

Reflections for North Bridge Baptist Church

April 26, 2020

This week we will look at Psalm 91 together. This is a Psalm of immense trust in God. We know who wrote many of the Psalms, but the scholars are not certain about this one. But, the writer had a close and very secure relationship with God. With every word, one can tell that the writer endured many ups and downs in life and in the midst of all of this came to understand the security that he had with his heavenly father.

Please read the Psalm. If you are with family you will want to take turns reading the verses. The Psalms were meant for public worship and they are best understood when they are read out loud. The last three verses are from the perspective of God speaking directly to us. Use a different voice for these verses.

Psalm 91 “Under His Wings”

Part I verses 1-2 “He is my refuge”

These initial verses begin from a first person perspective. The writer has firsthand knowledge of what it means to dwell with God. He knows of the security that it means for him personally. He declares that “He is my refuge and fortress”. This gives the sense of rest (refuge) and security (fortress) that only his personal Father can provide. This is a place that God has made available to all of us. It is an ongoing and personal place that we experience daily as we walk with Him. The world will not understand this. But, the committed Christian learns to relax within this relationship.

These beginning verses also give us four of the most common terms for God used in the Old Testament. Each one describes God in a unique way. The first term is ‘Most High’ (El Elyon). This term emphasizes God’s strength and sovereignty. The next term used is ‘Almighty’ (Shaddai). This gives the sense that there is no one or no power that is greater than our God. The third term is ‘Lord’ (Yahweh). This is the very personal term used for God that was given to Moses before the time of the exodus. It literally means “I Am.” Everything exists within his power and control. The final term ‘God’ (Elohim) is a general term, but it is made personal within the text by referring my God. This is the one in who the writer puts his trust.

Part II verses 3-8 “The care of God”

In this section the writer shifts from a first person perspective to the third person, addressing the reader. The writer is saying directly to us all of the ways that God provides his protection for us. In verse 10 he gives the example of birds caring for their young. They do this in two ways. The first is to hide them from those that would come to prey on the helpless. The second is to provide protection from both the elements and predators. Now, I am not an expert when it comes to the behavior of birds. But, I had a similar lesson when I was young. During my early years of grade school my family had a dog named Sandy. She was a wonderful cocker spaniel. She was loved by everyone in the family. She would

go with me on walks into the woods which were directly behind our house. The time came for her to have babies. This dog that was friendly to everyone changed in her demeanor. She became quite protective. My mom warned us to stay away from her babies. It is true. She made certain that her babies were protected from everyone, including our family. These verses talk about God doing this for his children in much the same way.

When the writer provides this example, he goes on to exclaim that we will not fear. 'Fear not' is the most common command found in scripture. It is found 366 times. The writer gives several examples of the things that those who dwell with God will not fear. We will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, and lastly, the plague that destroys at midday. Some of these examples are things that can be seen and some are of the unseen nature. Yes, even now, we are faced with an unseen enemy. But, even in the midst of this, we still have a God that is providing his care and shelter.

Part III verses 9-13 "Blessings of His protection"

One of the blessings that God provides that is mentioned in this Psalm is angels. I cannot ever recall seeing an angel personally, but that does not mean that they do not exist. They are mentioned in numerous places in scripture and are mentioned more commonly in the New Testament. There are several examples in the New Testament of the work of angels around the birth and life of Christ. An angel came and ministered to both Mary and Joseph concerning the birth of Jesus. They warned the wise men of the threat of King Herod. They appeared to the shepherds who were watching their flocks. This was a large example as Luke mentions that it was a great company of heavenly beings. (Luke 2:13) Angels appeared to the women who came to the tomb after the resurrection of Jesus. This is just a few of the examples. It is interesting the mention of angels in the book of Hebrews. The first chapter of the book talks of Christ and his relationship with the angels. That chapter ends with a comforting statement about the angles. Hebrews 1:14 "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation."

The Psalm gives this great statement in verse 12, "then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent." The writer makes this statement because of the protection that God will provide from these heavenly beings. He declares that they will lift us up in their hands. This is often unseen by us, but still certain. The writer talks about protection from the great lion and the cobra. These are two of the more deadly animals on this earth. We will not only survive against them but because of these angels we will in the words of the Psalmist 'trample them'.

Part IV verses 14-16 "God's pledge of love"

The perspective of the Psalm changes in this section. The words are as if God is speaking directly to us. The pronoun 'I' refers to what God will do and his promises to us. These words provide a great reassurance for every believer. In these verses there are six ways that God provides His refuge. First, because of his loving kindness He promises to rescue us. We may not even know that we need to be rescued. Second, it says that he will protect us. This applies to both things seen and unseen. Third, he promises to answer us. What a great power we have in prayer. Fourth, he promises to be with us in

trouble. There are times when things might get us down, but in the midst of all of this His Spirit is there. Fifth, He promises to deliver us and honor us. God has provided salvation and the book of Hebrews even talks about this in such a good way that Jesus calls us brothers. (Hebrews 2:10-11) And lastly, He promises to satisfy us and to show us His salvation. This is an unbelievable list!!

So, we begin this Psalm with the writer's personal affirmation of what God has done and what God continues to do. This Psalm ends with the words being spoken directly to us of the ways that he is our refuge. There is only one response that is fitting for us. We must live each day realizing all of this that God has provided. We can be cautious in the midst of this health crisis, but we still live with a confidence that God is on our side so that we may say "He is my refuge and my fortress."

Continue to pray for each other. It looks like it will be at least another month before we may be able to meet in person. I look forward to that time. I continue to lift each of you up in prayer. We will have a good celebration when we get together.

Barry and I talked briefly last week about the possibility of doing something on either Facebook or through a Zoom meeting. It would be helpful to know if that is a possibility. Please, let me or Barry know if that would be helpful, and if you have the computer/phone capabilities.