways that we didn't even see so we need to know that this is poetry which taken all together is making a grand statement God protects his people all the time around the clock in all kinds of ways throughout their lives third we need to see that this is a particular kind of poetry it's wisdom poetry there are a number of

psalms that are kind of all together on this a kind of poetry in the bible that contains sayings principles proverbs that are generally true but not always without exception let's look quickly at psalm 112 for an example there it says blessed are those who fear the lord who find great delight in his commands their children will be mighty in the land the generation of the upright will be blessed wealth and riches are in their houses and their righteousness endures forever does this mean that those who fear the lord will always be rich i think we all know of course not but generally those who fear the lord and find great delight in his commands will grow wealthier from generation to generation because of the way that god leads us to work and to manage our money and to treat others and how we use our possessions but that doesn't mean that we will never face ruin or hardship like job did let's come back to our psalm psalm 91 verse 10 it says if you make the lord if you say the lord is my refuge if you make him your dwelling no harm will overtake you no disaster will come near your tent does this mean that the person who makes god his refuge will never suffer harm or be affected by disaster no this is the way god ordinarily deals with his people he protects them from harm he keeps disaster away from him it's the general principle of how he operates but again it's not without exceptions look at job look at joseph look at the apostles look at the prophets so we need to read this as the kind of writing that it is it's wisdom poetry which tells us the way god usually ordinarily deals with his people number four we need to know that god has a long term plan he has a long term plan of salvation and protection for all his people for every child of his who suffers harm or disaster there is a way that god will make good on all of these statements all of these will statements there there's an ultimate sense in which for all his people the end of their stories will be yes god did this for me he watched over me he protected me he gave me the victory over everything even death let me show you what jesus said on one occasion to his disciples this from the gospel of luke chapter 21 verse 16 he was talking to the apostles and he said to them you will be betrayed even by parents brothers and sisters relatives and friends and they will put some of you to death everyone will hate you because of me but not a hair of your head will perish stand firm and you will win life you hear that they will put some of you to death but not a hair of your head will perish stand

[22 : 55] firm and you will win life what's Jesus saying here calamity suffering and yes even death at the hands of enemies will happen at times for his people but these things don't win over his people not in the long term not in the ultimate in the end even death can't beat God's people every hair of your head will be restored will be given back to you how does it happen as Jesus said John 6 38 this the lastw day for my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life and I will raise them up at the last day.

So this is the ultimate way that God will keep all of these will statements to His people. Psalm 91 is not saying that God's people will never suffer, that they will never die.

It's saying that God is our protector. He generally keeps His people from calamity and death throughout their lives and when He doesn't, He has a good and loving purpose and one day when Jesus comes back, He will finally undo the effects that any sickness or plagues had on our bodies. He will finally undo any damage that any enemy caused to our bodies, whether by arrow, sword, bullet, bomb, car accident, He will finally bring us to that place of triumph over all of it.

Jesus will. In the short term, it may seem, it may feel like cancer is overtaking you. But did it really overtake you if by the power of Jesus you are raised back to life from the dead when He returns?

[25 : 11] So we need to read these promises in light of God's long-term plan of salvation and protection. And finally, we need to see that God's protection doesn't always mean being kept from calamity, but sometimes it means being kept through calamity.

And there's pointers to this reality throughout the psalm. Verse 3 says, He will save you from the fowler's snare. But does that mean that you won't even be caught in it for a moment, ever?

Verse 5 says, You will not fear the arrow that flies by day, but does that mean that you'll never see war or be in the midst of a crossfire? Verse 12 says, God's angels will lift you up so that you don't strike your foot against a stone.

But does that mean that you are never allowed to fall from the rooftop? Verse 13, You will tread on the lion and the serpent. But does that mean that you will never see or face the lion or the serpent? Or does it only mean that in the end you'll have the victory over the lion by God's safekeeping power? Verse 15 is perhaps the clearest statement of this truth.

[26 : 29] He will call on me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him.

God will be with us in trouble, in the midst of it. Meaning that at times, yes, we will see and face difficulty, hardship, but God is with us in it and ultimately he will deliver us out of it, all of it.

Verse 16, With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. Does this mean that God will never allow his people to die young?

I think we know the answer to that is no. But God will keep his promise of long life and salvation to all his people. It'll just come a little differently than we thought.

ultimate long life, eternal life, resurrection from the dead kind of life when Jesus returns. So God's protection doesn't always mean being kept from trouble.

[27 : 40] Sometimes it means being kept through trouble. God is faithful. He always keeps his promises. He may not always keep them in the way that we would expect.

But at the end of it all, when we look back, we will never doubt that he was faithful, that he kept his word. We'll look back on Psalm 91 and say yes and amen.

That's how the Lord treated me all my life. His love never fails. He always keeps, always guards, always protects his people.

people. The question is, are you one of his people? Have you run to him, the one who is the shelter, the hiding place, the fortress?

Have you made him your safety, your protector? Maybe you're wondering, well, how do I do that? Well, he kind of tells us all through the psalm here, if you're listening closely, in verse 2, my God in whom I trust.

[28 : 55] It's about believing. It's about putting your trust in him and in the son that he later sent, Jesus. Verse 15, we become his by calling on him and his promise is that he will answer and so that's simply a prayer.

Lord, save me. Be my refuge. Be my God. And his promise is yes, I will answer.

I will deliver you. I will satisfy you with long life. I will show you my salvation. Verse 14, because he loves me, says the Lord, I will rescue him.

Do you love the Lord? Do you love Jesus? That word kind of has a sense of cling to in love. Are you clinging to the Lord Jesus?

If so, then he is your faithful protector in all things. And it doesn't matter what life throws at us. Let's drive it all the way home.

[30 : 14] Most of us here don't fear plague or diseases, arrows, snakes, lions. None of these are common in our lives today.

Maybe cancer. But what is common? What are those things that we are tempted to fear? The Lord is my refuge and fortress, my savior and protector.

We need not fear car accidents, cancer. We need not fear when the bank account gets low or when the vehicle breaks down on the side of the road.

We need not fear getting stranded out in the middle of the night in the cold, dark winter on the road. We need not fear that what happened in the news to someone yesterday is going to be happening to us today.

We need not fear injury, health troubles. We need not fear hostility from opponents who disagree with us, who think badly of us because of our faith.

[31 : 20] We need not fear political persecution or presidents or prime ministers who are going to bring in policies that are going to make it harder for us to live out our faith in Jesus.

We need not fear that great serpent, the devil, or his minions. If you say the Lord Jesus is my refuge and you make the most high your dwelling, no harm will overtake you.

No disaster will come near you. God commands his angels concerning you. He is your shield. He will be with you in trouble.

He will answer you when you call and he will show you his great salvation. So what's your trouble today? What's the trouble that you're in this week?

Is it a difficult week of work ahead of you? Is it that you're feeling spent, weary, exhausted, troubles with health, not sure what to do in a particular situation?

[32 : 25] Is it a relationship that's precious, that's broken? Call on the Lord Jesus. He will answer.

Say of him, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. Rest in the shadow of the Almighty. Take refuge under his wings.

He will never let you down. let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for these words which give us such courage and confidence.

And we thank you for Jesus, the one who guarantees that all of them are true and are for us. I pray that you would dispel all of the fear in our lives.

All of it. Except the fear of you. That we would be able to go forth in courage and live and work and talk and do things with no anxiety, no fear of disaster because you are our God.

[33 : 46] Put that deep in our hearts. let us be a testimony to the world around us. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.