

Covered and Delivered

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[0 : 0 0] A short series in Psalm 91. Pick off Psalms and Psalm 91. Last week we saw verses 1 and verse 2. Carrying on now down to verse 3 and verse 4 of this next section. Psalm 91 verses 3 and verse 4.

Beautiful. He will deliver you from the snare of a fowler and from a deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge.

His faithfulness is a shield and buckler. As I said last week or not, I was unsure whether to include these two verses of last week's verses.

This isn't a longer sermon last week, but the truth is verses 3 and verse 4. They need to be taken separately. We saw last week, if you recall, we began our journey in Psalm 91.

And we said that although this psalm does speak of God's physical help and God's physical looking after his people. From the very start, this psalm has been used by the church to speak of God's care for us in spiritual matters.

[1 : 2 3] As he looks after his people. Especially, as we said, in the view of spiritual warfare. From the early church, through the reformers, through the Puritans, through ourselves. There is nothing unusual taking this psalm to a deeper meaning.

As we sing and read this psalm and study it, we are studying, as it were, a manual as to how the Lord deals with us in terms of spiritual warfare.

So we saw last week, at the beginning of a psalm, a reminder that in God we have refuge, in God we have safety. And that is carried on, verses 3 and verse 4, where the psalmist now gives us detail this evening.

It gives us detail as to how the Lord protects us and, more specifically, from what he protects us. And that is the theme of the psalm, really, right down to the end of the psalm.

It just digs more and more down into how God looks after his people spiritually and what he looks after us from. In other words, the psalm carries on now, quite rapidly, looking at what the danger is and how, with the Lord, we face that danger.

[2 : 3 2] What it means for us to be safe and secure in him. I would say we'll be a shorter time tonight, but every time I say that, I tend not to be, so I better not say that.

But we'll take these verses as we have them. I don't want to rush last week. I don't want to go on too much this week. But we'll just see what these verses tell us. First of all, we see the Lord delivers us.

Let's take them as you have them. Verse 3, For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. I know this is obvious to us, but just to help us with the image.

Of course, here, the snare of the fowler is, of course, the devil. The devil is here, the one who is trying to catch us. And the image here, it's quite beautiful.

It's quite simple. It's one we can imagine quite easily. But we are trying to walk our journey as Christians. We're going about our path. We're walking the narrow way.

[3 : 35] We're trying to serve and doing our best to strive after the Lord and to serve him and to be a witness to our family and friends and live a life that glorifies the Lord and that strives after holiness and everything we're called to be and do.

As we're going about this journey, there is hidden among the grass traps set for us. Now, these are not traps set by us.

Sometimes we are only to blame for our sins and shortcomings. We don't deny that, certainly not. More often than not, it's us. The majority of the time, it's our sin that lands us in situations.

But there are times when there are traps set for us and they are set by this fowler, by this bird catcher, this hunter, really, of verse 3.

And the hunter sets traps and he hides the traps well. And these are traps we are liable to falling into. And perhaps a wording of it, if you read carefully.

[4 : 46] Is the sense that the Lord never allows us to fall into these traps? Or is the sense of the verse that once we are in the traps, he delivers us from them?

Now, theologically, you could argue both ways. And we do this carefully and not too often. But our own personal experience informs our theology here, doesn't it? If I was to say, the Lord never allows Satan, as it were, to attack us, never to trap us.

Then I hope you would say, well, Donald, that is nonsense. That's not what the verse says. Because as Christians, this week, this day, we have gone through and felt, perhaps, the impact of the traps set by the evil one.

We'll see in a second what these traps might look like. But we've all felt the attacks of the evil one. So that must mean, therefore, of course, the Lord, in his sovereign wisdom, he allows us, at times, to feel the attack of the evil one.

He allows us, at times, to wander into these traps. Even when we are striving to glorify him and to serve him well, it's not because of our sin. Sometimes it is, but more often than not, it's not.

[5 : 54] What might these traps, perhaps, look like?

This list isn't exhaustive because how the evil one attacks us, as we said last week, as we know ourselves, it's quite personal to our own walk.

He knows how to best get at us. He knows where the chinks in our armour are and he goes for them. Perhaps these traps might look like us being caught up in the guilt of old sin.

The guilt of old sin. And I mean guilt towards the Lord. When you think, oh, that way I used to live, these things I used to do or say, that situation I found myself in before you were saved, you think, man, what a person I was, what a situation I found myself in, what a kind of conduct, and so on and so on.

And all the past guilt of who you once were, of all the ways you affronted the Lord, all the things you did against him to our shame, perhaps quite happily the ways you rebelled openly in front of him.

[7 : 19] And these things are brought back to you and you think, man, what a disaster. Perhaps with that, it's the trap, it's the snare of shame, not just guilt of old sin, but the shame of old sin.

You think, man. The way I once was, I can't come near the Lord again just now. The things he saved me from, I can't come near him. With that, then, the same theme, at times it's the guilt of current sin or sin you've repented from since you were saved.

Times since you've been saved, we have been saved, we've fallen into sin. You and I with you, we've fallen into patterns of sin, we've fallen into traps of sin. And the guilt of that, even though, theologically, we know we're forgiven and our saviour, we repented for it, but yet the guilt is there.

Perhaps the shame of our sin since we were saved. We think, Lord, you've done so much for me, you've saved me, you love me, you've brought me from darkness to light.

And yet I have done and said and thought things which are so unholy and so against your nature. And yes, I know I'm saved, but I can't bear to look at you and the shame weighs down on you.

[8 : 44] Perhaps shame as to your lack of witnessing, shame as to our lack of care, our coldness of heart, our sin, and so on and so on.

Whatever ways the devil gets at you individually. There's guilt, shame, there are very easy traps for him. There are not complicated traps for him to create or to set.

He has seen us grow up. He has seen our journeys in life and he knows us. He can't read our minds. He can't force our hands. He is not all-powerful. He's not all-knowing.

But he knows us. We're human. He knows our story. He's been with us, following us, most of us, all of us, for years. He knows our patterns.

And he traps us so easily. Traps of guilt, traps of shame. Also, perhaps more actively, there's traps where Satan will distract us.

[9 : 43] Distract us often even with good things, holy things. I don't know if you're finding this yourselves. It's one of the temptations we're warned about in training for ministry.

It's very easy to be busy for the Lord whilst being very far away from the Lord. It's very easy. Don't quote me here.

It's not easy to write sermons. Certainly not. But it's easy to write sermons rather than sit with your Bible and pray or read or just be with the Lord. It's very easy to have deacons courts and correct sessions and meetings and evangelism meetings and planning sessions and fellowships and all these things.

Good. Good things. But personally, we are distracted. We're distant.

We haven't touched our Bible perhaps days, weeks, months. We haven't prayed. Not properly prayed. Not genuinely opened our heart to our Lord in prayer.

[10 : 46] Not sat before him in silence. Or sat before him and poured out our hearts or however we prayed for our Father in heaven. We've not done that for days or weeks or months.

Not truly. And before you know it, the trap's been sprung. And then the guilt comes. Then the shame comes. And then it repeats. And so on. There are many snares.

And we know ourselves. That's an example of them. Plenty more. More we need to name. But he is smart. And smarter than you. And smarter than me. And smarter than us combined. And he knows how to trip us up.

He knows how to plant these snares. Where to hide them. So we're almost sure to step in them. And look who the Lord is in this situation. As we find ourselves trapped in snares of our own sin.

But snares also perhaps of no sin. And snares that he, the evil one himself, has completely made up for us. We're delivered nonetheless. And look how sure the psalmist is.

[11 : 50] For he will deliver you. We perhaps often read past the connecting words. The simple phrasing. But every word matters in scripture.

It's not even he delivers you. That's good enough. But no. In the Hebrew, these words are very much there. He will deliver you. Which are sure sense. If we know the Lord.

If we love the Lord. If we're one of his. He will deliver us. From all the traps of evil. As we get trapped up in the wire. And we cry out to him.

He delivers us. We also see he delivers us. From a deadly pestilence. Now this is what I was saying. Why I wanted to have this for last week's sermon.

Really. I was humming and hawing. Because. We're not going to touch this tonight. This is its own. Sermon. In verse 6. We have to leave this for verse 6. But what I will say is.

[12 : 47] The delivery from a deadly pestilence. Perhaps sometimes. And some commentaries. And actually the majority of modern commentaries. Take that as some kind of literal saving.

From illness. Or from plague. So that could be the case. That could be the case. But I'd argue then.

Every Christian who died. Recently from COVID complications. When a quarter. Whatever it was. A third of the population. Died during the Black Death. The bubonic plague.

Plenty of Christians died there. Do the Lord not care for them? Do you not save them? Christians with illnesses. I mean. Brothers and sisters. Our own number. Plenty of us here.

Either are very close to someone. Or we are those with illnesses. And sometimes. Hard illnesses. Does that mean the Lord doesn't love those who have got illnesses? Is he not keeping us safe from the deadly pestilence?

[13 : 49] When we read this, Sam. As we're doing. In the view of this. Is speaking of spiritual matters. Not just practical. Physical matters. There's a deep journey.

In that word. In that phrase. Of deadly pestilence. All I'll say is. Leave us a cliffhanger for us. So we all come back. All I'll say is.

Historically. And even in the Hebrew itself. It's hinted perhaps being a physical thing. But the reality is. This is dealing with spiritual matters.

And we'll see that in detail. In a few weeks time. For the Lord's help. But quite simply I'll say. The pestilence is connected to the snare of a fowler.

It's the same thing he's living with from. In other words. Quite simply. We can summarize it. He delivers us from the snares of the evil one. And from the attacks. Of his legions.

[14 : 47] Of fallen angels. He delivers us. Then there's more than that. He doesn't just rescue us.

Look how he interacts with his people. His beloved people in verse 4. He will cover you. With his opinions. And under his wings. You will find refuge.

He covers us in care. And he covers us. In protection. And there has to be a difference here. Because we see a difference. In the description of the wings.

The pinions. The outer feathers. The flight feathers. The larger feathers. The image here. The image here. The image here. Is not of. Just this brooding. Completely safe protection.

It takes us back to verses 1 and verse 2. Of last week. Where we see Lord as a refuge. As a place of safety. As he overshadows us. The image there again.

[15 : 45] Is him overshadowing. His people. Perhaps our minds go briefly to. Our Lord as he. Looks upon of course the great city.

And what does he say? Oh Jerusalem. Jerusalem. And there we have the image of our saviour. There. Picturing himself. And giving image of himself.

Brooding over. And protecting. And desiring. And being there. A place of safety. To the whole. As a world of Jerusalem. If only they would make full use.

Of what he was giving them. What he was to. Going to be for them. If only they would come to him. But no. But here we see the opposite. Here we see the Lord. Being faithful towards his people. And we are running to him.

He covers us in care. Again the pinions. The long covering wings. This is the idea. That we are completely enclosed. In him.

[16 : 42] As the enemy attacks. As these snares. Fire off around us. As the deadly pestilence. Of the enemy. Comes close to us. As the arrows fly by us.

As those left and right side of us. Drop to the ground. Under his evil influence. We are safe. We are kept. We feel it. And we see it.

And we see the damage of the enemy. We see his tricks. And his plans. But ultimately. We are kept safe. From it. Brothers and sisters. As we've engaged.

Perhaps in spiritual warfare. In your own stories. As you've engaged. As you've engaged. In times of prayer. As you feel the evil one. Draw closer. And you pray for safety. You pray. That the Lord.

Would remove. The attack. And so on. However you word your prayers. It's not for me to say. And you are so aware. Are you not? So aware.

[17 : 39] Of his overshadowing. So aware. Of the opinions. Of the large. Flight feathers. The strong feathers. Of the Lord. Surrounding you. Surrounding us. He covers in protection.

But also he covers. In protections. He covers in care. But also he covers in protection. Under his wings. You will find. Refuge. We saw last week.

The Lord shelters us. This is a more active way. To say the same thing. Here the Lord is. Is active. Again the image is there. Of. Of sheltering. The creatures.

Again. The image of Jesus. As a. As a. As a hen shelters. Our chicks. That is the image. Of the Lord. Gently covering us.

With his wings. It's not just. As it were. Sheltering us in love.

[18 : 40] It's done in love. But it's an active. Sheltering. It's an intentional. It's. It's active. Protection. In other words. The Lord is not just standing back. Just.

Trying his best. To help us. If you even say that. He is there. Fully. Eternally. Able. And ready. To shelter us.

From all the real attacks. Of the enemy. We'll still feel it. We'll still see it. And that's in his wisdom. To allow us to see it. And to feel it. But ultimately. We are safe. Our souls. Are safe.

And the image. Is concluded. In the final line. Of verse 4. Where it's summarized. For us really. With the Lord's faithfulness. Is what? Is a shield. And a buckler.

To us. His faithfulness. Here. The word. There. Is the same word. We've seen the same root word. We've seen before. Is.

[19 : 35] His covenant. Faithfulness. That he is the one. Who has made a promise. And does not break that promise. That's the exact. Phrase. The term used here.

The promise. Keeping nature. Of God. Quite literally. Is our shield. And our buckler. Because he does not change.

Because. His promises. Are certain. Are true. It means. He will always be. A shield. To his people. When we come under. Spiritual attack.

He will never. Not be there. For his people. He will never not. Protect his people. He will always. Be there. For us. As the enemy. Attacks.

Quite simply. He overshadows us. The opinions. Surround us. And quite beautifully. He's a shield. In front of us. Defensively.

- [20 : 32] He defends his people. But. Note. There's also. The other. Implement. Being used here. It's not just defensive. The Lord. Is not just defensive. He is offensive.
- He. Attacks. Back. Against the enemy. We read in Colossians. That reminder. That. Our saviour.
- In all that he has. All that he is. And all that he has done. He shows himself. To be the one. Who is in full control. Of all things. And we read there.
- As to the power. That he has. He is the one. Verse 16. Read it for us again. Colossians 1. Verse 16. For by him. For by Jesus. For by him.
- All things were created. In heaven and earth. Visible and invisible. Whether thrones. Or dominions. Or rulers. Or authorities. All things were created.
- [21 : 27] Through him. And for him. Thrones. And dominions. And rulers. And authorities. That is not speaking of earthly things. We said it before. That is speaking of spiritual matters.
- And that context. It is speaking of rebellious. Spiritual reality. The fallen. Spiritual reality. The evil. Spiritual reality. He is in full control.
- We see that. Just glimpsed at here. As the psalm carries on. He is our buckler. Now. I don't know about yourselves. Perhaps. I've never heard of sermons before.
- Perhaps I just don't understand it. My medieval. My fighting history. Isn't what it should be perhaps. But I had to look up. What a buckler was. And I had to look at images. What a buckler was. So shield we know.
- We know our shield. Big shield covers us. That we understand. A buckler is what you wear. It looks like a shield. To be honest with you. Historically it's what you see.
- [22 : 26] The Celtic people having against the Romans. At least in depictions. It's a small shield. About size. With a bit of metal. Or pieces of metal. Whatever you had.
- Nails. Jammed into it. And it wasn't for protection. It was used as a club. Shield in one hand. Buckler in the other. Shield yourself here.
- And then you'd club the enemy. With this lump of wood and metal. In your other hand. The Lord is a shield to us. But not for a second do we think. He is just protecting us.
- No. He also is a buckler. For us. His faithfulness is. His loving kindness. His covenant keeping reality. In fact our Lord.
- Promises there to leave us. Nor forsake us. He promises that he is the one. Who has kept us. And known us forever. He promises he is the one. Who has stamped. On the very head.
- [23 : 20] Of the serpent. Who has won the victory. Because of that is true. He shields us. But also because of that is true. He attacks. He is the one.
- Who has dealt. The deadly blow. To the enemy. Shield and buckler. He is. On the offensive.
- He defends us. Yes. At the same time. He is on the offensive. Against the enemy. We have a God. Who is. Always with us. One we see.
- Who always cares for us. But not one. Who is just. Passively there. Looking after us. No. He is actively looking after us. And whilst he actively looks after us.
- He is also actively engaging. With the enemy. With the evil one. If nothing else this evening.
- [24 : 16] We have to be reminded. That the enemy has a. A variety of attacks. A variety of snares. And for all the snares. We talked about. And the many hundreds of snares. We didn't mention this evening.

We look down. To the. Reminder. Of the glory. Of verses three and four. He delivers us. And he covers us. And his faithfulness towards us.

Does not end. Does not. Cease. Just to. Look ahead. Verses five.

And verse six. We're saying here. But. Here's the psalm. Perhaps. We have to just. Dig down. A lot more.

What we'll see. Next. Few weeks. Isn't perhaps. Obvious on the surface. But the second we dig down. It becomes. Frighteningly. Clear. To us. I know that you do.

[25 : 13] I know we have a praying congregation. And. I am. Very thankful to the Lord. For that. More. More than I. I've ever said. I really am. Please do.

I hope you do. Please do be in prayer. For the services. Not just the midweeks. But for the. Sunday services too. Please keep me in prayer. All week. I hope. I need them. I really need these prayers.

We all do. But. In the preaching. Of a word. It is power. And Satan. Hates the preaching. Of a word. And I'm mindful. In the series. We are digging into.

Some of the reality. Of who he is. And how he operates. And he doesn't like that. So please do. Keep these sermons. In prayer. The preparation. Preaching. And that. We be safe.

From spiritual attack. Even whilst we engage. In learning. From the Lord's word. Together. I'll say my amen to that. Just now. I don't want to jump into. Next week's. Section.

[26 : 08] It's very tempting. To turn the page. And go on to next week's. But we'll leave that. For next week. I should say it to start. Forgive me. But I'll say it just now. If I have to remember. I'll be missing. Next week. The elders. Are in charge.

I don't want to go away. I have to go away. It's a. Journalism. I believe. Business. So I'm obliged. If I can. To go. So I'll be in Inverness.

I can't share too much. But please do pray. For a business too. We can. Bring our time. To a. Conclusion. Just now. We can pray. First. And we can.

Praise the Lord. In song. Let's pray together first. As we come Lord. To a. A point. In the psalm. Where we're reminded. As to the. Beauty. And the power.

And the glory. That you have. As we look forward. To the coming weeks. And we see. Sadness. And destruction. We see the enemy. In his evilness.

[27 : 03] We see the enemy. In his full. Unmasked horror. Lord give us strength. Going forward. To remind ourselves. Of these past few weeks. That we have. A Lord.

Who is with us. As we delve into. The darkness. Of who. The enemy is. And what he looks like. And what he does. We're reminded. That we do so. From the safety.

Of your wings. From the place. Of refuge. We find in you. Covered. Covered forever. With the eternal power.

Of our risen. And ruling. And reigning. Savior. Who stamped. And destroyed. The very head. The very head. Of the enemy. Who has dealt.

That death blow. To him. And as he. Wriggles. And writhes. And. Curses. Against you. Your glory. And your power. We feel him.

[27 : 59] And we see it. But. We know. That he has no victory. The victory is. Fully. And eternally. In our saviour's hands. Help us Lord.

Then to remember that. Give us. Strength this week. We pray Lord. For our wider congregation. Keep us spiritually. We ask. Keep us relying on our saviour. And his power. Help us to do all that we have.

And all that we seek to do this week. Support us Lord. We need you. Help us do nothing. In our own strength. Help us be mindful. Of one another. And of the gospel work. And prayer. This coming week.

Thank you once more. For this gathering. We have the sure and certain. Truth. That you are present with us. This evening. That you are present with us. Just now. Because your people are here.

And where your people are gathered. Together. There. You have made your home. In us. And through us. And with us. Because we are here. We know for certain. You are with us. Just now. Help us be understanding.

[28 : 53] Of that. That we worship a God. Who is present. And who hears. And who sees. And who receives. Our worship. And sees it in the finished.

Final work of our saviour. In his name. And it's for his sake. We ask for his many things. Amen. Let's come to conclusion.

Singing Psalm 85. Scottish Psalter. Scottish Psalter. Psalm 85. We can sing. Verses 6. To the end.

6th end of verse 13. Psalm 85. Verses 6. Down to verse 13. Psalm 85.

Verse 6. That envy. May thy people joy. What thou not us revive. Show us thy mercy. Lord. To us do thy salvation give. I'll hear. What God the Lord will speak.

[29 : 49] To his folk. He'll speak peace. And to his saints. But let them not. Return. To foolishness. Psalm 85. Verses 6 to 13. To girls.

To girls please. Let's do this.

Let's do this.

Let's do this.

Let's do this.

[31 : 59] Let's do this.

Let's do this.

Let's do this. Let's do this. Let's do this. Let's do this. Let's do this.

Let's do this.