

*Introduction:*

- A. *Illus.*: Early this week we sent out an urgent prayer request from one of our missionaries. A Christian man had converted to Christ from Islam. His mother and uncle have also become Christians. He had gone to tell his father, a powerful former general, of his faith in Christ. The meeting became chaotic and threatening. The man’s father asked to see him again a couple of days later but this time he had his henchmen take his son in a military vehicle to an unknown place and chained his feet, watched by three armed guards. This brother had been able to hide his phone and texted a missionary what had happened. The man was tortured and was exhausted from lack of food and water. His father intended to kill him and throw his body in the river. The word went out to pray for him. Somehow he escaped.
- B. Danger is a way of life for Christians; far more than we realize. We don’t have to face the prospect of persecution to be in danger. The real dangers we face are not the troubles we most fear—a bad medical diagnosis, a lost job, family turmoil, depression, an accident or attack. **The real danger is harm to our hearts—our souls. That is where people’s lives are won and lost.**
- C. This morning I come to you with a friend. I don’t actually know his name but he is a writer and a man of God. He wrote Psalm 91 and, with him, I want to urge you today to make the LORD your refuge for your soul. **Turn to Ps. 91.**  
*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.  
I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust.”*  
My friend here and I agree:

## I. WE TRUST THE LORD ALONE TO KEEP US SAFE (vv.1-2)

- A. Do you realize who we're dealing with here! Look at the divine names. *The Most High* – there's “a title that cuts every other threat down to size!” [Kidner] *The Almighty*, *Shaddai*, the name of God called upon by our spiritual forefathers like Abraham in his wandering. *The LORD*, *Yahweh*, *I AM*, who has bound himself to us by his unbreakable, covenant promises. This Most High, Almighty, covenant-keeping LORD is *my God*.
- B. “*The shelter of the Most High*” suggests a secret hiding place, a safe room for our souls. To  *dwell* there—to  *inhabit* it—means it is where we live. That safe place is called  *the shadow of the Almighty*. Here is a hiding place for those who have lived long in  *a dry and weary land where there is no water*. The shelter and shade of God.
- C. That is where my psalmist friend and I have hidden; where we have found a safe place to settle. Now we invite you to join us in the cool and safe shade of the Almighty God.

We all do all we can to avoid trouble and hardship. Of course, we do. “*Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward,*” Job 5:7. Jesus said, “*In this world you will have trouble.*”

Illus.: Uncle Remus was talking to Br'er Rabbit, who was sick and tired of living in the briar patch. Br'er Rabbit says, “*Dat ol' briar patch ain't brought me nothin' but trouble... Dis's where my trouble is, an' dis de place I belongs away from.*”

Uncle Remus replied, “*Don't you know you can't run away from trouble?*” But Br'er Rabbit insists: “*Where I'm goin', there ain't gonna be no trouble.*” And Uncle Remus replies, “*Dey ain't no place dat fur.*” [Song of the South]

**The trouble with trouble is what it can do to our hearts** as we frantically try to evade the crisis, the hurt, the consequences. So we want to urge you to “*make the LORD your dwelling.*”

## II. WE URGE YOU TO TRUST YOUR HEART TO THE LORD'S ABSOLUTE SECURITY (vv.3-13)

**V.3:** *Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare  
and from the deadly pestilence.*

A. The fowler's snare is a hidden trap to catch birds, like a camouflaged net that suddenly springs. The deadly pestilence is the runaway epidemic where no one is safe, like the Black Plague. What these both have in common is that you don't see them coming and you can't protect yourself. **But "surely he will save you" from these.** How?

B. *He will cover you with his feathers,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*

Neither the hidden trap nor the stalking pestilence can reach us there *under his wings*. What's more, God's *faithfulness*—his promise-keeping, his loyal love—is like a shield gripped by God, behind which we take refuge.

C. **Vv.6-8:** *You will not fear the terror of night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day,  
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,  
nor the plague that destroys at midday.*

*A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.*

*You will only observe with your eyes  
and see the punishment of the wicked.*

This language reminds us of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt. Remember the plagues: water turned to blood, flies, hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of the firstborn sons. Through all these, the Israelites were protected. God had Moses tell stubborn Pharaoh, "*On that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live;*

... so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people.”

In the culminating tenth plague, when the angel of death passed over the nation, Israelites were protected by putting the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. They were safe from “*the terror of night.*” And when the Egyptians pursued them God blocked their way by his own presence in the pillar of fire and cloud, then he parted the sea for Israel to pass through on dry land, and *then* brought the waters down on the heads of their pursuers. *Ten thousand fell at their side*, but not one of them died. They “*only observed with their eyes and saw the punishment of the wicked.*”

That is our promise, too. The exodus story is a living portrayal of our spiritual deliverance. We, too, were slaves in bondage, dying without hope. Then Christ came to say, “*Let my people go!*” His blood protects us from death and his life parted the waters of death for us. His Spirit protects us through all our wilderness journey. He has led us out of bondage into the Land of his promises. Our enemies are defeated. **Colossians** says, “*He made a public spectacle of [the principalities and powers arrayed against us], triumphing over them by the cross.*”

D. There is an amazing promise in **vv.9-12**:

*If you say, “The LORD is my refuge,”  
and you make the Most High your dwelling,  
no harm will overtake you,  
no disaster will come near your tent.*

**Do you know why?**

*For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways;*

*they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.*

There are a lot of screwy ideas about angels—about what they look like, what they do, and where they come from. (They are *not* people who have died and gone to heaven.) **Heb 1:14** tells us what they do, “*Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*” Did you know that! They minister to us—*serve us*--who have been saved! All of them, all the time. And one way they serve us is our protection. **In all our ways.** No days off. What do they do? “*They lift you up in their hands*” out of situations where we would otherwise stumble. The references to ‘you’ in Hebrew here (“*concerning you*”) are singular while ‘angels’ is plural. **We are each guarded by multiple angels.** Think of that! Right now, in this place, the angels of the Almighty God, who can see him and us at the same time, are standing guard over each and all of us. “*Unseen warriors, brothers, friends.*” Remember Elisha’s servant, terrified because he and Elisha were surrounded by an enemy army.

*And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.* [2 Kgs 6:17]

### **Why would we go anywhere else for protection?**

One effect of this angelic detail surrounding us is in **v.13**, “*You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.*” Here are mortal enemies of our souls, threats to those on the path of righteousness. The lion by his roaring ferocity, the serpent by his sly and subtle guile. Satan is likened to both a lion and serpent. But because of God’s protection and our ever-

present guarding angels, even these fierce or poisonous enemies pose no danger. *If we dwell in the shelter of the Most High.* If we don't, we will suffer.

*Illus.:* Chuck Colson wrote about a riot at Washington, D.C.'s Lorton prison complex a few years ago. Inmates torched buildings and armed menacing gangs roamed the grounds. In the midst of all that fiery chaos four Christian inmates darted through the dangerous mob, yelling "Crusaders!" and rallying their Christian brothers. Soon about 75 Christian inmates were holding hands in a circle on the field. They lifted songs and prayers to heaven as the flames around them leapt toward the sky. "It was like the eye of a hurricane, the calm in a storm," said one inmate. "And one bright star in the sky stayed centered over our group the entire night." Many nonbelievers sought sanctuary within the circle; some lay down and fell asleep, feeling safe under the protection of prayer. [#1313 & 2266]

Remember how we started: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." How do we "dwell in the shelter of the Most High"? God tells us how in **vv.14-15:**

*"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;  
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.  
He will call on me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble,  
I will deliver him and honor him.*

### **III. GOD INVITES YOU TO THE SHELTER OF HIS PROMISES (vv.14-15)**

- A. V.2 identified the LORD as "my God, *in whom I trust.*" This is what trust looks like. "Because *he loves me,*" says the LORD, "I will rescue him." To take shelter in God, we

must love him. Love for the Lord brings faith to life. Our love for God gives our faith a pulse and breath. The great commandment is, “**Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.**” Do you love him ?

In response to our love, the LORD promises, “I will rescue him.” It’s not that God’s love is conditional but till we love the LORD we are not positioned for his rescue. So **to be sheltered by God love him.**

- B. **V.14, “I will protect him for *he acknowledges my name.*”** That means, “*he knows me—who I really am—and lets others know the I am his God.*” It means *my loyalty is to God alone, whom I know and love.* We position ourselves for God’s protection when we worship him.
- C. **V.15, “He will call on me, and I will answer him;”** When we are sheltered by God every prayer moves God to action. Every prayer matters and makes a difference. We cannot see the machinery. We cannot discern how prayers the seem to bounce off a brass sky have any value, but God promises that they do. The Holy Spirit sometimes remodels our prayers, edits them so that they align with God’s will. Sometime waiting is part of God’s answer. But no believer in trouble ever prays to God in vain.
- D. Then in vv.15-16 God rolls out these precious protections. The first is, “**I will be with him in trouble.**” Whatever trouble you face, you never face it alone. Illus.: Once after a very difficult time that left me deeply depressed, I cried out to God, “*Where were you? Where were you when I took all that abuse.*” And to my surprise, as clear as could be, the Lord Jesus whispered to me, “*I was right next to you the whole time; and you did well.*” “**I will be with him in trouble.**”

Next promise: ***“I will deliver him and honor him.”***  
Both rescue and reward. You will be the victor and God himself will honor you for the spiritual courage required of you to stand your ground and trust him.

Finally, ***“With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”*** Long life is an understatement for those who have already entered into immortality with Christ!

*“Show him my salvation.”* Illus.: My pastor friend, Jim, came to our little group a couple of weeks ago, face shining. He explained that he was preparing his sermon from Rom. 5. He’d preached the week before v.8, *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Now he’d come to v.10, *“For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, **how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!**”* It was the *“how much more”* that stunned him. What could be *more* the being reconciled to God through Christ?! If Jesus death and resurrection *saved* us, what *more* will there be through his *life*?! And that is what it means that he will *“show him my salvation.”*

## **Conclusion**

Pastors often have go-to passages when we visit the hospital. Ps. 91 has always been mine. But I read *“no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent,”* to people who are sick; who are facing what seems like a disaster. Remember, the real danger in this life is not what happens to our bodies but what happens to our souls. This Psalm offers protections for our hearts and souls. There are wonderful times when God heals a body or mind, when the angels step in to rescue someone from a car

accident or a crime. But the guarantees here are for our souls. In preaching on these verses Spurgeon said,

*'It is impossible that that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord... Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach is his honour, death is his gain.... No evil in the strict sense can happen to him, for everything is overruled for good.'*

[in Wilcock, BST, Vol 2, p80]

So all that remains is to ask you, as my friend and I have urged, will you enter in to the shelter of the Most High? Will you trust him when you're in trouble? Will you love him, acknowledge his name, and call on him in trouble? Then, if you do so, you will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.