

I. In These Days

- A. As the COVID-19 virus began to grab headlines a few months ago, the Lord began to sovereignly and clearly give the church across the earth Psalm 91, in order to bring strength and confidence to the body of Christ worldwide.
- B. I want to encourage you all to press into this passage in this season. Ask the Holy Spirit to increase your understanding and draw you nearer to Jesus through it. I want to encourage you to use this mostly as a guide to help you pray through this.

II. Psalm 91:1-16

A. The Overview

1. Authorship – Interestingly, Psalms 90-100 are all considered by many to be penned by Moses. We cannot know this for sure, but the rule of thumb in scholarship is that if the Psalm has no author connected to it, you can assume it was the author from the previous psalm. We know for certain that Moses penned Psalm 90 so the assumption is that he also authored Psalm 91. The other obvious choice of authorship would go to David simply because of the vast number of Psalms that are accredited to him.
2. The Context – This Psalm was known in the days of Jesus as the song of plagues, and as all the rest of the psalms, it is a song to be sung set to music. This is not psalm that promises no trouble or negative circumstances will affect the people of God. Rather, this is a song of hope in the trouble and negative circumstances. Traditionally this song was sung at funerals or recited as plagues and wars swept through regions. It is the surety that no evil thing, not even death itself, can ultimately triumph over those who love God. (Romans 8:37-39).

“Before expounding these verses I cannot refrain from recording a personal incident illustrating their power to soothe the heart, when they are applied by the Holy Spirit. 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 vigor 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 displayed 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 handwriting these words: "Because thou

hast 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 upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. 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, for everything is overruled for good. Happy is he who is in such a case. He is secure where others are in peril, he lives where others die." (C. H. Spurgeon Commentary on Ps. 91)

3. The Flow – This Psalm has a clear progression to it as it shifts from various perspectives of declarative and general truths, and how those truths inform those perspectives. The following breakdown is my personal opinion of the flow of this Psalm.
 - a. The Truth of Intimacy with Jesus in the midst of darkness – vs 1
 - b. The Pursuit of Intimacy with Jesus in the midst of darkness– vs. 2
 - c. The Trust of Intimacy with Jesus in the midst of darkness– vs 3-6
 - d. The Faith of Intimacy with Jesus in the midst of darkness – vs. 7-8
 - e. The Care of Intimacy with Jesus in the midst of darkness– vs. 9-13
 - f. The Desire of Intimacy with Jesus in the midst of darkness—vs. 14
 - g. The Result of Intimacy with Jesus is deliverance from darkness— vs. 15-16

III. Verse by Verse Commentary

A. The Truth of Intimacy with Jesus in the midst of Darkness

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” – The Psalmist Declares an Overarching Truth

1. **He who dwells** – The Hebrew word translated into “dwell” means to sit down and set yourself in a place. It must be of great note that the promises and blessings of this Psalm are specifically given to those who dwell in the secret place with Jesus. They will inherit the promises and blessings or can apply them to their situation. (Ps. 27:4, 65:4; 84:1-12; . 14:23; Col. 3:16)
2. **Secret Place** - The place in which the blessed are to dwell is in the secret place of the Most High. The exact phrase “secret place” refers to the innermost portion of the temple in heaven where God Himself dwells. In the earthly temple that replicated the heavenly one, the “secret place” was known as the Holiest of Holies and was separated from the rest of the temple by a thick impenetrable veil. The “secret place” also speaks of the private or secret dialogue between friends that

- are intimate and confidential. (Ps. 27:5, 31:20; Is. 45:19; Mat. 6:6, 6:18, 14:23; 26:36-39)
3. **Abide** – The Hebrew word “abide” means to permanently stay or be made to continue. What is being put forward in this first verse is the idea that the fruit or result of those who choose to “dwell” (sit down and set themselves) in the secret place will “abide” or be permanently placed under the shadow of the Almighty. (Ps. 25:13 8:31-36, 14:16, 15:4-10; 1 Cor. 13:1 2:24-28)
 4. **Shadow of the Almighty** – This theme appears many times in scripture and carries the idea of a bird that lovingly is covering her young ones in their nest with her wings. It strongly suggests that God’s covering over you is not some passive shield or force field of power but rather Jesus Himself actively loving you and nurturing you as He spreads His wings over you. (Deut. 32:11-12; Ps. 17:8, 36:7, 57:1; Song 2:3; Is. 4:5-6; Mat. 23:37)

B. The Pursuit of Intimacy with Jesus in the midst of darkness– vs. 2

“I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust” - The Psalmist Declares His Intentions

1. **I will say** – The author of this psalm is responding to the truth of verse 1 and setting his heart in a declarative visionary way to dwell and abide, so that he lives in the reality of the security and safety of intimacy with Jesus. I find that I must do this in my own life as I remind myself constantly of the truths of intimacy with Jesus that I want to walk in. (Ps. 142:5; Pro. 18:10)
2. **Refuge** – The original Hebrew word, translated as “refuge”, means the place of shelter from storms. Jesus as our refuge keeps us from perishing in the storms and being dominated by falsehood and lies. (Ps. 62:8, 73:28; Pro. 14:26; Is. 25:4, 28:15-17; Jer. 17:17; Joel 3:16)
3. **Fortress** – There is a clear difference between the words refuge and fortress. The refuge is the place of hope and shelter from storms whereas the word translated fortress speaks specifically of protection or defense from enemy attack. (Ps. 31:2-3; 144:2)

C. The Trust of Intimacy with Jesus in the Midst of Darkness (Ps. 91:3-6)

“Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall

be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.” - The psalmist encourages us to pursue intimacy as he did

1. **He shall Deliver** – These next few verses are going to expound upon the last that declared Him our “Refuge and Fortress in whom we Trust”. One cannot be delivered from a situation that they are not in. This is where hope and trust in the refuge come into view. The strength being offered is that when these things happen to you, you will ultimately be delivered. The promise is not that no weapon will ever be formed against you, but rather that no weapon formed against you will permanently stand and succeed in your ultimate destruction. (Ps. 2:1-6, 10:28-29; Rom 8:35-39)
2. **Snare of the Fowler** – In the times of this psalm the way you would hunt birds was not with a shotgun like we have today but rather with a snare or trap. The idea behind a trap is to trick or lure the prey through deception. This verse clearly speaks of deliverance from the lies and deception of our enemy. (Ps. 38:12; 2 Cor. 3:11-14; 2 . 2:9-10)
3. **Perilous Pestilence** – The word Pestilence is only used to describe a Judgment of God against wickedness through the means of a plague. The idea is that even in the midst of God’s judgments there is protection and understanding given to those who are His. (Ex. 9:15; 2 Chron. 7:13; Num. 14:37-38, 16:46-48)
4. **Refuge under His Wings** – This is how of the “He shall deliver” us: through His care and nurturing of our hearts as a mother hen, and carrying us on eagle’s wings. He will be our hope and rest from storms and lies. (Is. 43:1-2)
5. **Truth as a Shield** – This is fortress language that fittingly follows refuge language. He is our defense against our enemy and the truth of who He is and what He says is our defense against all works of our enemies prevailing against us. The shield was used in battle to protect from general attacking blows of swords or arrows meant for our destruction. (Gen. 15:1; 1 Sa. 17:7; Ps. 5:12)
6. **Truth as a Buckler** – This is also pointing to Jesus as our fortress or defense against enemy attack but this time it is referencing Him as our buckler. A buckler was a small, very light shield held as an extension of the hand. It was intended for close quarters hand-to-hand combat. The

shield was meant to protect from general attack, whereas the buckler protected from very precise or specific attacks. (Jer. 46:3; Ez. 23:24)

7. **Trust that overcomes Fear** - This next section focuses on the 4 different types and realities of attacks that can come against us: general attacks (defended by shield) and specific attacks (defended by buckler). I believe the idea is that these four attacks and correlating fears sum up all attacks and fears related to attack.
8. **Trust that conquers the Fear of Terror at Night** – The first attack mentioned is the general attacks by night when we are sleeping and exposed, when we are totally unable to protect ourselves and are even uninformed of the attack that is happening. We can trust that He defends us as a shield against these types and times of attack. (Job 24:15-16; Ps. 3:5; Pro. 3:24)
9. **Trust that conquers the Fear of Arrows by Day** – The second attack is the general attacks by day when we are active and working with God to bring His kingdom to the earth. This attack is still general and we do not necessarily perceive a precise strike against our person but rather a volley or arrows shot in our general direction. The defense against this type of attack would be a shield. (Eph. 6:16)
10. **Trust that conquers the Fear of Pestilence in Darkness** – The third attack is an unperceived yet very specific attacks. The Hebrew word for pestilence speaks of a supernatural disease or even angelic force that is meant to destroy. A specific attacks requires a specific defense or buckler to keep it from destroying that which it seeks to destroy. (Ki 8:37)
11. **Trust that conquers the Fear of Destruction at Noon** – The fourth attack is perceived as a specific attack at a specific time. The Hebrew word used here—translated destruction—is only used to speak of specific supernaturally motivated war or judgments like some kind of natural occurrence of destruction. Once again, there is the need for Him to be our buckler or specific defense. (1 Cor. 10:6-10)

D. The Faith of Intimacy with Jesus in the Midst of Darkness (Ps. 91:7-8)

“A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look and see the reward of the wicked.” - The Psalmist Meets us in our Weakness

1. **A Thousand may Fall and Ten Thousand at your Right Hand** – This next portion takes us from trust into the testing of our faith. The psalmist tells us we may see a thousand fall to deception and fall in the judgment of God by refusing to repent. There may be many more who you are in direct contact or relationship with (right hand) who succumb to the deception or reap the rewards of rebellion against God. It is very easy to get disheartened or disillusioned with our faith concerning the destruction and death we see, especially when it affects those we know or are close to. (Ps. 42:2-3, 119:81-83, 143:7; Jhn 16:22)
2. **It shall not come near you only with your eyes shall you look see the reward of the wicked** – Take heart when you see destruction all around, the Lord is your refuge and He will keep you from stumbling, you will only see deception ruling in those who are wicked but not in yourself, you will only see the judgments of God fall upon the wickedness of men but not on you. You dwell in the secret place in intimacy with God—nothing can cause you to fall. (Ps. 37:34, 92:11; Pro. 3:25-26; Is. 3:11; Heb. 2:2)

E. The Care of Intimacy with Jesus in the midst of darkness (Ps. 91:9-13)

“Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place, No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample.” – The Psalmist Assures us in The Lord

1. **Because you have made the Lord your refuge, even the Most High** – The psalmist takes us back to the qualifier of the promises of intimacy with Jesus. Because you have set yourself to dwell in the secret place, God will be your refuge in deception and destruction. He draws our attention to the fact that it is the “Most High” who is our refuge, “Most High” refers to the sovereignty of Jesus over all creation and it’s destiny. Our hearts can be more than assured of these realities. Of course, the “Most High” will keep evil from befalling us. (Gen. 14:20-22; Ps. 21:7, 47:2, 57:2, 83:18; Dan. 4:17; Rom 8:31)

2. **No Evil Befall you, No Plague Come Near you** – We must be careful how we interpret this point. We were just told that we would see deception and destruction causing thousands to fall all around us, that we would be tempted to lose heart. So in that sense, it comes near us. However, what is in view here is He will keep us from receiving the same reward as the wicked receive. The deception sent to destroy nations cause us to press into truth, the pestilence sent to turn the nations won't be punitive to us but rather purifying. (Deut. 7:15; Ps. 121:7, Prov. 12:21; Rom 8:35-39)

Though trouble or affliction will be in your midst, yet there shall be no real evil in it, for all shall come from the love of God and shall be sanctified; it shall come, not for your hurt, but for your good; and yet in the present will not be joyous, but grievous, yet, in the end, it shall yield so well that you yourself shall own that no evil befall me. It is not an evil, an only evil, but there is a mixture of good in it and a product of good by it. Not you only, but your dwelling, shall be taken under the divine protection: There shall be no plague come near that will do you or yours any damage. - Matthew Henry

3. **For He shall give angels charge over you** – Many may recognize this portion of this psalm from the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Satan quotes this portion of this psalm totally out of context, as he tells Jesus to throw Himself off the temple because Angels will protect Him from physically dying from the fall. However, that is not what is in view here at all. It is specifically referencing how He will give angels charge over you to keep you from being deceived and partnering with rebellion in sin. Not only will He Himself be your refuge but He will also give you supernatural help to stay steady in the face of darkness. (2 Kings 6:16-17; Ps. 34:7; Heb. 1:14)
4. **Lest you dash your foot against a stone** – Not only will He keep you from falling but He will keep you from even stumbling. His care goes far beyond simply surviving and preserving and into the reality of thriving in our walk. (Ps. 37:24; Pr. 3:23; 2 Tim. 4:18; Jude 1:24)
5. **You will tread on Lions and Cobras, and Trample Young Lions and Serpents** – You will be so covered under the care and help of Jesus that you will actually rise above and walk or tread on top of the darkness that hunts you as a lion or attempts to trick and tempt you as a snake. Not even the fiercest and strongest of destructive attack (young lion) nor if Satan himself (serpent/dragon) were to come to tempt you would they succeed to cause you to fall. Because you have made intimacy with Jesus your dwelling place, you will not just overcome evil, but trample it underfoot. (Eze. 2:6; Lk 10:19; Rom 16:20; Eph. 1:19-23)

F. The Desire of Intimacy with Jesus in the midst of darkness (Ps. 91:14)

“Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will deliver him; I will set him on high because he has known my name.” – *Jesus Himself Thunders Through the Psalmist to Reveal His Heart*

1. **Because he has set his Love upon Me** – Oh, the absolute bliss and unbelievable truth of this portion of the psalm. Jesus Himself breaks into the psalm to declare how much our affections mean to Him. How do we achieve such a place of privilege, that the “Most High” watches over us day and night as a shield and buckler, keeps us from all evil, and commissions angels to accompany us? He does all this because we spoke a weak but sincere “I love you” from our heart to His. He invited us into the ongoing secret place of friendship with Him and made a way for us to be there and we said, “yes”. All the religious rhetoric and spiritual faith and practice formulas we come up with to obtain the protection of God crumble as Jesus declares, “I do this because you set your love on me!” (Ps. 8:1-9, 139:6; Song. 2:14, 8:6; Mat. 22:37; Jhn. 17:26; Rom 5:5; James 1:12, 2:5)
2. **I will Deliver him and Set him on High** – He reveals the reason why He delivers us is so we stay in the place of setting our love upon Him. He is so desirous and jealous for more of our love that He delivers and defends from anything that would steal or quench it. He gives us the power and help to trample over Satan in order to empower us to stay in the secret place with Him. He has given us power and authority over all darkness and evil, every principality and power, so that we would stay in the place of love. (Psa. 37:40; Jhn 5:44, 12:26; 2 Cor. 1:8-11)
3. **Because he has Known my Name** – Now He defines what setting our love on Him looks like and feels like to Him. He tells us that what causes Him to be moved deeply is we have set ourselves to know Him. To know His name biblically, means to have discovered and known His nature and character, what He is thinking, and how He feels. It is friendship with Him that so moves Him and knowing His name is also the source of the truth that defends us. (Ex. 33:18-19, 34:5-7; Ps. 5:11, 9:10, 69:36, 119:132; Sng. 1:3; Jer. 9:23-24; Is. 9:6; Jhn. 17:26)

G. The Result of Intimacy with Jesus is deliverance from darkness (Ps. 91:15-16)

“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.” – Jesus Gives Promises to the Psalmist and those who Set their Love on Him and Know His Name

1. **He shall call upon Me and I will answer** – These promises are to those who set their love on Him and know His name. They are in progression and there are five of them. The first promise is that to those who ask anything in His Name it will be done for them. Out of friendship comes dependence and intercession. The confidence of the friends of God is that they know He will answer them. (Ps. 138:3; Jer. 33:3; 2 Cor. 12:9)
2. **I will be with him in trouble** – The Second promise is that He will be with us in times of trouble and affliction. Once again I must point out that His desire is first, to be with us in times of trouble, and then secondly, deliver us out of them. We will see trouble, we will see thousands fall, we will be exposed to the onslaught of deception and destruction, but He will be with us. He will uphold His friends and give His angels charge over them to keep them from stumbling. (Ps. 23:4, 138:7; Is. 41:10, 43:1-2; Mat. 28:20; Jhn 16:32; 2 Cor. 1:5-7; Col 1:24)
3. **I will deliver him and honor him** – In His perfect understanding and timing, He will be fully deliver us from trouble. This is the third promise. The writers of scripture are so clear on this point of trusting God to be with us in trouble in order to see His name formed in us, and once it is, full deliverance comes. There is a time coming when trouble will no longer have any place in the life of the friends of God. We are confident that even the darkest of days that we may face are only momentary afflictions. (Is. 25:8; Joel 2:32; Hos. 13:14; Oba. 1:17; 1 Cor. 15:26, 54-58; Rev. 7:17, 21:4)
4. **With Long Life I will Satisfy Him** – I believe it would be out of context to see the theme of the general satisfaction found in intimacy with Jesus in this verse. This is a very specific type of satisfaction that He will bring once deliverance and honor comes. Eternal life has always been a promise of those who love God, however He adds here that the eternal life we will have will satisfy us. This is the fourth promise: He does not promise boring eternal existence but rather an eternal life that fulfills us to the fullest measure. (Ps. 16:11, 17:15, 21:4-6, 36:8, Jhn 10:10; 1 Jhn 3:2)

5. **Show him My salvation** – The fifth promise is salvation. Biblically, the term salvation is used to speak of the “restoration of all things” not just to eternal life. Here is a great proof that this Psalm is speaking to the entire progression of our journey in this age with Jesus. Jesus ends this psalm the way He ends the entire biblical cannon and reiterates the ultimate promise of God that runs from Genesis to Revelation. He will bring ultimate salvation to the entire creation, He will eliminate darkness and evil forever, He will make all wrong things right, and He will permanently restore all things. The beauty of this passage is not that it is about general salvation or general restoration of all things, it is very personal to the individual. He will restore all things to you personally and show you His salvation for your life and destiny. (Ps. 14:7; Is. 45:17, 51:3-6, 52:7-10; 61:1-11; 62:1-12; Zeph. 3:14-17; Rev. 7:15-17)