

We turn for a continuation of our summer series on the Psalms to another great Psalm, 91, which the old Rabbis said was written by Moses, just as Psalm 90 was. Though we can't be sure of authorship, this glorious Psalm nevertheless speaks of the absolute security which Moses, along with the rest of God's people, claim as their own. May the Lord reassure us that He will indeed "give His angels charge of us to guard us in all our ways" (Ps. 91:11).

Monday: Read Psalm 41:13; Psalm 72:18-20; Psalm 89:52; Psalm 106:47-48 & Psalm 150:6
Firm Endings

Although we refer to the Psalms as one single book, the original structure of the Psalms consists of five books. Interestingly, each of the five books concludes with an Amen or Hallelujah:

Psalm 1:1-41:14 (Book I): "Amen and Amen"
 Psalm 42:1-72:20 (Book II): "Amen and Amen"
 Psalm 73:1-89:53 (Book III): "Amen and Amen"
 Psalm 90:1-106:48 (Book IV): "Amen, Hallelujah"
 Psalm 107:1-150:6 (Book V): "Hallelujah"

Meditate and Pray: Amen comes from the verb meaning "to stand firm". It is the word for a pillar of the temple, for example. What we are asking in prayer when we say "Amen" is that God would establish what He has promised to bestow upon His people when they pray. We are simply asking God to remember what He has promised He would do for His people. We pray, "Lord, let it be according to what you have said and according to what we have prayed."

Tuesday: Read Psalm 91:1-4 and Matthew 10:29-31

Rest in the Shadow

Psalm 91 begins by pursuing the subject of God's fatherly care, providing refuge for His own under His protective shadow (Ps. 91:1,4). Earlier in Psalm 36:7-9, King David himself describes that same security in these terms:

Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

Can there be a better picture of God's particular care for "every hair on the head" of His own in all their sufferings? To remind us of such care, Jesus labors in Matthew 10:29-31 to remove our fears of those "wolves" who can kill the body (Mt. 10: 28). He knows how scared we can be when we are sent out in His name as "sheep among wolves," – but He *also knows* how to remove our fears by the reassuring pictures He gives us in His Word. Hairs of our head numbered, indeed!

Meditate and Pray: Thank God, the Father and the Son, that He cares for us far more than mere "sparrows" (Mt. 10:31), and that this care for us remains constant, providing a place under the throne where we can take refuge. How does hymn # 251 in our hymnal put it?

*Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand,
 The shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land;
 A home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way,
 From the burning of the noontide heat, and the burden of the day.*

*I take, O cross, thy shadow for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of His face;
Content to let the world go by to know no gain or loss,
My sinful self my only shame, my glory all the cross.*

Wednesday: Read Psalm 91:1-4 and Exodus 25:16-22

Taking Refuge

Tradition says that Moses may have written Psalm 91, just as he wrote Psalm 90. This would make the language about “taking refuge” in Ps. 91 understandable in terms of what God showed Moses about the ultimate place of refuge for God’s people, the tabernacle. There it was that God would meet with Moses (Ex. 25:22), “as a man meets with his friend,” face-to-face.

In particular it was on top of the Mercy Seat of the Ark that God would hold communion with His people through the ministry of the High Priest. Why? Because there on that lid of the Ark of the Covenant, the blood of sacrificial forgiveness would be sprinkled, and the covering of sin would be accomplished. In this safe place also, the angelic throne creatures called “cherubim” (Ex. 25:20) spread their wing-spans to cover the ark. How natural, then, that such a place of forgiveness and reconciliation between God and man, sheltered by the protective wings of the angels, should be understood as Moses’ subject in Psalm 91, where he speaks repeatedly of taking refuge by faith under “God’s wings.”

Meditate and Pray: Thank God for sending His Son to be our ultimate place of refuge, as on the Cross He provided a lasting forgiveness through the sprinkling of blood – a work of atonement into which “angels long to look” (1 Peter 1:12). Use hymn # 251 to express thankfulness for the refuge which the Cross gives us:

*O safe and happy shelter, O refuge tried and sweet,
O trusting place where Heaven’s love and Heaven’s justice meet!
As to the holy patriarch that wondrous dream was given,
So seems my Savior’s cross to me, a ladder up to heaven.*

*Upon that cross of Jesus mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One Who suffered there for me;
And from my stricken heart with tears two wonders I confess;
The wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness.*

Elizabeth Clephane

Thursday: Read Psalm 91:1-4; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4 and 63:7

Deep Calm

What an amazing metaphor of the believer’s safety! We take refuge under the wings of God. Listen to how Charles Spurgeon unfolds this picture in his comments on just one of these references to the “wings of God” (Ps. 61:4):

The chicks beneath the hen are safe, how comfortable, how happy! How warm the parent’s bosom! How soft the cherishing feathers! Divine condescension allows us to appropriate the picture to ourselves, and how blessedly instructive and consoling it is! O for more trust... such a covering invites us to the most unbroken repose... Rest we well may when we reach this point. Even the harp may be eloquently silent when deep, profound calm completely fills the bosom, and sorrow has sobbed itself into a peaceful slumber.

Meditate and Pray: What a fundamental blessing of the Gospel: rest, peace and repose in our God. Picture Jesus sleeping in the back of the boat in the storm (Mark 4:38), and which Peter sleeping in prison, awaiting execution before the angel of God rescued him (Acts 12:6)! Ask the Lord to give you an increasing portion of this blessing.

Friday: Read Psalm 91:1-4 and Romans 13:4-5

Mysterious Ways

We rightly celebrate Psalm 91 as depicting the heavenly security which will be fully revealed when Christ returns, and which is already accomplished in the justification, forgiveness and peace which Christ's atoning work has effected. Nevertheless, Psalm 91's salvation from "snares, pestilence, the terror of night and the arrow that flies by day," also speaks of earthly blessings which we often take for granted, forgetting those who lay down their lives that we might enjoy them. As Romans 13:1-5 make clear: God has appointed governments to "bear the sword," and they do not do so in vain, but, under God, will bring punishment on wrong-doers, wherever they are found. So, the message goes out to all evildoers throughout the world: "If you do wrong, be afraid" (Rm. 13:4). And the message for us, who enjoy the peace of a law-abiding land? Be thankful!

Meditate and Pray: Take a moment to "pray for all in authority," (1 Timothy 2:1-2) and to thank God for the "peaceable and quiet life" which we enjoy because of those who are willing to lay down their lives for our civic protection, including the military, police, state troopers and other emergency responders. In particular, please pray for the families who have lost loved ones in military service or civilian service, that they may be supported by our prayers and God's comfort. And pray for our brothers and sisters in prison all over the world, captive because of their faith.

Saturday: Read Psalm 91:5-11

Mysterious Ways

One of the most painful experiences of growing up is to discover that the ways of God do not always provide us or our loved ones with the absolute protection, *here on earth*, which Psalm 91:5-11 seems to imply. In the untimely loss of a loved one in Christ, how many cry out, wondering if God has forgotten Psalm 91:11, which promises that He will guard us, "in ALL our ways!" Well may we, with Asaph, offer a rejoinder to the promise of protection in Psalm 91:11, with the words of Psalm 77:8-9:

Has God's mercy ceased forever? And will He be favorable no more? Has His promise failed forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?

Meditate and Pray: Lord, in the midst of overwhelming grief, when we ask, "Why?" and wonder if God has forgotten us, quieten us under your providence, and strengthen our faith in the doctrine of Scripture, which teaches that you preserve and govern all your creatures and all their actions. Give us the grace to rest even when your providence appears to be frowning upon us. Amen.

May the Lord now help us to sing, with a renewed sense of humility and submission, hymn # 128 in our Red Trinity Hymnals, about God's mysterious providence:

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;

*He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.*