

Why We Believe What We Believe 3

Provision & Protection

(preached 11/13/22)

Please turn to *Psalms 91*.

Sermon #1: 4 Factors and Justice/Morality:

- 4 Factors of why we believe as we do are: 1) Justice/Morality, 2) Mercy/Compassion, 3) Provision/Protection, and 4) Multiple Sources saying the same thing.
- It's with the HEART that one believes or doesn't.
- All of humanity attach justice and morality to what we believe, why is why we can be both passionate and unrelenting...even in the face of opposing facts or the Bible.
- We will reject any doctrine, idea, or philosophy we feel is unjust...even if evidence says it is or the Bible does.
- Under the OC eating food that had been sacrificed to idols was a massive taboo, but under the NC it no longer was.
- Some Jewish converts to Christianity still considered it immoral and sinful, and would be greatly offended when they saw other converts eating said food.
- Despite verbal & written corrections from the Apostle Paul himself assuring them it wasn't sin, some refused to adjust...why?
- Because they attached morality to their belief.
- The heart is tempted to believe itself to be equally moral to God: "I would have healed that person" etc.
- Part of our discipleship is to cast off our old selves and believe as Jesus believes.
- We do so by 1) recognizing that God is just and righteous all the time, more so than us.
- 2) crucifying our personal sense of morality when it clashes with God's Word, repenting, and attaching God's morality to what we believe.

Sermon #2: Mercy & Compassion.

- We're more likely to believe in something if we perceive mercy and compassion within it.
- We're more likely to reject something if we see a lack thereof.
- When we attach mercy & compassion to our belief, we'll be far more zealous and "feel good" about what we believe, assuring ourselves it's right.
- We'll do so even in the face of contrary facts or the Bible.
- Our hearts have a tough time seeing God's compassion and mercy within His commandments.
- All it can see is classic reward/punishment.
- Why did He send the Flood? Why do some go to Hell?
- When our hearts cannot reconcile these things, it exalts its own sense of mercy above that of God by saying "I would have thought of a lesser punishment."

- Yet Christ Jesus—Who was and is God in the flesh—descended from His throne in Heaven to come here and be born as one of us.
- All He did was good, yet we rejected, betrayed, slandered, and crucified Him for it.
- Yet even as His blood was being shed by us, that same blood forgave us of all sin!
- Even as we beat His body, that same broken body bought our healing and peace!
- Is there a greater act of compassion and mercy than His willingness to go to the Cross, descend into Hell so we don't have to, then rise from the dead on the 3rd day?!
- Even now He makes intercession for us in Heaven with Father God, speaking our names to Him so that we remain within the NC!
- Without Jesus then and now, we would all be going to Hell.
- The mercy and compassion of God is everywhere in the Bible and in our lives.
- His heart toward all of humanity is that of a Father Who loves His children, wants them to be Saved, and inherit His Kingdom.
- His heart breaks at the thought of anyone rejecting His Son and damning themselves to eternal separation from Him!
- Our goal is 1) to recognize that the Lord is more merciful and loving than any human being could hope to be and 2) to attach God's mercy and His compassion to what we believe, therefore both solidifying truth and being passionate for the same!

TODAY we cover provision and protection.

We're more likely to believe in something or someone when we see provision and protection within.

We're more likely to reject it when we don't.

WHEN WE ATTACH ONE OR BOTH OF THESE CONCEPTS TO A CONCEPT OR PERSON WE BELIEVE IN THEN OUR PASSION FOR THE SAME INCREASES, PERHAPS EVEN TO THE POINT OF STUBBORNNESS OR DECEPTION.

If that's the case, we'll still believe regardless of facts or what the Bible says.

WHEN WE SEE GOD'S PROVISION AND PROTECTION WITHIN HIS WORD, WE'LL HAVE A RIGHTEOUS AND KNOWLEDGEABLE ZEAL FOR HIM.

That will make us more prone toward thanks, praise, and worship of the Lord. A desire to be closer to Him.

MIRACULOUS PROVISION. Years ago I had a friend who, although brought up in the church, fell away from the faith even to the point of claiming he was an atheist. Even though he had some intellectual reasons for the same, his reasons were what we've been talking about through this entire sermon series.

- His heart saw too much **injustice** in the world to believe in a moral God.
- His heart saw a gaping **lack of compassion and mercy** in his experience, therefore refusing to believe there was a God Who embodied the same.
- His heart felt that he'd worked hard for his family's **protection and provision**, with no help from the Lord, and therefore felt that he didn't need God.

FALLING OUT. At first I tried to help him through this, but pretty soon our discussion got pretty heated and we had a falling out that lasted for several years where we didn't speak to each other. Then one day he called me, out of the blue, and told me a miraculous story. Long story short, he was in a bad way with no solutions in sight so he did what many do in this case: he prayed to God. He asked God to save the situation and that's exactly what He did.

HEART BELIEVED. His heart went from feeling cold and distant toward the Lord, doubting His very existence, to passionately soft and thankful toward Him. My friend was now declaring Jesus as His Savior and even claimed to have a visitation from Him afterward.

What happened? Was it the supernatural miracle that took place? Yes...but ***it was his heart that finally saw God's provision and protection for he and his family.***

IT IS WITH THE HEART THAT ONE BELIEVES. NOT THE MIND.

Psalm 91:1-16 (NKJV)

¹ He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

² I will say of the LORD, "*He is* my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

³ Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler *And* from the perilous pestilence.

⁴ He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth *shall be* your shield and buckler.

⁵ You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, *Nor* of the arrow *that* flies by day,

⁶ *Nor* of the pestilence *that* walks in darkness, *Nor* of the destruction *that* lays waste at noonday.

⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; *But* it shall not come near you.

⁸ Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked.

⁹ Because you have made the LORD, *who is* my refuge, *Even* the Most High, your dwelling place,

¹⁰ No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;

¹¹ For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.

¹² In *their* hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

¹³ You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.

¹⁴ "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.

¹⁵ He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.

¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation."

Psalm 91 is one of the most popular psalms of all time, second only to Psalm 23 in my opinion.

- Why do we respond to it the way we do?
- Why do our hearts begin to yearn, especially when the verses are read aloud?
- What it is about this Psalm that calls to us as deeply as it does?

MOTHER HEN. Believe it or not, the imagery shown in the first 4 verses is that of a mother hen covering her chicks. Whether it's stormy weather or a predator casting about looking for who it may devour, a mother hen gathers her chicks who crouch down underneath her wing. The hen is completely exposed to both the inclement weather and the predator, but her brood is sheltered and protected.

Verse 2 says that God is our REFUGE and FORTRESS.

REFUGE translates to a shelter of hope, a place where our trust is secure.

FORTRESS means something even stronger like a castle, a place of defense against an enemy.

Verse 3 goes even further. Whereas a refuge or fortress is an immovable place you run to and into, verse 3 shows that God isn't limited to merely being approached. It says he "delivers us from the snare of the fowler." Haven't you ever wondered what that was?

SNARE is a metal trap that's baited with something alluring to the prey.

FOWLER is a trap specific to hens and chicks, meant to entangle them. This shows premeditation—***a person laid this trap on purpose to capture chicks to eat them.*** If you read the rest of Psalm 91 it's evident that the being who lays this trap is the devil.

Next it says God frees us from the "perilous pestilence."

PERILOUS doesn't just mean dangerous, its translation is fascinating: it means naughty, mischievous, and wicked.

PESTILENCE means a large scale calamity that descends on people en masse whether a virus or tens of thousands of devouring locusts.

COMBINE ALL. Now consider the words together in the phrase God uses: the pestilence God frees us from isn't something like Covid, but rather *trouble that we've gotten ourselves into*.

- First we're drawn to "bait" that's already tempted us,
- then the trap springs and we're caught,
- then a "pestilence" descends upon us while trapped.

It's one thing to feel that God "provided" for us when we've earned it or "protected" us when we've done things right.

- I'm a faithful Christian who goes to church, volunteers, and lives a holy life...so if God protects me from getting sick or injured, maybe I had that as my reward?
- I worked hard and sacrificed at my workplace so when I get the raise and promotion, I credit God ... but believe He helped me because I helped myself.
- The snare of the fowler was baited with something that enticed and tantalized us, something forbidden, that hid destruction underneath it.
- When we moved to take it the trap was sprung, we couldn't free ourselves, and the "perilous pestilence" which descended upon us was trapper coming to collect his prize and eat it.

Provision and protection is when God frees us at that point.

WHEN HE STEPS IN AND SALVAGES US OUT OF A BAD SITUATION.

CREDIT MANIA! When I was 19 I applied for a credit card and when my grandma found out, she pled with me over the phone not to. She tried to explain the concept of interest to me, but I didn't listen. After I got the card she pled with me to use it for emergency purposes only, and I didn't listen. I bought my first Sony Walkman with that card! I maxed it out within a few months and applied for another one that offered to triple my credit limit if I would only transfer the current debt to them. *So I did and then maxed the second card out.*

MIRACLE? I couldn't believe the miracle that kept happening. Through divine providence, it seemed that other credit card companies now had my information and were upping their offerings. A 3rd card said that if I transferred my debt to them, they would double my current credit limit and I jumped at the chance! Within a few months I had that card maxed out too.

Grandma found out and offered to cosign a loan with me at the bank for a lower interest rate and I agreed. She made a condition: I had to cut up the card in front of her. I did. We went to the bank together and they cut a check to my current CC company and I began sending payments to the Addison bank.

I was a good boy for a few months...but the itch started getting worse and my need to scratch it became overwhelming. Other credit card companies were laying out “bait” that I just couldn’t resist: increasing credit limits, lowering interest rates, and giving certain rewards. For me, it was like staring at a juicy steak that’s been grilled to perfection after not eating all day.

OOPS I DID IT AGAIN. I took out another credit card, determined not to tell anyone! Within 6 months I had it maxed out and was now sending two 3-figure payments out every month. I was living in NYC, one of the most expensive places to live, and only making 13K after taxes. I was drowning and couldn’t do anything. I did cut up that CC and even called to cancel my account. The lady over the phone made it clear that I still owed them the \$ regardless. Even with this the damage was done: I was caught in a trap I couldn’t get out of and the trapper was coming to collect his prize.

What I really needed was a savior. Someone more wealthy and wise than me, who also cared deeply about me, and was willing to free me.

Somehow grandma found out and called me. I recall sitting at my desk at work, and closing my office door when she brought it up to me. She didn’t yell, raise her voice, or start lecturing me. She didn’t say “I told you so.” She listened quietly while I confessed everything...including the fact that I’d already cut the CC up and canceled my account before she called. After I spoke there was silence for a few uncomfortable seconds, and she asked what I owed on the CC.

Then she said she would pay it...the entire thing. And she did.

FREE MYSELF? I recall being stunned, so much so I almost dropped the receiver. Hold on and hear me out: even though I’d been “trapped” several times by the same “bait” which was an ability to spend money I didn’t have on things I didn’t need, I’d been able to sorta kinda get myself out...but not really.

By transferring debt from one card to another, I was just making a deal with a worse devil than the previous one.

One that laid a bigger, badder trap for me baited more extravagantly.

TOO LATE. By the time I'd made this deal over and over, I realized I was truly snared by the fowler. I was entangled in a trap I couldn't escape from and was being eaten alive by the 19% interest payments. When I sat down and did the math on how long it would take me to pay all my debts, it would be years of being able to do next to nothing financially but eat, sleep, and go to work. It was the first time I realized that I was caught in this trap with no way out and grandma delivered me from it.

The concept of this kind of provision, protection, and refuge is that of a Savior Who pulls us out of quicksand we dove right into.

- Who throws us a rope into a pit we've dug ourselves into.
- Who gets us out of jail after we've committed a crime. It denotes a Savior Who salvages a situation that we messed up.

A SAVIOR WHO IS GREATER, STRONGER, MORE WEALTHY, AND MORE AUTHORITATIVE THAN THE PERSON WHO SET THE TRAP ABOUT TO EAT US AS PREY.

The hen gathers her chicks underneath the protection of her wing, and the Good Shepherd sets out to find His lost sheep.

PALM SUNDAY. Centuries after Psalm 91 was written, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was about to walk through the gates of Jerusalem for the last time to celebrate Passover. He was entering in as the Messiah and King they'd been waiting millennia for. Crowds of people were gathered to lay down palms and clothing before Him...and then this happens:

Luke 13:31-35 (ESV)

³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."

³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.'

³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'

³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

PREDATOR. He calls Herod a fox because foxes kill chickens—Herod is a predator. In verses 32-33 Jesus is telling us that He will die in place of His brood.

Verse 34 tells us the unfortunate choice the people will be making. Even though He raises His Psalm 91 wing and calls His chicks to come gather for safety, they run from Him. Not only do they reject Him, but actually run to the side of the predator believing it will take care of them.

The bait trappers lay out is tempting because we believe there's protection and provision in it rather than God.

It deceives us into thinking the trapper will be our mother hen and there's shelter underneath its hawk wings.

Verse 35 is the terrible result: since they've decided to shack up with Satan, God will let them...and they will be made empty. Truly, slightly less than 40 years later the Roman Empire would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, as Babylon had done 6 centuries previous, and scatter the Jewish people to the 4 corners of the earth.

SECOND COMING. Yet look at the end of the verse 35 where Jesus fulfills the role of the Good Shepherd going forth to look for the lost sheep: He's going to come back in the end of days. When the people of this world is truly caught in the snare of the fowler, worse than at any time in history. When the Dragon and His Beast are ruling the world with an iron fist and martyring anyone who proclaims the name of Jesus.

THE LORD WILL RETURN FOR HIS BROOD IN GREAT POWER AND GLORY.

NOT EVERY PHYSICAL NEED. The Lord doesn't provide for every physical need, otherwise the tens of thousands of Christians starving in India would have food and shelter. The Lord doesn't protect us from every physical harm and our example is not just Jesus Himself, broken and battered, but the Apostles all of whom were violently persecuted to the point of death with the exception of John.

PROTECTS OUR ETERNAL FUTURE. Yet within the Gospel the Lord protects our eternal future with Him from sin, the devil, the world...and US.

He's going to share His Kingdom with us forever which is the ultimate provision.

The Lord truly is our Protector and Provider. It's in His Gospel and His Word. It's in Him. Let's believe what the Lord says by attaching these things, then we'll find ourselves wanting to thank Him.