

PSALM 91:1-16

Since this whole coronavirus thing has happened, we have had six people connected to this church die. None of them died with the virus. Two died at home; two died in an adult care facility; one died in the hospital and one died in a hospice facility. These were people who stayed put in what most would call a very safe place, but they died. Their safe-secure place of residency didn't stop it and couldn't stop it.

In a recent graphics and data chart published by ProPublica, there has been a major spike in numbers of people who are dying from the coronavirus in their own homes. This seems to be happening worldwide and no one is able to actually explain it completely.

Well that's odd. We have been told that the key to our security is trust in your home, put your confidence in your home and stay at home. We have been told that the key to security is to lock yourself into your home because that is where you will find safety and security. That is where you will escape the danger.

May I ask us a personal question? Where do we find our safety and security at this point in the history of our lives? Do you find your safety and security in your home or being locked in your home? Do find your great safety and security in hand sanitizer? Do you find your great safety and security in wearing a mask? Do you find your great safety and security in a bomb shelter or basement?

Do you think God wants His people to live out their lives being so afraid that they lock themselves down in a house and don't even go to church? I don't think so, but it isn't what I think that is important; it is what God's word says that is important and what God's word says is this:

WHEN A PANDEMIC PESTILENCE IS TERRORIZING THE WORLD, GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO COURAGEOUSLY KNOW THEIR SAFETY, THEIR SECURITY AND THEIR SALVATION IS FOUND IN A COMPLETE TRUST IN HIM.

Our security is not found in anything physical but it is found in a shadow, a specific Person's shadow, the Shadow of God and in a relationship with God. That is exactly what is taught in Psalm 91. We don't exactly know who wrote this Psalm and there is no title or superscription, but the thesis is clear. Dr. Thomas Constable said, "God Himself is the One who is the believer's security." This Psalm teaches "God saves us...from deadly diseases" (*Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas Constable, Psalms 91*, p. 1).

Now some of you are probably saying wait a minute. You actually think I can go outside and back into this world and trust that God will keep me safe from this disease? Let me read you the account from the life of Charles Spurgeon, who took this Psalm literally in the midst of a pandemic sickness: "In the year 1854, when I had scarcely been in London twelve months, the neighborhood in which I labored was visited by Asiatic cholera, and my congregation suffered from its inroads. Family after family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave.

I gave myself up with youthful ardor to the visitation of the sick and was sent for from all corners of the district by persons of all ranks and religions. I became weary in body and sick at heart. My friends seemed falling one by one, and I felt or fancied that I was sickening like those around me. A little more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest; I felt that my burden was heavier than I could bear and I was ready to sink under it. As God would have it, I was returning mournfully home from a funeral, when my curiosity led me to read a paper which was wafered up in a shoemaker's window in the Dover road. It did not look like a trade announcement, nor was it, for it bore in a good bold hand-writing these words: "Because thou has made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." The effect on my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as my own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil and I suffered no harm. The providence which moved the tradesman to place those verses in his window I gratefully acknowledge, and in the remembrance of its marvelous power I adore the Lord my God" (*Psalms*, pp. 385-386).

This very Psalm touched and strengthened Charles Spurgeon during a pandemic illness that killed 10,000 people in London. We would like to take you through the Psalm today.

Before we begin the exposition of the Psalm, I want to point out the names that are used in this Psalm for God in the first two verses:

- 1) God is identified as "the Most High" v. 1, 9
- 2) God is identified as "the Almighty" v. 1
- 3) God is identified as "LORD" v. 2, 9
- 4) God is identified as "God" v. 2

The name "Most High" (Elyon) means God is the Supreme, Most High God, higher and holier than anything in existence (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 632). Any threat is always less than Him. The God of the Bible is exalted above all and is over all.

The name "the Almighty" (Shaddai) means God is the most powerful being there is. He has all power and might at an infinite level (*Ibid.*, p. 806). Any threat He has power to eliminate.

The name "LORD" (YHWH or Jehovah) refers to the fact that He is the sovereign I AM who can do whatever He wants and that He is in a covenant relationship with His people.

The name "God" (Elohim) refers to the fact that He is the Triune Self-Existing God who has all sovereign power as Creator.

So the first thing that God's people need to realize in the midst of pandemic trouble is we have a covenant relationship with the sovereign, almighty God who is higher and holier than anything in existence and He has the power and authority to do whatever He wants to do. **Our security in scary times is found in trusting in God and in the majesty of His Person and Sovereignty.**

This kind of security will not be found in finances or alarm systems or weapons; this kind of security is found in a relationship with God.

God has specifically promised in this Psalm that His people can trust Him to be their security and protection when pandemic sickness is terrorizing the world.

In fact, there are twenty-two promised realities given in this Psalm in a historical context that is just like the one we are in right now.

But there are five conditions that must be met in order for God's people to be guaranteed that God will fulfill these amazing twenty-two promises:

Condition #1 - The believer must dwell in the shelter of the Most High and abide in the shadow of the Almighty. **91:1**

The promises you are about to see are amazing, so one question is who are they for? Are these promises that are given to every believer? Are these promises given to believers who run to Him in times of danger and trouble? Or are these promises given to God's people who "dwell" and "abides" in a close relationship with Him?

The first condition that is mentioned right up front is that if a believer is to actually have this kind of protection, he must live life in close fellowship with God. **Verse 1** says, "He who dwells." The invitation is open to every individual. As the old Bible expositor Albert Barnes said, this is a "universal proposition."

The idea here is that if one wants God Himself to be his security and have access to all of these promises, the believer must live in constant and consistent fellowship with God. He must lodge himself in a relationship with God. He must have a life that not only visits God once in a while, but lives in constant fellowship with God all the time.

He dwells in the shelter of the Most High and the idea is continually live life in that relationship. In this age, it starts with faith in Jesus Christ, but after faith in Christ it demands a development and close fellowship with God.

The believer who wants God to protect him or her needs to live life in fellowship with God. Someone said, "The safest place in the world is in fellowship with God."

Condition #2 - The believer must individually commit himself to the LORD. **91:2**

Notice the pronouns used in this verse - "I" and "my." "I will say"; "My refuge" "My fortress" "My God" "I trust." This is an individual and personal relationship one must have with God. No husband can have this relationship for his wife and no wife can have this relationship for her husband.

This is an individual decision and commitment. Each individual must develop their own, close relationship with God and trust in God if the believer expects to be the recipient of all of the blessings of God, spelled out in these verses. Each believer must have their own confidence that God will do this.

To have this assurance that God will do this, this must be a very personal and individual experience and testimony. This must be “my experience” and “I must have this relationship with God.”

Condition #3 - The believer must individually trust in God. **91:2b**

Without faith it is impossible to please God. The word “trust” (batach) means to set your total hope and confidence in God to the point where one totally trusts in Him (*Ibid*, p. 112). That is what God wants. God wants His people trusting completely in Him.

He does not want His people trusting in the security of a house too afraid and paralyzed to go outside. He wants His people trusting in Him as the sovereign God and creator of everything. The trust is not in us; the trust is in God.

Condition #4 - The believer must love God. **91:14a**

The Hebrew word for “love” (hashaq) is one that means to cleave to something because you delight in it and find it the object of your desire (*Ibid.*, p. 313). People who love God and love His word are those who will have the security and safety from God, Himself.

Condition #5 - The believer must know God. **91:14b**

The word “know” (yadah) means to know in the sense of knowing, praising, professing and confessing (*Ibid.*, p. 332). God wants His people not only knowing Him, but praising Him and testifying of Him.

What is specifically stated is that he knows the name of God. What that means is this believer understands who God reveals Himself to be and he trusts in the truth about God and He stands for it and defends it.

Now if God’s people are willing to meet these five conditions, then God has promised some amazing and comforting realities for His people:

PROMISED REALITY #1 – God will be our refuge. **91:2a**

This is an amazing statement. God does not say He will provide a refuge, but He is our refuge. Now I want you to carefully observe from **verse 2** that the individual actually says this to the LORD. So the individual not only believes this but actually says this to God. He confesses to God that He is his refuge.

PROMISED REALITY #2 – God will be our fortress. **91:2b**

Again, it is God who is our fortress protector. Notice again the person addresses this to God. He acknowledges to God that He is the refuge and fortress for his life.

PROMISED REALITY #3 – God will be our trust. **91:2c**

Our trust is in God. Then after testifying that He is our refuge and fortress, he testifies to God that he trusts in Him.

There are people who are believers who never tell God anything like this. They don't even talk to God in these terms. In fact, if you listen to them talk, they trust more in a doctor or a politician or a medicine because that is all they talk about.

One who will tap into these promises will be talking to God.

PROMISED REALITY #4 – God will be our deliverer. **91:3**

There are things that try to trap us and ensnare us. Some of the things are not easily spotted. There are people that are out to trap us. There are deadly diseases that can kill us.

What God says He will do for those who are faithful to Him is deliver them. He will snatch them away from anything that could enslave them or destroy them.

PROMISED REALITY #5 – God will be our protective covering. **91:4a**

This is a beautiful picture of what God says He will do. He will put His people under His protective covering, like a mother bird does when she covers her babies.

PROMISED REALITY #6 – God will be our protective refuge. **91:4b**

When we are under the protective covering of God, we can trust that He is our refuge. A refuge is a place where you can go in times of trouble. God is the refuge in the times of the storm.

PROMISED REALITY #7 – God will be our protective shield and bulwark. **91:4c**

These are two interesting words. The word shield protects things that come at you from the front. The word "bulwark" comes from a Hebrew verb that means to surround. So the shield protects the front and the bulwark protects all around. So God protects His people from everything coming from every direction.

God is a sure protective defense against anything that could harm or kill His people from any angle. He is a God who comes between us and the threat.

It is extremely important to observe that it is **His faithfulness that is a shield and bulwark to us**. So God protects us because He is faithful to do what He has promised to do.

He is an amazing sovereign defense for His people. He can prevent something from touching us or He can deliver us from something if it does touch us. But God is our shield and bulwark.

PROMISED REALITY #8 – God will remove our fear. 91:5-6

God does not want His people living life in a paralyzed and paranoia fear. God's people can be at peace in life and have a confidence in God no matter what is going on night or day.

There are scary things in this world. Sometimes there are things at night that do scare you. Sometimes there are things in the day that do scare us. They make us apprehensive. There are destructive things that can hit. That word "destruction" (v. 6) is qeteb which refers to disease or disaster. Things can hit us that are scary morning, noon or night.

We who know the Lord should not live our lives in terror and fear because God wants His people to know that He will see to it that His people are protected. God wants His people to know when they are surrounded by scary things like fatal pestilences and diseases that kill people, He is protecting them and they don't need to be afraid.

PROMISED REALITY #9 – God will preserve our life. 91:7

We may see people all around us dying, but we won't. People may drop right next to you, but it won't affect you because I will preserve you. God says My people who love Me will be kept safe.

God's people need to know something that George Whitefield believed and that is "we are invincible until our time is up." You may watch people die right next to you, but you will not until it is your time. God sustains His people even when others are dying.

PROMISED REALITY #10 – God will let us see Him destroy the wicked. 91:8-9

No wicked person can escape the retribution of God. God says My people can keep their eyes open and what they will see is that I will drop wicked people dead right beside them.

God says I will let My people witness my retribution which I pour out on wicked people and even though they will see Me do destructive things, they have nothing to fear because I am their refuge and they have fellowship with Me.

PROMISED REALITY #11 – God will protect His people from evil. 91:10a

The implication of this is that God is completely sovereign over various evil kinds of things. God can authorize various evils and plagues to destroy people and at the same time protect those who are faithful to Him.

PROMISED REALITY #12 – God will protect His people and their homes from plagues.
91:10b

The word “plague” (nega) refers to destructive things that God specifically sends as destructive judgments. It includes all kinds of disasters and diseases.

God says My people will be protected. Their homes will be protected. It is not the home or tent that is protecting the people from the plague or disease; it is God who is protecting His people.

PROMISED REALITY #13 – God will give His people angelic protection. **91:11-12**

This is one of the passages of the Bible that does teach that God provides guardian angels for His people (Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14). God’s people are assigned angels and their job is to guard them and protect them. The writer of Hebrews said angels are “ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation.”

God actually assigns angels to protect His people, so you don’t have to live life in some paralyzing fear.

Satan actually quoted these verses of this Psalm when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. He asked Jesus to believe this literally by jumping off a building. Jesus knew the angels were there, but he also knew that it would not be right to do something suicidal just to prove it.

PROMISED REALITY #14 – God will give His people victory over life-threatening dangers.
91:13

It is interesting that when Jesus sent out His disciples to minister, He actually quoted Psalm 91:13 to instruct them that He would take care of them as they went out and proclaimed His word. God promises His people that they will be able to walk safe in a dangerous world.

There are physical threats that exist to the people of God and they can kill them. A lion or cobra can kill you. God says to His faithful people, you don’t need to live in fear because you will walk through life and walk right over the danger and it will not touch you.

PROMISED REALITY #15 – God will give His people His personal deliverance. **91:14a**

When we come to **verse 14**, we come to the Divine “I” section of this Psalm. God wants us to realize that He will be a very personal God to each of us. In the final three verses, God uses the pronoun “I” some six times. God is in the business of personally watching over His people, caring for His people and delivering His people. He is a very powerful God, but He is also a very Personal God. God will deliver His people from all trouble and danger.

PROMISED REALITY #16 – God will give His people elevation and exaltation. **91:14b**

In the end, God will always exalt and elevate those who are faithful to Him.

PROMISED REALITY #17 – God will answer the prayers of His people. **91:15a**

Remember the names of God, Almighty, Most High, the self-existing I AM (YHWH) and the sovereign Creator of all. This God promises to answer the prayers of His people who pray to Him.

God wants His people calling out to Him. I hope during this crisis you are doing that in your own personal life. God stands ready to answer the prayers of His people when they turn to Him in times of trouble.

PROMISED REALITY #18 – God will specifically be with His people in times of trouble. **91:15b**

God will never abandon His people in times of distress or disaster. He will always stand with His people.

PROMISED REALITY #19 – God will specifically rescue His people. **91:15c**

When God's people find themselves in difficult and stressful situations, they can turn to God and He will rescue them.

PROMISED REALITY #20 – God will specifically honor His people. **91:15d**

God not only rescues His people, but He also honors His people. Albert Barnes said God will exalt His people to honor and will recognize them as His friend.

PROMISED REALITY #21 – God will extend a satisfying life to His people. **91:16a**

I love something Warren Wiersbe said: "It is one thing for a doctor to add years to our life, but God adds life to our years and makes that life worthwhile."

God does not want His people to stop enjoying life. He wants His people realizing God will let me live as long as He wants me to live and I can live a satisfying life all the way through it.

PROMISED REALITY #22 – God will let His people see His salvation. **91:16b**

God's people will see God do some amazing things this side of the grave, but they will actually see spectacular things concerning their salvation on the other side of the grave.

If you are living life in fellowship with God, these promises are all yours.

Verse 1 gives an invitation to all. To dwell in the shelter of the Most High, you must get into the shelter and there is only one way in and it is faith in Jesus Christ. If you will invite Jesus Christ into your life, you will enter into a relationship with the greatest Person you will ever know.

If you will purpose as a believer to live your life in fellowship with God and His word, then you can say with this Psalmist: "I will say to the LORD MY refuge and My fortress, My God, in whom I trust."