

Psalm 91 - You Have Nothing to Fear

I. Introduction

A. This morning we are going to look at Psalm 91

1. In case you're paying attention, this is a deviation from the schedule - I was initially going to preach on Matthew 17 this week, and we'll continue in Matthew next week
2. But I decided to preach on Psalm 91 this morning, perhaps for several reasons
 - a. I could say that I'm preaching on Psalm 91 because our theme this week is Nepal (we'll do a presentation on the trip on Wednesday and Saturday) and I had the opportunity to preach this message three times during our trip - Macedonia Church in Dhulikhel, Resurrection Church in Dhading and Keshar's church in Palung
 - i. This is one of the messages that I put together while in Nepal and I really had a heart for the church in Nepal and the different struggles that they face while writing it
 - b. But to be honest - probably a larger reason for choosing Psalm 91 is that I didn't get as much done this week coming back from Nepal as I had hoped, so Saturday it seemed better to do a message I had already mostly prepared than try to throw together Matthew 17 at the last moment
3. So, I'll start this by apologizing to Scott and Bryan - they could probably stand up here and give this sermon themselves from memory

B. I chose to preach on Psalm 91 at Macedonia Church in Dhulikhel the day after the NBTC Dedication Ceremony

1. At the NBTC Dedication Ceremony, we gave gifts to each of the students and then a gift to the NBTC to represent our partnership and fellowship with Paul and Devaraj to run the Nepal Bible Training Center
2. And the gift that we brought was a decorative plaque of Psalm 91 - a common, well-known, and well-loved Psalm
3. But as I thought about it and was thinking about choosing a passage to preach on Saturday, I thought Psalm 91 had much to say to the church in Nepal right now
4. The church in Nepal has faced and is facing many difficulties and dangers - they went through a terrible earthquake and are still recovering from it, they were blamed by the Hindu's for causing the earthquake, they live in a culture that, for the most part, completely rejects and ostracizes them, and there is even talks in Parliament about passing laws that make it illegal to preach the gospel in Nepal
5. It seems like the church in Nepal should have much to fear - but Psalm 91 stands against all of these things, all of the dangers, uncertainties and difficulties that the church faces and says, "nonetheless you have nothing to fear"
6. Psalm 91 is a Psalm of encouragement and comfort to those who face the difficulties of this world - take heart, you need not fear these things, these things cannot hurt you

C. As I come back to the United States, though, Psalm 91 has a message for us as well

1. I'll just share a story about when Bryan, Scott and I got back to the U.S. in Philadelphia - we were walking around the airport and remarking on all the ways it was good to be back in the U.S. - clean air, running water, etc. etc. - but then we ran into a life size cut out of Donald Trump, and we all groaned a little bit; it had been very nice to escape all of that for two weeks - no one in Nepal had any care about Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton or any of the ridiculousness that is our nation - we may be in a very different situation from the church in Nepal, but that doesn't mean we fit into our world any better here
2. Perhaps we don't face the same difficulties and dangers as the church in Nepal, but the world around us is still beset with dangers - perhaps we don't have radical Hindu's surrounding us, but our culture is increasingly made up of atheist and so-called 'liberal Christians' who reject and ostracize us in different ways - perhaps our government has not made it illegal to preach the gospel, but the façade that Christian principles were upheld by our government is rapidly falling away and increasingly hostile voices are leading and running our government - perhaps we haven't gone through a major natural disaster recently, but we could and we face other smaller dangers every day
3. But, no matter what is going on around us, Psalm 91 again says, 'You have nothing to fear.'
4. But, before we take comfort, we need to look into the depths of the Psalm to figure out how it applies to us.

D. Read Psalm 91

E. As we look at Psalm 91, I want to ask three questions of this Psalm - and this will be our outline this morning

1. First, we'll ask, what is the promise of this Psalm? What is this Psalm teaching us?
2. Second, we'll ask, who is the promise for? Who deserves the promises of Psalm 91?
3. Third, we'll ask, how do we fit into the promise? What does Psalm 91 call us to do?

II. What is the promise of Psalm 91? What is Psalm 91 teaching us?

A. As we look at Psalm 91, the promise of Psalm 91 is protection - it is a promise of protection from God

1. Psalm 91 is an 'untitled' Psalm, which means we don't have any clear evidence who wrote this Psalm or why
2. But whoever wrote this Psalm had apparently faced many troubles in life - He knew all of the dangers and deceptions that life could bring
3. But in the midst of life's troubles, he also had found that God was a faithful God, a God who was worthy to be trusted

B. So the Psalmist records three promises for us, and this is how we'll look at the Psalm this morning

1. First, he says, "Those who trust in God will dwell with God" (verses 1-2)
2. Second, he says, "Those who dwell with God have nothing to fear" (verses 3-13)
3. Third, he says, "Those who love God will see His salvation" (verses 14-16)

C. We'll start with the first two verses: Those who trust in God will dwell with God

1. Psalm 91:1-2 - *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*
2. The first half of verse 1 is about trusting God - the one who *dwells in the shelter of the Most High* is someone who is going to God for refuge - they are trusting that God can protect and save them - so they are going to His shelter, they are trusting that God is their fortress, their refuge is God
3. And the second half of verse 1 is the promise - those who go to God for protection will be protected by God
 - a. Those who seek to dwell in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty
 - b. That word, 'will', in the middle of verse 1 is the hinge of this section - the one who goes to dwell with God because they trust in God will abide with God - those who trust in God will abide in His shadow of protection
 - c. In other words, those who go to God, trusting that He is their protector, will be welcomed to live with God, to live under the shadow of His protection, to live in His fortress
4. The first verse is actually painting a picture for us
 - a. When we come to verse 4, we see that abiding in the shadow of the Almighty is a specific reference - He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
 - b. The shadow of the Almighty is like the shadow of a mother hen's wings
 - c. The picture is a picture of a hen with her little chicks
 - d. The little chicks are helpless in this world and exposed to many dangers - but if they trust the mother and stay close to her, then, when danger comes, the hen will cover them with her wings
 - e. They trusted their mother and they dwelt under the shadow of her wings - and the promise her is the same, those who trust God will dwell in the shadow of His wings - they will be welcomed to come near and live with God
5. So, in verse 2, the Psalmist responds and says, "I will trust God"
 - a. He knows that God is a faithful God, He knows that God will keep the promise of verse 1, He knows that God will be a fortress for those who come to Him
 - b. So He takes the conditional portion of the promise on himself - if he trusts in God then he will dwell with God, so he is going to trust God - *I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*

D. The center and bulk of the Psalm is the next promise: Those who dwell with God have nothing to fear

1. Psalm 91:3-13 - *For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place--- the Most High, who is my refuge--- no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.*
2. Verses 3-13 are a list of dangers in this world - but the long list is meant to show that God will protect His own people in every circumstance that might happen, so it tells us one thing - those who dwell with God have nothing to fear
 - a. We see that God's people have nothing to fear from the schemes of men
 - i. God will deliver from the snare of the fowler, the terror of the night and the arrow that flies by day
 - ii. People may attack or misuse God's people, they may boldly confront or scheme in the darkness
 - iii. But none of that can hurt God's people - they have nothing to fear

- b. We see that God's people have nothing to fear from the hazards of this world
 - i. God will deliver from the pestilence and the plague, the lion and the serpent
 - ii. Dangers and disasters may happen in this world just by living here
 - iii. But again none of that can hurt God's people - they have nothing to fear
- c. But, right at the center of this section is the biggest promise - God's people have nothing to fear when God's judges the wicked; God's people have nothing to fear from God's wrath
 - i. Psalm 91:8 - *You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.*
 - ii. Verse 8 reaffirms the truth that God will repay the wicked, He will judge the evildoer
 - iii. And I'm confident that this is the center verse for a reason - it is the center because the promise is so great
 - iv. God's just anger is what we ought to fear most in this world - God will destroy everyone who has ever rebelled against Him, He will destroy all of the wicked
 - v. But those who have trusted in God will only watch the destruction of the wicked - they will only look with their eyes and see recompense
 - vi. Those who have trusted God have nothing to fear even in the midst of God's wrath and destruction
 - vii. The burden of verse 8 is this: If we don't need to fear God's wrath, then what do we need to fear in this world? --- The answer is: nothing!

E. Then, in verses 14-16, a final promise is given: Those who love God will see His salvation

1. Psalm 91:14-16 - *"Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."*
2. The voice of the Psalm changes in the last few verses - while most of the Psalm is a report of God's promise given by the Psalmist, the last three verses are put in God's mouth - God affirms Psalm 91 by speaking out its promise
 - a. And, in many ways, it is exactly the same as the first thirteen verses - God speaks a promise of protection to those who trust in Him, to those who are dwelling with Him
 - b. But there is a big difference in verses 14-16 - in verses 1-13, the one whom God protected was the one who trusted in Him, who dwelt with Him - here in verses 14-16, the one whom God protects is the one who loves and the one who knows Him
 - c. God, in speaking out the promise, is really defining what trust means - what does it mean to dwell with God?
 - d. Genuine trust, a trust that will drive one to dwell with God, is rooted in knowledge and love - to truly trust God one must know who He is and love who He is
 - e. The one who trusts God must know that He is the God who saves, must know that He is the God who keeps promises - and then He must love God for these things
 - f. And this love, filled with knowledge, is what drives Him to dwell in the shadow of the Almighty's wings - he holds fast in love - love binds him to God, love drives his trust in God, love keeps him under God's shadow
3. And, for those who love God like this, God speaks out a promise
 - a. First, He repeats the promise of the Psalm - I will be with Him in trouble; I will rescue him
 - b. But then He adds two other promises
 - i. With long life I will satisfy Him
 - ii. And I will show Him my salvation
 - c. And this is the final promise of Psalm 91 - those who know, love and trust in God will see God's salvation, but this last verse helps us understand the promise
 - i. The one who is trusting God is facing hardship in this world
 - ii. But God says, "if he keeps clinging to me, even through hardship, I will deliver Him"
 - iii. God says, "if he loves me, I will be his satisfaction; if he knows me, I will be his salvation."
 - d. The promise of Psalm 91 is given in the midst of hardship in this world
 - i. It says: keep trusting God when things are hard; keep loving God when you have trouble; keep knowing God when all the world is against you
 - ii. If you do, then God will come and save you - He will deliver you and restore you - He will show you His salvation and satisfy you in Him
 - iii. There may be many fears in this world, but at the last reckoning, you have nothing to fear
 - iv. So Psalm 91 says: Keep trusting in God!

III. Who Is the Promise for? Who Deserves the Promise of Psalm 91?

A. As we look at Psalm 91 this morning, we need to ask, who is the promise for?

1. The Psalm is actually pretty clear on this point - the promise is for the one who trusts in God, the one who dwells with God, the one who knows God and the one who loves God
2. So what we need to ask is: who has perfectly trusted God? Who truly abides with God? Who has loved God perfectly? Who knows God perfectly?
3. The problem is, none of us have done this well enough - none of us has trusted God in a way that earns the promise of Psalm 91 - none of us has known God well enough to earn the promise - none of us loves God perfectly - we have no claim that we truly dwell with God
4. We haven't been good enough for Psalm 91, but there was One who was good enough - once we think through the requirements of Psalm 91, I think we must see that the promise belongs to Jesus

B. Jesus is the One who has lived in Psalm 91 perfectly

1. There were three main conditionals in the promise of Psalm 91: trust, knowledge and love - and Jesus has infinitely, perfectly done all three
2. Jesus perfectly trusted God through all of life's troubles
 - a. We could look at lots of different ways that Jesus trusted His Father on earth, but we'll just go to the last and greatest in Luke 23:44-46 - *It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.*
 - b. In the last moments of His life, when it could seem that Jesus had every reason not to trust in God He still said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"
 - c. Jesus lived out, in the ultimate way, Peter's exhortation in I Peter 4:19 - *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*
 - d. Jesus trusted God in all of life, to such a degree that His trust did not fail at the worst point in His life - He trusted His Father infinitely, even when dying under the weight of the world's sins
3. And Jesus perfectly loved God
 - a. Again, we could look at numerous references here, but I'll pick one, John 14:31 - *but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.*
 - b. Jesus lived His life in love for His Father and He lived His life in such a way that He displayed His love for His Father - He lived in perfect obedience to display His perfect love
 - c. So, when His Father called Him to the cross, Jesus says, "I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father."
 - d. Jesus perfectly loved God; He loved God to such a degree that His love would drive Him to obedience to the point of death, even death on a cross
4. And Jesus perfectly knew God
 - a. Let's look at Matthew 11:27 - *All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*
 - b. Not only did Jesus know God, but He claimed that He was the only One who knew God - apart from Him, no one could ever know God
 - c. Jesus knew His Father perfectly well

C. So Jesus fulfills all of the requirements of Psalm 91

1. He is the speaker of verse 2 - *I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*
2. He is the reference of verse 14 - *"Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.*
3. So verse 16 should be His promise - *With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."*
4. Jesus is the One who should be protected by God, the One who will see God's salvation
5. And we can say that Jesus has seen God's salvation, because God did not let death hold Him, but raised Him up from the dead
6. In fact, Isaiah 53:10-11 has been fulfilled - *Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*

7. Isaiah 53 said there would be grief and anguish, but after the grief and anguish, God would prolong the days of His servant and His servant would see and be satisfied
8. The promise of verse 16 came true - *With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.*"

D. But this teaches us something very important about the promise of Psalm 91

1. The promise of Psalm 91 belonged to Jesus, but that didn't mean that He didn't have trouble in this world
 - a. Jesus was ignored, Jesus was mocked, Jesus was falsely accused, Jesus was even killed
 - b. If we thought that Psalm 91 promised a life without trouble - that we would be insulated from the troubles of this world - then the promise would seem to have failed for Jesus
 - c. In fact, Jesus was encouraged to claim the promise this way while He was on earth - Psalm 91 is quoted in the New Testament in Matthew 4:5-6 - *Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him 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 command his angels concerning you," and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"*
 - d. The devil said that the promise of Psalm 91 should be taken and used to demand that no trouble would come
 - e. But Jesus answers in verse 7 - *Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'*
 - f. Jesus wasn't going to grasp the promise in this way - if the promise means no trouble then the promise isn't for Jesus
2. But that is not the promise of Psalm 91 - the promise is not that there won't be trouble, the promise is that there is nothing to fear
 - a. That may seem like a small turn of phrase, but it is actually an enormous difference
 - b. Psalm 91 doesn't promise that trouble won't come, it promises that even when trouble does come that won't stop us from seeing God's salvation
 - c. There may be trouble, sickness, persecution, even death - but these won't stop those who trust God from seeing God's final salvation
 - d. Psalm 91 tells us that we don't have to fear even when terrible things happen because God will make it right in the end - God will restore and God will save
3. So Psalm 91 did come true for Jesus
 - a. All of the terrible things in the world happened to Jesus - He even ended up dying a terrible death under the curse of God - Jesus experienced the worst of what could happen in this world
 - b. But Jesus still saw God's salvation - not the worst that the world could through at Him, not even the wrath of God would stop Him from seeing God's salvation
 - c. Even after death, God raised Him up and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms
 - d. Trouble came, terrible things happened, things that ought to rip apart the very fabric of our universe, but verse 16 still came true - *With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.*
 - e. Jesus trusted God and God protected Him, He dwelt in God's fortress, He dwelt in the shadow of the Almighty's wings - nothing could ever truly hurt Him, He had nothing to fear

IV. How Do We Fit Into the Promise? What Does Psalm 91 Call Us To Do?

A. To truly understand Psalm 91, we need to see that Jesus is the only true recipient of the promise

1. But the glorious truth for us this morning is that the promise is for Jesus, but it is not only for Jesus
2. It is not only for Jesus because we are in Jesus - God has chosen His people to be found in Christ - I've said this before, but those two words, 'in Christ', are the most important words in the Bible
3. Because, with those words, 'in Christ', everything that belongs to Jesus belongs to His people as well
4. As Paul says in Ephesians 1:3 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,*
5. What belongs to Christ belongs to those who are in Christ, so if Psalm 91 belongs to Jesus, then we get to rejoice in it's promise as well
6. This is how we fit into this promise - not as those who have earned the promise, not as those who have done well enough to demand this promise, but as those who receive this promise purely as a gift through the work of another, ones who receive this promise by grace through faith in Jesus Christ

B. But Psalm 91 does call us to do something as we rest in the promise: Psalm 91 calls us to trust God

1. We should trust God according to the picture that is painted in this Psalm - a trust filled with knowledge and love, a trust that clings to God like a small chick stands next to her mother - a trust that runs to God's dwelling place
2. We should trust God because we know God
 - a. We know that He is the God who made promises and has kept every single promise in Christ
 - b. We know that He is the God who graciously gave Jesus for our salvation
 - c. We know that He is the God who is sanctifying us by His Spirit
 - d. We know that He is the God who has promised us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm
 - e. Because of Christ, we know this God - we know who He is and have come to know Him personally as our Savior and Protector - our Lord and our God
3. And we should trust God because we love God
 - a. We have seen His great love for us and we want to run and embrace Him
 - b. We want to dwell with this God, we want to find protection under His wings
 - c. Our love causes us to cling, to hold fast to this God - not primarily because we don't know what else to do, but because we want to be close to God, we love God for all that He has done for us
 - d. We trust Him, we dwell with Him because we couldn't imagine doing anything else - where else could we possibly want to be?
4. So we are the little chicks finding refuge under the Almighty's wings
 - a. Psalm 91 says: stick close to your protector, because as long as you stay with me, you will have nothing to fear
 - b. You have no need to fear the schemes of men, as Hebrews 13:6 says - *So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*
 - c. And we have no need to fear the troubles of this world, because as Hebrews 12:28 says - *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken,*
 - d. And, glory of all glories, we have no need to fear the wrath of God, as Romans 8:1 says - *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
 - e. So we can trust in God - we can dwell with God and know we have nothing to fear

C. And Psalm 91 doesn't just call us to trust God, but to trust God boldly, trust God even when terrible things happen

1. Psalm 91 tells us that many bad things may happen in this world, but God will always protect you - you may get sick, you may be rejected, you may even die, but God will still protect you
2. No matter what happens in this world, if you trust God, you will see His salvation
3. So, don't let the troubles of this world turn you away from God
 - a. Don't let sickness or death cause you to doubt God
 - b. Don't let danger or persecution hinder you from serving God
 - c. These are just things that happen in this world, and we were promised no less - *In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* (John 16:33)
 - d. So trust God boldly - keep following Him even when it is dangerous, when it seems foolish, when it looks like you are going to lose everything, even when it looks like you are going to lose your life - keep following hard after your Savior
4. If you do, if you keep trusting God through all of life's troubles, even through death, then you will see God's salvation
 - a. You may lose everything, you may even die - and, unless Christ comes back first, every one of us will die - but at the end, God will make it right
 - b. Just as He did with Jesus, He will raise you up! He will give you an inheritance that is imperishable. He will set you in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus!
 - c. You have nothing to fear - no thing that happens in this world can touch your salvation, no thing that happens in this world can imperil your hope, no thing that happens in this world can reduce your joy
 - d. You will see God's salvation
5. So keep trusting God boldly, keep loving Jesus intensely, keep dwelling in the shadow of the Almighty God - it will always be worth it