

Because

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[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweep from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.! As always, if you want to learn a little more about us as a church, you can go to FCCGreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page and other social media.

But hey, today we are pumped to get into the Word of God, but most of all, let this Word get into these hearts and truly change us from the inside out. Today we're in the third week of our series called Secret Place.

This series is over Psalm 91. We'll be in verses 9 through 13 today. And the title of the message is Because. You know, one of my favorite sayings as a parent, because I said so.

How many of you parents get way too much satisfaction out of saying that to your kids? And then how many of you kids can't stand when your parents say that? Yeah! Well, here's the good news, even though they probably won't stop.

Someday, you'll get to say it to your kids as you drive them nuts. And it really is glorious. But that word because is one of those often said and easily overlooked words.

[1 : 16] Because of this, then this is the result. A conjunction used to explain the reason for something. So this word because links the cause to the effect.

So when a child wants to know why they have to stop kicking their sibling, because I said so is good enough. And you're about ready to get body slammed.

Did I really say that out loud? Parenting is so much fun. Or, because I love my wife and made a commitment to her on our wedding day, I will imperfectly live out that promise for the rest of my days.

And what a blessing to watch those of you who are further along on that journey do that so faithfully. Thank you for your example to us younger couples. So, you might be wondering, why are we getting a grammar lesson when school just got out for the summer?

Because that word is so important with what we're going to talk about today. So, let me bring it all together. Connect you to our series if you've not been with us so far.

[2 : 28] We're in Psalm 91. If you want to go ahead and grab your Bible or your Bible app. And our series is called Secret Place. Because if you remember Psalm 91.1, He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

And in week one, we talked about four different Hebrew names for God that are packed into these first two verses. And those character traits of the Lord guide the rest of this psalm.

We looked at El Elyon, the Most High, the only one that we can put our trust in completely. El Shaddai, the all-sufficient one who can handle every problem we face.

Yahweh, the covenant-keeping, never-changing God who's the same yesterday, today, and forever. And then we talked about Elohim, the one who created you in the secret place and invites you to dwell all your life in His presence.

And then last week, we continued that conversation about how trouble comes, but our awesome God is faithful. And because of that, we can be fearless as we chase after His heart.

[3 : 42] And then today, it's sort of like we need a reminder, because you know what? We do. How many of you wives are always reminding your husband about something when he acts like he's never heard you say it before, right?

Well, that's what I see happening here for all of us as the Holy Spirit inspired these words. Because listen, life is hard. Trouble does come because the flesh is weak.

Because there are temptations all around. So, let's pick up here in Psalm 91, verse 9. Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place.

So, now that you can see this because statement, let's start this sentence today. I want you to get one big sentence today, okay? Here's the first part. Because I dwell in the secret place.

So, that begs the question. Have you made the Lord your secret place, your dwelling place? Have you surrendered your life completely into His hands? And listen, as much as some think that they do, we don't get to modify what that looks like because God's already decided.

[5 : 00] Have you repented of your sins, turning away from that me-centered life, confessing Him as Lord? That means dying to self and rising to new life and baptism.

Are you filled with the Holy Spirit, walking in that relationship with Christ, pursuing holiness in Him? See, I need you to know that God loves you.

His protection covered you before you were even born into this world. And because we've all sinned against Him, Jesus put on flesh. He dwelt among us.

100% human. 100% God. Hard to wrap our minds around as He dealt with every human struggle and emotion and temptation that we face.

Probably a lot more. And yet, He lived a perfect sinless life. Performing signs, miracles, and wonders, showing a true kingdom heart.

[6 : 01] Compassion. Love. Justice. Righteousness. Beautifully merged together. And then He endured brutality like we can't even understand. Betrayed.

Lied about. Spit upon. Beaten. Crown of thorns in the skull. Forced to carry His cross to Golgotha. There He was nailed to it. Hoisted up. And suffered.

Giving His innocent life for our guilty ones. Taking our place with the punishment our sins deserve. So that He could say to us, I love you big time.

The veil tore in two. The earth shook. Darkness covered everything. And then from Friday afternoon until Sunday morning, it touched three parts or a part of three days.

Listen, things went kind of quiet. Until. Until the grave could hold Him no longer. He walked out of that tomb declaring life for all who would pick up their cross and follow Him.

[7 : 04] See, that's the gospel. That's hope. And if you don't know it, you'll have that opportunity today to surrender. Because His arms are open wide.

No matter where you've been. No matter what you've done. Grace is available to carry us through this life into eternity and paradise that I can't even fathom.

And the psalmist is talking to those who belong to the Lord who have this great inheritance. So, because He's your Lord and Savior, because He's the living water I drink of, because His word is the bread of life for my soul, because I can daily sit at His feet being transformed into His image, because in Him I find my peace and joy, because He gives me a purpose like nothing else this world offers, because He's my secret place and I'm under the shadow of His wings, look at this next part of this sentence.

Because I dwell in the secret place, I'm under God's protection. So, two parts to this. So, first in Psalm 91, verse 10, let's just keep going in our psalm here.

It says, No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling. So, at first, this can be a little confusing, but remember, we've dealt with this last week.

[8 : 27] We know, as this psalm talks about, the fowler's snare, the perilous pestilence, those things are real, and there will be those who come against us.

There will be hard things that happen that we don't understand, that might seem unfair. But what does Jesus say? Remember this from last week, John 16, 33? In this world, you will have trouble, but take heart, because I have overcome the world, Jesus says.

In this fallen world because of sin, you will have trouble. And listen, life isn't always a bowl full of cherries, but take heart. God's got you in the midst of it all.

He can and He will use troubles to grow us, mature us, even use our redeemed mess to share His message. When you're in the center of God's will, you're good.

And He's more than awesome enough to protect you from anything that comes against you. Do you remember last week when we talked about David's life? If he was the author of this psalm, and if you remember, it doesn't say, so we don't know for sure, but if he was the author, it would make sense, because he knew trouble, and yet walked in God's protection.

[9 : 42] The other author that some scholars tend to believe could have written this is Moses. And while I lean towards David personally, both of them could speak to God's power and protection from experience.

Think about Moses' story. His life began when he should have been killed by the Egyptians. That was what they were doing to the little Israelite boys. But his life was preserved as he was sent down the river in a basket.

He was found by Pharaoh's own daughter, raised in a royal household with training and education that he would need in a few years.

God's protection in many ways. Later, when the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush, calling him to lead millions of Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, he finally obeyed, standing up against one of the most powerful rulers in the world.

And yet, he wasn't killed like you might think he would have been. God's power was on full display. He sent one plague after another on the Egyptians.

[10:48] And because they would not turn from their hard hearts, because Pharaoh would not do the right thing, he would get another one, and then another one, and he still wouldn't let them leave.

On that last plague, we see God's protection over all the Israelite firstborns as they put the blood of the lamb on the doorpost, causing the angel of death to pass over their homes.

But it was a different story for the Egyptians. In their grief, Pharaoh finally cried uncle, and he allows the Israelites to leave. So Moses gets them packed up, they're headed towards the Red Sea, and about that time, he changes his mind, sends his mighty army against them, probably the most powerful army in the world.

And how does God protect them? He parts the Red Sea for the good guys, sends it crashing back down on the evil, the wicked. And even though Israel's disobedience would make them wander for 40 years in the wilderness, God's protection still guided them.

He turned the bitter, undrinkable water from Mara into sweet drinking water that they so desperately needed. He provided manna from heaven and swarms of quail for 40 years to feed the multitude.

[12:01] Pillar of cloud by day, fire by night to guide the way, miraculously causing their clothes and their sandals to not wear out over the years, even giving them military victories over the enemy.

I think Philip Yancey summed it up well when he said, a God wise enough to create me and the world I live in is wise enough to watch out for me.

So while we live in a fallen world with all kinds of devastating results, when we're in the center of God's will, nothing can approach us that God doesn't allow.

And if he does allow it, then he wants to use it to change us even more into the image of Christ. And it's okay that I don't completely understand all of that. And I don't know if you nerd out on stuff like this like I do, but I really hope in heaven that we'll be able to see all the times that God protected us from harm when we didn't even know it was happening.

Whether it was the annoyance of not being able to find your keys when you know you put them back in their normal spot, and yet God used that delay to protect you from a dangerous crash.

Maybe someone had evil motives against you, and God sent someone into that situation who had no idea either, but it scared off the bad guy.

[13:22] Man, we can think of a hundred different examples, but I surely hope that we get to sit in the replay booth, okay? But church, I believe Psalm 46.1 that says, God is our refuge and strength and ever-present help in trouble.

Now look at Psalm, keep going in this, Psalm 91.9.11.12 as we look at how God chooses to protect those who are His. 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. Okay, so let's go to the deep end of the theological pool for a second.

This passage is called a typological or an application-based prophecy where it's a general promise of God's protective care over believers like us and yet Satan, as he was tempting Jesus, misapplied, shocker, misapplied this as he tried to get Jesus to test God.

And if you haven't noticed, the deceiver and the author of lies likes to twist things. But this brings up a subject that we probably don't talk about enough. Angels.

[14:38] But here's the sad reality. Most people's belief on angels isn't from the Bible. Have you noticed that? It's from Hollywood. And yes, I grew up watching Touched by an Angel 2, just like many of you.

And while we don't have time today to do a full study on angels, can I correct a really big one that so many Christians believe? Here it is.

When we lose a loved one, you so often hear, even from those who probably should know better, we hear, they got their wings, they're an angel now, fly high.

And I get it. I get it that that's comforting to embrace. And those moments of grieving probably aren't the right time to say, now hold on, your theology's way off.

But listen, I think now probably is a good time because that way of thinking just isn't true in God's word. See, Hebrews 1, 13 and 14 says this, To which of the angels did God ever say, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool at your feet?

[15 : 46] Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? So did you see that? There's a clear distinction between angels and us.

Angels were created by God as messengers, servants, guardians, and that's great. And I'm so thankful for it. But we as humans were created imago dei, God's image, in his image.

And when we die as followers of Jesus, we're present with the Lord in paradise. Nowhere in scripture does it speak of us as future angels. So listen, grandma's in heaven celebrating if she knew Jesus, not sitting in an invisible rocking chair while you sleep, okay?

So be careful not to buy into the flying, naked, baby cherubs that comes mainly from the Renaissance and Baroque art periods where they would basically take a few biblical terms, blend it with Greek and Roman mythology, and create this stuff.

And I don't mean to take us down a rabbit trail here, but it's so important that we're true to God's word in every way. That we understand that as Psalm 91 teaches, God's protection is over us and it's often through angels who've been giving charge to watch over, guide, and guard us.

[17 : 06] And if you study angels, if you study a cherubim, angels and cherubim throughout scripture, they're not usually these gentle little negotiators, okay? They're fierce warriors in a battle against evil who've got your back because they've been empowered by the God of all creation.

And we're told that we have angels that have been assigned, given charge over us. Now, church, if we could only see, I mean, I'm serious, if we could only see the spiritual battle that is raging, that is raging for our hearts and our minds right now, I don't think we could handle it.

If the veil was lifted and we could physically look upon the spiritual realm with the warfare going on for our hearts, we'd probably pass out in fear. It would be terrifying.

And yet, it's just another reason to stop running from this God who created me to know Him, to stop visiting when I can dwell, to worship Him who loves me more than I deserve and who's proven it by the bloodstained cross and the empty tomb.

Also, by His 360-degree care over you and me as we're told this in Romans 8, 28. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him and who've been called according to His purpose.

[18 : 29] Now, let's finish this sentence today, okay? Because I dwell in the secret place, I'm under God's protection walking, watch this, walking in victory.

You know, there's a difference between I got baptized when I was 11, I know the Bible stories, I come to church when I can, throw 20 in the plate, talk a little theology, and I have FCC listed as my home church in the obituary, okay?

There's that versus the truth, which is I was made to dwell in the secret place of God Almighty. I walk in victory in Christ every day, faithfully doing life and serving alongside other believers in my FCC family.

My attitude and my behaviors are being transformed daily. Far from perfect, but I'm striving by God's grace to love my family and love my neighbor with the love of Christ.

See, Max Lucado tells the story of Alexander the Great's famous horse that got loose and took off. That's when an ambitious young soldier with a low rank of private went after it.

[19 : 36] And although it wasn't easy, he caught the horse and returned it to the general. Having a great bond with the horse, the famous military leader was so relieved and he showed his gratefulness saying, thank you, captain.

With a single word, captain, the soldier was promoted. And get this, he believed his leader so much, he immediately went to the quartermaster, got his new uniform, picked out an officer's bunk, and he sat down with the other officers to eat.

Because the general said so, he believed it and lived his new rank. But here's the thing, it works a little different in the kingdom of God. Our rank hasn't changed because of what we've done, but only because of what he's done.

That's the difference between Christianity and every other religion where you have to try to somehow earn your way to God. But as a disciple of Jesus, he did the work to set us free. And we have the privilege to accept that gift, getting our new rank, being called child of God, a son or a daughter, being called a new creation, an heir of God with an inheritance like we can't imagine, a citizen of heaven, salt of the earth, light of the world, temple of the Holy Spirit, chosen by God to walk in victory.

[21 : 01] Now, look at our last verse for today. Psalm 91, verse 13. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent, the young lion and the serpent, you shall trample under foot.

So, how interesting that a passage all about victory tells us we shall tread upon and trample a lion and a serpent. Well, what are two prominent descriptions of Satan in God's word?

Well, first, a serpent. Man, we see this in Genesis 3, running all the way through the last pages of Scripture in the book of Revelation. And what does 2 Corinthians 11, 3 say as it refers back to the serpent in Genesis?

It says, but I'm afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

So, we see here the evil one is deceptive, twisting Scripture, taking a smidge of truth, altering it into a lie. Did God really say not to eat from the fruit of the tree of good and evil?

[22 : 16] Did God really say that life is more precious than our inconvenience? Did God really say that His beautiful gift of sexual intimacy is between a man and a woman within the parameters of marriage?

Did God really say not to let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what builds others up? Did God really say? And He starts to tempt and twist and torment.

He is the author of confusion and like a snake He's slithery and sneaky and yet there's victory over the deception. And then we're given a very different animal picture of a lion.

This is the picture of Satan's in-your-face aggressive and powerful attacks. And what does 1 Peter 5a say? Be alert. Be of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

We live in a culture today where Satan isn't afraid to attack you with a straight up wickedness.

Where good is called evil and evil is called good. Where people celebrate the murder of someone they disagree with.

[23 : 25] Where true followers of Jesus will get attacked, mislabeled, and canceled because of truth. And the psalmist purposely chooses two very dangerous animals.

Listen, I made the mistake years ago and this is the old movies years ago of watching just a few minutes of the movie Anaconda. And man, it scared the daylights out of me and I don't even have to watch another film to know a lion could destroy me as well.

I don't want any part of that or a big snake. And yet those animals that most people fear and rightly so, those are the very animals that Satan is compared to.

But we're also told not to fear even though Satan is a formidable foe that we can't defeat in our own strength and power because when Jesus comes into the equation, the king of kings crushes Satan's head as his children walk in that victory.

So what's that even mean in real life with real problems? Well, it means that there's a way of living that's even foreign to many in the church.

[24 : 30] It means that everything about my life can honor Christ if I'm willing to surrender. It means I don't have to be overcome with guilt, fear, addiction, slander, lust, a toxic tongue, a critical spirit, a victim mentality, or anything else not from God.

It means I have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and that lifestyle doesn't have to stop after I drive off the church lot. It means I'm on mission to share the hope of Christ with others and it means I don't have to chase after the things of this world because they don't fill me up anyways.

And you know what? It also means that I know Jesus personally and the same power that raised Christ from the dead is alive in me and that enemy stands no chance.

Or as 1 John 4 4 says, you dear children are from God and you've overcome them because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

So let's head back to our grammar lesson we started off with today. This conjunction because changes everything. And church, because we dwell in the secret place, we're under God's

protection walking in victory.

[25 : 46] Because we belong to Jesus. So let's close out today like we sometimes do, making this bold proclamation together. Here it is.

Because I dwell in the secret place, I'm under God's protection walking in victory.

Amen? All right, pray with me. Heavenly Father, we are just so very grateful for your truth that you have spoken over us today, that there's no reason to fear, there's no reason to be terrified of Satan, even in his cunning ways, even in his vicious attacks.

Father, because Jesus is our Lord and Savior, because the Holy Spirit lives inside of us, we can trample him under foot. We can walk in true victory as your word lays out before us.

So thank you, Jesus. Thank you that you have invited us to dwell in your secret place, to know you, to be under the feathers of your wings, and to find protection and hope and purpose and life in Jesus' name.

[27 : 04] Thank you. Thank you, Jesus. We worship and adore you, and we pray this in your holy name. Amen and amen. Hey, real quick, we're so thankful that you've tuned in today.

Once again, if you didn't catch it earlier, my name's Ray Sweet from First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. You can always check us out at FCCGreensburg.com.

But hey, if you got questions about your faith, questions about following Jesus, questions about First Christian Church of Greensburg, we'd love to come alongside you and help you on this journey.

So there's a couple ways that you can reach out to us. You can give us a call, 812-663-8488. That's 812-663-8488.

Or you can email me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com. Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today, and I pray that you will walk in victory as you trust Jesus more and more.

[28 : 07] Have a great week.