

#3 Strong In The Storm

8-19-26

Psalms 91- The Shelter Who Covers

I. Announce:

A. Welcome to those watching online.

B. Slide 1-4 see notes

C. Slide 5 Prayer:

II. Intro:

A. Series: Strong in the Storm [Finding Confidence in God *through* the Psalms]

1. Series Theme: **Storms** are inevitable, **Fear** is understandable, **but God's presence** is greater than our *circumstances*.

2. These 4 psalms reveal that our confidence is not found in escaping life's storms, **but** in *walking through them* with **the God** who is our **Shepherd**, **Refuge**, **Shelter**, and next week our **Keeper** (AL wrap up w/The Keeper who doesn't Sleep).

B. Slide 6 Tonight we tackle Psalm 91 - God being, *The Shelter Who Covers*.

1. Theme: Rest is found **under** God's care.

2. Big Idea: God's presence is our **safest** dwelling place.

C. Psalm 91 is one of the most loved chapters in the Bible. **Soldiers** have carried it into battle. **Missionaries** have memorized it before entering dangerous places. **Parents** have prayed it over their children. **Hospital patients** have clung to its promises. It's a Psalm that has given **courage** to countless believers throughout history.

1. Yet Ps.91 is also one of the most *misunderstood* passages in Scripture. Some have read it as though God promises that faithful believers will **never** experience sickness, tragedy, persecution, or death. **But that cannot be what the Psalm means.** The very people who treasured Ps.91 most deeply (the apostles, the early church, missionaries throughout history) often suffered greatly. **The Bible never promises a *storm-free* life.** In fact, Jesus told us, *In the world you will have tribulation.* Jn.16:33

- D. So what is Psalm 91 promising? - It is promising something **even greater** than physical safety. It promises that *no matter what happens to us, we are never outside the care, presence, and sovereign love of God*. His **protection** is ultimately eternal, *not merely temporary*. The **safest place** on earth is **not** the place with the fewest dangers. *It is the place where God is present.*
- E. This Psalm moves smoothly like a conversation. The **1st voice** *declares confidence in God*. A **2nd voice** encourages the believer by *describing God's faithful care*. Finally, God Himself speaks in the closing verses, *affirming His promises to those who love Him*.
1. The entire Psalm centers on one great truth: those who make **God** their **dwelling place** discover **a security** *the world can never offer*.
- F. **Slide7** Read Psalm 91.

III. **Slide8a 1. ABIDING (1-2)** [Trusting. Belonging. Misunderstanding]

- A. 1 He who **dwells** in the shelter of the Most High will **abide** in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."
- B. The Psalm opens with one of the richest invitations in all of Scripture.
1. Notice the emphasis is **not on occasionally visiting** God **but on dwelling** with Him. *A dwelling is where you live. It is where you return day after day.* The Psalm is inviting us into **a continual relationship** with God, **not merely an emergency relationship when life falls apart**.
- C. The word **shelter** speaks of **protection**, while **shadow** communicates closeness.
1. *You only stand in someone's shadow if you are near them.* God's protection is **inseparable** from God's presence. **We are not** invited simply to seek His gifts; **we are** invited to **seek Him**.
- D. **Vs.2** becomes a personal confession: *I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.* Faith always becomes personal. Notice the repeated word **my**. *He is not merely a refuge in theory. He becomes my refuge.*

E. The strongest faith is *not simply knowing facts about God* but confidently placing ourselves into His care.

1. Slide8b So this opening reminds us that Christianity is **not** primarily about **avoiding danger**. It is about learning to live near God.

The **safest life** is the life that **continually dwells** in His presence.

IV. Slide9a 2. TRUSTING (3-13)

A. We read it already.

B. The Psalm now describes the many dangers from which God delivers His people.

1. There are traps set by the fowler. **Deadly pestilence**. Terror by night. Arrows by day. **Disease in darkness**. Destruction at noon.
2. The language intentionally covers every imaginable danger (known and unknown, visible and invisible, day and night).
 - a) The point is **not** to create a checklist of every disaster God will prevent. The point is to remind us that **Nothing** ever catches God by surprise.

C. Slide9b (4) contains one of the most beautiful pictures in Scripture: *He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge*. The image changes from **fortress** to **mother bird**. *God is both mighty enough to defend us and tender enough to shelter us*. (His strength never diminishes His compassion)

D. (an Important Misunderstanding). Some teach that verses like these guarantee that faithful believers will never experience physical harm. But **Paul** was beaten, imprisoned, shipwrecked, and eventually martyred. **Stephen** was stoned. **James** was executed. **Countless faithful believers** have suffered throughout history. *Their suffering did not mean God had abandoned them*.

E. Psalm 91 is poetry. Poetry uses vivid imagery to proclaim profound truth. The ultimate promise is not that believers **will never suffer**. The promise is that **nothing** can separate God's people from His care. Even death itself cannot rob us of His **protection** because our lives are **hidden in Him forever** ... like this ...

1. Slide9c 3D Optical Illusion Art - picture hidden in a pattern/dragonfly.

2. To sum this up, God's greatest **protection** is not always **keeping us from suffering**. Sometimes it is **faithfully carrying us through** suffering until He safely brings us home.

V. Slide10a 3. **BELONGING** (14-16)

- A. The most remarkable part of the Psalm begins in v.14 because now **God Himself** speaks
- B. *14 Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. 15 When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.*
- C. Notice that God's promises are rooted in **relationship**. *The believer loves God. The believer knows God's name. The believer calls upon Him.*
1. Slide10b This is not describing **perfection**. It is describing **belonging**.
- D. God promises, *I will be with him in trouble*. Notice He does not promise that trouble will never come. He promises **His presence** in the middle of it.
1. Slide10c Throughout this series we've noticed, **God rarely removes every storm immediately, but He never abandons His people within the storm**.
- E. The Psalm concludes with words that point **beyond this life**: *With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation*. Throughout the OT, long life was often viewed as a sign of God's blessing. But from the perspective of the whole Bible, we understand that God's greatest salvation is **eternal life through Christ**.
1. Every believer will ultimately experience the complete fulfillment of these promises when we stand safely in God's presence forever.
- F. Psalm 91 *begins with dwelling in God's shelter and ends with dwelling in God's salvation*. From beginning to end, **God Himself** is our home.

VI. Slide11a 4. **MISUNDERSTANDING**

- A. Timothy/Kathy Keller great YouTube on this. *Stealing their points*.

B. So the promise of this psalm is that God will keep you safe. He's a refuge. He will keep you safe. **But** how do we understand that promise? *What does it mean?*

1. I can tell you how Satan wants you to read it. Shakespeare said, in *The Merchant of Venice*, "*The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.*" (which is exactly what the devil does in Luke 4).

C. Jesus was in the wilderness, being tempted by the devil. **And** he tempts Jesus by citing Psalm 91:11,12. Basically saying, "*Don't go to the cross and don't suffer. If God really loved you, He wouldn't let you suffer, because that's what Psalm 91 says.*"

1. **Look at the devil's strategy.** If the devil can get a **Christian** to believe that *Now that I'm a Christian, God will not let any really, really bad things happen to me.* (maybe a couple of *kinda bad* things). **Because** if you believe that, **and** really bad things **do** happen to you, **then** you're going to *pull back from God*. You're going to say, "*That promise didn't work.*" To which Satan says, **checkmate!**

D. Now, we know the best way to understand any part of the Bible is **to compare it with the rest of the Bible**. A well-known theological safeguard in Christian interpretation is *that Scripture must be read as a unified whole, and no passage should be used to contradict another*. **We need to look at them together.**

E. Here are **3 passages** on what it means that God keeps you safe:

1. **Slide 11b (1) Gen. 50:20 Joseph**, at the end of a long life in which he was *abused, falsely accused, enslaved, convicted*. **But** at the very end of his life looks at his brothers, who had done all this to him, and said, "*You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.*"
 - a) **If I had not** been sent to Egypt, **if I hadn't** become a slave, **if I hadn't** become a convict, **if I hadn't** been brought down here - I would not have been able to rise up, become prime minister, **and** save not only many people from famine, **but** even save my own family from their sin and show them how to repent. "*You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.*"

b) Which means: **God was keeping me safe** when He sold me into slavery. **God was keeping me safe** when I was put into that dungeon. **In hindsight, God was keeping me safe, but in the moment it didn't look like it!**

2. **Slide11c (2) Another verse would be Rom.8:28, *All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.***

a) Now look at that word “**together.**” **It doesn't say all things are good. It doesn't say, “Oh, even the bad things, if you just look at them, every cloud has a silver lining.”** (that's so shallow and unfeeling). **No, many, many bad things that happen are bad. They're just bad.**

b) **But** what this is saying is that ***together God works things together.*** **He brings His power to bear on things so that, in the long run** (and we will only see this from the standpoint at the end of history) ***all things will have moved in the direction,*** just like Joseph saw, **of God's glory and our good.**

3. **Slide11d (3) This is Lk. 21:16-18 (most helpful).** This is where Jesus is telling His disciples that they're going to be **persecuted and bad things** are going to happen to them, **and yet He's going to stand by them and He's going to keep them safe.**

a) This is what it says, ***You will be delivered up... some put to death, and yet not a hair of your head will perish. In patience you will possess your souls.*** *nkjv*

b) Here's what it means, ***In patience you'll possess your souls.***

c) **If you live for anything more than God, if there's anything in your life that's more important to you than God** (whether it's your career, whether it's a child, anything more important than God) **you are not safe! Not at all! Because circumstances can come and threaten that thing or take that thing away, and then you don't have a **life** left. You don't have a **self** left. You don't have a **meaning in life** left.**

d) **Not** to love our career less, **not** to love our child less, **but to love God more in relationship to them**, then & only then do we **possess our own souls**, *as it were.*

- F. Therefore, what God is saying in Psalm 91 is **not**, *I will protect you **from** all trouble, but - I will protect you not only **in** all trouble, but even **through** it. I will make you **safer through** the trouble.*
- G. **And the only way we are absolutely sure that God is really doing that** (that He's not just punishing us for our sins) **is to remember when He says, *He will **cover** you with his feathers, and **under** his wings you will find refuge.***
1. The image of a mother bird covering her chicks, is an image that not only Psalm 91 uses of God, **but even Jesus** uses it. **When He comes into Jerusalem, He says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if only you knew the things that pertain to your peace. I would have **covered** you over like a mother hen **covers** over her chicks."**
- H. **Slide 11e Christ Connection:** You know what that means? **The mother is being a Substitute.** If there's burning sun rays coming down on the chicks, the mother takes the heat. If there's horrible rain and wind, the mother takes the rain and wind. If there's a predator coming to eat, the mother gets eaten.
1. **And Jesus Christ on the cross took what you and I deserve for our sin **so that** you can know that, **no, you're not being punished for sin. We're being kept safe. We're being kept safe** (eternally) **no matter what happens.****
 - a) You can trust Him. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge.
- I. **Ultimate Proof:** Ps.34:20 says, *He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. In the Gospels that's applied to who? Jesus on the cross* (that not one of His bones was broken). But you want to say, *Well ... you protected all of His bones, but crucifixion? - He got crucified.*
1. **Slide 12** Kathy Keller said, *A lot of God's promises, are met on the far side of resurrection, **not the near side of resurrection.** And we tend to think, *Well, if it's not going to happen **here and now**, then what good is it?*
WELL, IT IS!!!*

VII. CONCLUSION

A. Psalm 91 asks the question: *Where do you dwell?* The safest **address** in the universe is **not a country, a neighborhood, or a house**. It is the **presence of God**.

1. **Storms** will come. **Disease** may come. **Sorrow** will come. One day **death** itself will come. **But none of those things have the final word** :)

a) Our lives are **hidden** with Christ. We dwell **beneath** the shadow of the **Almighty**. **And** because we **belong** to Him, **we are safe forever**.

B. **Prayer**: Father, TY for inviting us to **dwell** in **Your presence**. Forgive us for making *fear, worry, or control* our dwelling place **instead of You**.

C. Keywords: Shelter, Dwelling, Abiding, Belonging.