

Psalm 91

Every Psalm has a question at its heart. And the question at the heart of Psalm 91 is how much can I trust God?

Psalm 91 contains an amazing catalog of blessings for who trust the Lord. There is a long list of assurances, promises, guarantees, pledges of security, and assurances of victory over unfathomable foes.

But sometimes we read Psalms like these and I think we feel a disconnect because they do not describe our life at all. The ideas, the sentiments, the assurances and guarantees—"like a thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand but it will not come near you"—does not describe how we feel at all. We fear and dread and it feels like if anyone is going to get it, it won't be the thousand on left or the 10,000 on my right, it will be me.

Trust seems to be out of fashion.

In 2022—our trust in almost everything and everyone is a historic, recorded low.

And trusting Jesus is no exception. We fill our lives with all sorts of things to create the illusion of self-sufficiency and independence from Jesus and even distract us from reality and responsibility. We make all kinds of things necessary when Jesus said "One thing is necessary," intimacy with Him.

How's that working for us? How does our society, our culture, our politics, our civility, our relationship, our peace and love and joy, goodness and kindness work when we put distance, construct a wall of separation, between ourselves and Jesus?

Psalm 91 begins with a premise. All the amazing promises in Psalm 91 are based in the premise that we find in the very first line of Psalm 91.

**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.**

Psalm 91:1

We can summarize this in one word: trust.

Do I trust Jesus above all else?

What is trust? What does it mean to trust?

Trust means to put ourselves in a position of vulnerability with someone or something.

To put it another way, trust means to make ourselves reliant on someone or something.

I trust my bank. We have all of our money in the bank. We trust them the next time we go there to not say, "Now who are you again? We've never heard of you."

I ordered some carry out the other day. I trusted that the food I ate, to which I had no access at all as it was being prepared and packaged, which I placed inside my body, would be healthy rather than kill me.

That's trust.

How do we know what we trust?

The three 'I's' tell us what we trust.

The first "I" is **inclined**.

If you are like most people, there are certain people who are more likely to believe than others. You are inclined toward them telling the truth. There are politicians, news sources, people who post on social media, friends, authors, commentators who you are more likely to believe than others. If they say it, you're default position is to believe every word. If someone else says it, you don't believe them. For example, if we bought cookie dough and I go to get the cookie dough from the refrigerator to make cookies and my wife Jen says, "I didn't touch it," I believe her. If my kids say, "I didn't touch it," I am not as inclined to believe them. If we are inclined to believe someone, we trust them.

The second "I" is **intimate**.

We are close with the things we trust. We place ourselves right next to those people and things we trust. For example, our dog often makes his way into our bed at night and frequently, he will snuggle his face right up to my face, laying on my neck. And I trust him in that position more than I would trust a wild animal or even nearly any other human being.

We are intimate with things that we trust, we let them get close. We make ourselves defenseless before them. We let down the shields and allow people and things that we trust to get close to us. We let them in.

The final "I" is **invested**.

We invest time, energy, hopes, dreams, resources in people and things that we trust. We transfer the gifts we have been given to things that we trust in the hope that our trust will be validated. The more we trust, the more resources, the more gifts we transfer. We trust that our expectations will be met by the investment that we make. We invest in people and things whom we trust.

Psalm 91 promises when we are inclined toward the Lord, when we are intimate with the Lord and we are invested in the Lord that our life looks different we live with assurance, we live with courage, we live fully amid the security and the shelter of the Kingdom of God.

Here is what this life looks like:

When we trust Jesus enough to make Him our shelter, when we stick close enough to Him to be in His shadow, **we will live victoriously**.

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.

Psalms 91:3-8

The first catalog of benefits that we realize from trusting Jesus is a list of the enemies that will not be able to lay a hand on us. Remember, we fall under God's protection as His children, as daughters and sons of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. God does not abandon us when we don't trust Him. God does not leave us alone. There are consequences, of course, to trusting this world rather than Jesus, but we shouldn't worry about God abandoning us. When we are a child of God, when we have confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord and given our sin to Him, seeking forgiveness, seeking a relationship with God, we are a part of the Kingdom of God.

And that is a wonderful place to be. The theologian **Dallas Willard** said, **"The safest place to be is in the Kingdom of God."**

But it is all too easy to trust Jesus with our eternal life—endless time and space—and not trust with our everyday life. If we want to live victoriously, if we want to live without fearing our enemies, we will trust Jesus with our everyday life. We can't know that victory over our enemies, we can't realize that victory, we can't expect that victory if we don't trust Jesus enough to make Him our shelter.

Who are your enemies? A lot of dictators and maybe even one or two Presidents had an enemies list.

Who's on your enemies list?

Is it a person?

Is it a people?

A neighbor?

Is it a place?

A business?

They may have earned their way onto your list. In fact, it is likely they did. Most people don't just pick their enemies lightly. Having an enemy is hard work. Indifference is easy. Love and hate take energy.

But the good part about living victoriously is we don't have to worry about our enemies. We don't have to expend the energy to hate them because we know what happens to them. We know there is ultimately nothing they can do to harm us. Because we trust Jesus, we know He will not allow us to be caught in their snares, even when we are surrounded by the dark of night we aren't afraid. When wilting

heat like the noonday shines down mercilessly upon us, we stay strong. Our enemies don't threaten us. We don't fear them.

The good part about not fearing our enemies is it allows us the emotional space to love them. And that is very good for us. Not allowing ourselves to hate our enemies sets us free.

Not too long ago I met with one of our folks here who had been terribly wronged by someone. They had been terribly wronged. And it was very difficult—to say the least. This week I received an e-mail that the fruit of trusting Jesus enough to live victoriously:

One of the things you mentioned in a sermon was praying for the person who has hurt you. My thought was, “that isn't going to happen.” As time passed, I could see what this negative attitude was doing to me so I took a challenge I heard - praying for the person who wronged you, each day for 5 minutes - asking for blessing for them. It changed my life. I could see the positive effects the first day and by day 30, I was free from all the negativity that had bound me and closer to God than I have ever been in my life.

There is no greater victory lap than praying for our enemies—asking Jesus to bless them. When we trust Jesus, we live victoriously.

When we trust Jesus enough to make Him our dwelling place, **we will live with confidence in the future.**

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.

This passage was made famous by Satan—of all persons! Satan quoted it to Jesus after Jesus had fasted 40 days in the wilderness and was at His absolute low-point. Satan tempted Jesus by taking Him to the very pinnacle of the Jerusalem--something called the Royal Stoa, about 100 yards above a very hard limestone street.

And there Satan tempted Jesus to put His Father to the test by quoting Psalm 91:

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and “ ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ”

Luke 4:9-11

And Jesus immediately quoted Scripture back to Satan:

“It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’

Luke 4:12

Testing God is the opposite of trusting God.

What is testing God?

Testing God is making Him prove Himself to us. Testing God is making Him prove His faithfulness to us, making Him show us our future. Testing God betrays a fundamental lack of trust in His character and love for us. Testing God tells Him, “I trust circumstances more than I trust you.”

Testing God is devastating for our life, our faith and our walk with Jesus.

Unfortunately, this is where most Christians live. We test God rather than trusting Him. We want assurances before we obey. We want to know, if we listen to God, how the future is going to turn out, how things will go. We want God to reveal His exact plan, step by step, piece by piece. We want to see the playbook. We want details about what is coming.

Jesus just doesn’t work that way. And if we wait upon details of His plan, if we wait upon God to reveal every step, we will miss the great adventure that is being His follower.

There’s a reason why, of course, God rarely reveals the full extent of His plan, rarely gives us a step by step, detailed playbook—because if we knew, we likely wouldn’t follow, because following Jesus usually gets me into a messier, more challenging, difficult even painful situation than I anticipated when I took that first step of faith—when I trusted rather than tested.

But I have never regretted it. I have never regretted trusting Jesus in anything.

Finally, **when we trust God, we know Him.**

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.

Psalms 91:14-16

We are made to know God.

The first line of the Westminster Catechism is:

Q. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

We desperately want to know God and know that God knows us—every single one of us.

If I had to name one thing Christians take for granted, it would be the simple idea that God allows us to know Him. God reveals Himself to us.

People—everywhere and at all times throughout history—have gone to extreme lengths to know God, make costly sacrifices, give up their lives and even the lives of those they love and even

exchange their soul for cheap wares of carnality as a substitute for the joy of being intimate with God. People have sold everything they have and given their bodies to destruction in order to know God, any god.

Jesus has come to you.

And all the while Jesus says, “Trust me and I’ll deliver you. Call me and I’ll answer. I’ll rescue you. Honor you. I’ll be with you always—even to the end of the time.”

Do you trust Him?

I am inviting you today to trust Jesus.

If you are like me, you have put your trust in all kinds of things seeking the peace, the rest, the joy that only comes from knowing Jesus. And you have found what I have found, that nothing fills us, nothing serves us, nothing relieves us from our burdens like trusting Jesus.

This morning I invite you take a step of trust—just one step. Get a little closer to Jesus’s shadow, make yourself vulnerable to Jesus, let Him show you His salvation.

If you would like that, pray with me.

