

# The Shadow of the Almighty

## Psalm 91

### Introduction

Psalm 91 had a special place in the heart of Corrie Ten Boom

After the War – Corrie had gone around and shared her experiences of faith and survival in the concentration camp at Ravensbruck - - - after about 10 years - - she returned home to Haarlem – in the Netherlands

While there – she slipped and fell - - and a policeman came over to assist her

When he found out that she was Corrie Ten Boom – he asked her, ‘Are you a member of the family of that name whom we arrested about ten years ago?’ - - - ‘that is right’ – she replied

She says that during the occupation some of the good Dutch policemen stayed on the police department working for the Gestapo - - - with the purpose of trying to help political prisoners. This man had been on duty the day her family was arrested

He recalled the events of that day

“I am so sorry for your accident,” he said sympathetically, “but I am glad to see you again. I will never forget that night in the police station. You were all sitting or lying on the floor of the station. Your old father was there with all his children and many of your friends. I have often told my colleagues that there was an atmosphere of peace and joy in our station that night, as if you were going to a feast instead of prison and death.”

Corrie Ten Boom: 'He paused and looked at me kindly as if trying to remember my face. "Your Father said before he tried to sleep, 'Let us pray together.' And then he read Psalm 91."

Corrie Ten Boom: "You remember!" . . . 'after ten years that policeman had remembered which Psalm my father had read.'

Psalm 91 would hold a beloved place in her heart

A few years ago - - our son Josh was needing a book to read for AR reading at school - - - I gave him a copy of 'The Hiding Place'

He started reading it - - he asked me - - 'Did she sign this book?'

I don't know – did she?

Well – her name is signed in the front – with Psalm 91:1 underneath

So we googled her signature online - - - and sure enough – it looked like a match

**Psalm 91:1 - 'He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.'**

This Psalm has held a treasured position in the hearts of many Christians down thru the centuries

E. Elliot – was asked to write a biography of her husband Jim Elliot - - - the missionary martyred by the Auca Indians in Ecuador - - - she titled it: 'In the Shadow of the Almighty'

Verse One sets the tone and theme for the rest of the psalm

**Luther: 'This is the most distinguished jewel among all the Psalms of consolation.'**

In this Psalm we read about terrors and pestilences / plagues / arrows - - - all kinds of dangers to the people of God

But we also read about shelter / the shadow of the Almighty / angels watching over us

The Psalm reminds us - - - God intends for His people to live out their faith in the midst of a dangerous world – a world in rebellion against God / w/ an enemy who seeks to ensnare us

The key to our ultimate survival and blessedness is to dwell in the shelter of the Most High!

### **I. In God's Shelter - vv. 1-4**

\*\*\* Where is the safest geographical spot in the world?

Is it in a safe house? [with Secret service Protection]

An underground bunker / bomb shelter?

In a big city / in a small town?

On a U.S. military base

Is it on a remote island not even located on maps?

The Psalmist tells us the safest place in the universe: in the shadow of the Almighty

The Psalmist refers to a place of divine protection – the shelter of the Most High

**Calvin: 'In this Psalm we are taught that God watches over the safety of His people, and never fails them in the hour of danger. They are exhorted to advance through all perils, secure in the confidence of His protection.'**

You and I live in a world with many dangers, toils, and snares

God is pictured metaphorically like a mother bird protecting her young – v. 4

A missionary in the country of Angola / Africa - - - had witnessed a wild fire that had burned acres and acres of bush land / caused much death and devastation - - - after the fire was spent - - - he noticed an interesting sight - - -. He walked over some of the burned out area and saw the carcass of a mother hen sitting in a nest – blackened and charred by the raging fire. He kicked over the heap with his boot - - - and was surprised to see several baby chicks run out - - - alive and well. They had found a refuge under the mother’s wings

**Spurgeon: 'Even as a hen covereth her chickens so doth the Lord protect the souls which dwell in Him.'**

There is divine protection and security for God’s people – no matter what happens

We see this kind of security in Paul’s life - - - He faced many threats and dangers

In acts 23 – a plot was formed against Paul – to put him to death – some 40 Jewish men had taken a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul

### **Acts 23:12-15**

Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem - - - but they have been unable to secure a conviction of any crime committed by him

So a plot is formed against him

Over 40 zealous Jews have taken a vow – to neither eat nor drink until they have killed Paul

Every growling of the stomach reminded them - - - let’s go kill Paul so I can eat!

### **Acts 23:16-23**

Just one of the many threats against Paul’s life – but it wasn’t his time

Paul was moved to a new prison - - - with a guard of 200 soldiers / 200 spearman / 70 horsemen!

How did that take place?

He was in the shelter of the Most High / under His wings

Just prior to this event - - Paul was given a word of assurance

**Acts 23:11 - 'But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.'**

He was in the shelter – or the secret place [kjv]

Suppose someone says – well – wait a minute - - - Corrie Ten Boom's father died in jail after a few days - - - her sister Betsie died in the concentration camp - - - weren't they under the Father's wings?

Spurgeon: 'It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord; the most crushing calamities can only shorten his journey and hasten him to his reward. Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach is his honor, death is his gain. No evil in the strict sense of the word can happen to him, everything is overruled for good. Happy is he who is in such a case.'

If you dwell in the shadow of the Almighty - - - God rules and overrules for your good and His glory – it is a place of blessedness

v. 3 – He delivers you from the snare of the trapper

Satan – like a bird trapper – lays snares for the souls of men

He wants to trip us up – ensnare us in some sin

Prov. 7 – warns of the snare of the adulteress [sexual sin] – and the man caught by her

Prov. 7:23 - 'As a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life.'

The snare of the trapper – something that pulls us off the path of obedience

Satan ensnares some with pleasure / some with treasure / / some with power / some with vain glory / etc.

Is there something in your life - - - that you know is not good for your spiritual life - - - yet you keep returning to it - - - it draws you in

John Piper shares a letter from a young lady - - - who wrote to him - - - she had been involved in a church - - - was experiencing joy in her walk - - - but was eventually led astray by an unbelieving boyfriend. They had a sexual relationship for a while - - then the boyfriend was gone. She now felt broken and wounded - - - her life seems dark - - - and she's not sure where she stands with God

Piper's response: Whatever your relationship with God was before - - - it was not a close relationship - - - and God wrecked it - - - and He is now inviting you - - - not back to the faith you think you had before but to a deeper and more abiding faith

No return to the old religious you - - but forward to a new Bible-saturated / cherishing of Jesus / taking refuge in the shelter of the Most High kind of faith

She's been set free from the trap of the fowler - - sometimes that freedom can be painful –

That is God's way of saying – 'Don't do that' – stay near Me – it's too dangerous out there

When we seek shelter under His wings - - we forsake sins we once cherished  
We put on the armor of God – shield of faith / breastplate of righteousness / etc.

**Spurgeon: 'We are foolish and weak as poor little birds, and are very apt to be lured to our destruction by cunning foes, but if we dwell near to God, He will see to it that the most skillful deceiver shall not entrap us.'**

In close fellowship with God - - we are safe from the snare of the trapper

## **II. Uber Protection - vv. 5-10**

The Psalmist expands upon the degree of safety one occupies under the shelter of His wings

Uber = denotes outstanding or supreme example of a thing

You will never find a better place of refuge than under His wings – it does not exist

This is our Father's world

The Psalmist refers to various dangers – arrows that fly by day / pestilences [diseases] / no plague will come near your tent

v. 10 – no evil will befall you

v. 8 – you will only look on with your eyes

This section has a striking example with the ten plagues that fell upon Egypt - - - in the days of Moses

v. 8 – The Israelites were observers of the plagues - - - but they were not harmed by them

God told Moses to tell Pharaoh to let Israel go - - - if not – things would get ugly

**Exodus 9:3 - 'Behold, the hand of the Lord will come with a very severe pestilence on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks.'**

Exodus 9:4 - 'But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel.'

The Egyptian donkeys and camels / horses died- - but not Israel's

Later – plague of hail – destroyed the crops of the Egyptians - - - but not in the land of Goshen

The final plague – was the death of the firstborn

Exodus 11:5 - 'And all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of the pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the first-born of the slave girl . . .'

Exodus 11:6, 7 - 'Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again. But against any of the sons of Israel a dog shall not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.'

On the night of the Passover – there was death in every home of the Egyptians – and they cried out - - - but not one Israelite died that evening - - - because they covered their door posts with the blood

They would not even feel the threat of a dog barking

Israel was under the shadow of His wings - - - under the blood of the Lamb – they were untouchable!

Ray Brown: 'In my early twenties I used to be a postman. One day I had to deliver a letter to a house I had never visited before. I opened the garden gate only to find myself confronted by the largest and most vicious dog I had ever seen! It barked furiously and then lunged towards me. I stood there helpless and terrified until, to my immense relief, I saw that this massive, angry dog was chained to a huge stake set in concrete.

The chain was a long one and the dog had considerable freedom, but not enough to reach me. I saw I could easily deliver the letter and did so. The incident became like a parable to me. As a matter of fact, whenever I had to visit that house in the course of my work, I took little notice of the aggressive dog. I always kept my eye on the strong stake!

Ray Brown: 'At the cross the enemy of souls, the devil was made impotent, limited and chained down. When he has bitten us it is usually because we have been far too near.'

Our job is to stay near unto God

I John 4:4 - 'Greater is He who is you than he who is in the world.'

We are safe under the shadow of His wings

Charles Spurgeon: 'Those who are the Lord's constant guests shall find that He will never suffer any to be injured within His gates.'

\*\*\* This Psalm reminds us that God is the One who rules over all  
What God does cannot be overturned by mere creatures

Job 42:1 - 'I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted.'

Jesus once asked the disciples – 'Who do people say that I am / Who do you say that I am?' -  
- - the question elicited one of the great declarations of faith in the gospels by Peter

Matthew 16:16-18 - 'And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.'

We say, 'Jesus – how can you say the gates of Hades will not overpower the church?'

You have this small little band of disciples - - - and Jesus says this gospel will be proclaimed throughout the world – and the gates of Hades will not overpower the church

Here we are – 2000 years later - - - testifying to the gospel of the grace of God thru the shed blood of Christ

It is no accident that we are here today - - - it is the power of God

Christians came here from Europe - - some fleeing persecution / seeking religious liberty

They founded a great nation

What happens if America becomes totally corrupt and taken over by the wicked? / begins persecuting Christians?

That would be nothing new

The church has been persecuted / Roman emperors – such as Nero fought against Christianity - - - some sought to destroy the Bible – Diocletian in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century was particularly fierce

But – he did not succeed

Constantine came along and converted to Christianity [312 AD] - - put an end to the Roman persecutions literally overnight - - one of his first acts was to have 50 copies of the Scriptures transcribed

Roman Catholicism buried the gospel under so many layers of traditions and idolatries / worship of Mary / etc.

But – God raised up Martin Luther / John Calvin - - all the Reformers - - - and the true church burst forth in power once again

Jesus told us the gates of hell would not prevail against the church

### III. Divine Bodyguards - vv. 11-13

We are reminded here - angels do play a role in our lives – although we may not always be aware of their activity

In Scripture:

- Angels deliver messages – such as to Mary / Zacharias
- Angels – carry out judgments – Revelation / Herod was struck by an angel – Acts 12
- Angels worship God
- Angels deliver God's people from peril

Daniel 6 – Daniel survived the lion's den

Daniel 6:21-22 - 'Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O King, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lion's mouths, and they have not harmed me . . . !'

Corrie Ten Boom believed that an angel hid her from view of the guards who were searching newcomers thoroughly / patting them down - - - yet she was able to walk thru the line untouched - - - smuggling a bible into the concentration camp at Ravensbruck - - and held bible studies with the other women there

Why didn't the guards stop her / take her Bible?

She prayed for God's angels to hide her - - and she believes they did!



One curious element about v. 11

v. 11 – the only verse ever quoted by Satan in Scripture - - - he left out – ‘in all your ways’

He quoted it in one of the temptations to Jesus

**Matthew 4:5-7** - 'Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning you; and 'on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"'

One thing we know – if Satan quotes the Bible - - - we can expect him to twist its meaning!

He does that here - - He turns a beautiful promise into arrogant presumption

Do something foolish and - - - see God's angels spring into action! / everyone will believe in you then!

That wasn't the Father's way or will

The devil's theology: 'just do what you want - - - sin away - - - and expect God to bless and protect you!'

That's not what this verse means – and Jesus responded with another Scripture – ‘Don't put God to the test!'

#### **IV. He who Loveth - vv. 14-16**

These blessings are promised to those who love and trust God

v. 15 – there will be days of trouble!

But – we can call upon God – and He will answer according to His will – and save us

We can dwell in the shelter of the Most High – and abide in the shadow of the Almighty

#### **Conclusion**

Jesus once used an image with Israel – shortly before going to the cross

**Matt. 23:37-39** - 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you,

from now on you shall not see Me until you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord."

Israel turned away from the Messiah - - - and yet today - - - awaits the day when they embrace Christ as Messiah

Their house will be left desolate for a time – until the fulness of Gentiles is come in

Gentiles will gather under the wings / take refuge in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – that is the church age!

You and I have opportunity to gather under the wings of Jesus yet today

If you don't know the Savior - - you know nothing of the shelter of the Most High - - - but you can enter in to this blessed position

Turn from your sin / embrace Jesus as Savior - - - begin dwelling in the shadow of the Almighty!