

Almighty

Psalm 91



A man was driving home one night in a very dense fog. It was so thick that all he could see were the taillights of the car in front of him. Desiring some safety in the terrible visibility, he decided to follow the taillights to make sure he didn't veer off the road.

It was working like a charm until all of a sudden, the taillights came to an abrupt halt. The man was following this beacon of protection so closely that he wasn't able to stop in time and he rammed the back of the car in front of him.

"Why would you just stop like that?!" screamed the man as he got out of his car to confront the driver in front of him.

"Why wouldn't I?" replied the driver. "I was in my own garage."

One of these two thought he was safe in the light of another car, and found out he wasn't. The other thought he was safe in his own home, and found out that wasn't true either.



In the last few years, there's been a lot of conversation, even ridicule, around the idea of people attempting to set up "safe spaces" so nobody can harm them.

Admittedly, some of that ridicule might be born in truth. Setting up our own safe places in the middle of a fallen world doesn't usually work out.

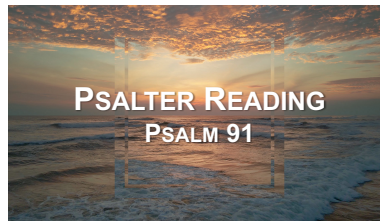
But in all honesty, don't we all desire some form of safety, to know we're protected?

We build strong and sturdy homes that can withstand weather and storms. We have all sorts of security devices and cameras to lock down our safe places and warn us of any intruders.

Maybe we even get some sort of ferocious dog that will protect us from all harm – or in my case, two small dogs that are much more brave on their own side of the window.

We desire to be safe, to be protected.

That's where Psalm 91 comes in. This is a Psalm that speaks a lot about protection. It speaks about what we can trust as children of God. And it has a very important reminder for us about who God is.



And so, listen now to these words known as Psalm 91:

*¹ Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of Shaddai.*

*² I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."*

*³ Surely he will save you
from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.*

*⁴ He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*

*⁵ You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,*

*⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.*

*⁷ A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.*

*⁸ You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.*

*⁹ If you say, "The Lord is my refuge,"
and you make the Most High your dwelling,*

*¹⁰ no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.*

*¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;*

*¹² they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.*

*¹³ You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.*

*¹⁴ "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.*

*¹⁵ He will call on 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."*



I think one of the first things we notice is that there's a lot of bad stuff in there!

Verse 3 mentions the fowler's snare, representing all those that mean to entrap us. It also mentions the deadly pestilence, which is sickness that we fear...sickness that threatens to end our lives.

Verse 5 has the terror of the night and then deadly arrows flying our way.

Verse 6 sees the return of the pestilence or disease, but this time it's stalking and moving in the darkness of night. That's terrifying on its own, but then in daytime we have the plague that destroys. We've all been through a pandemic. We know what that feels like now.

Verse 7 seems to imply that we would be left all alone to face all of this terror by ourselves, with a thousand or ten thousand falling around us.



And yet, Psalm 91 goes on to tell us that we have nothing to fear.

In fact, verses 9 through 13 say that if we would even make the claim that we have a refuge in God, then we have no choice than to also believe that no harm will come to us.

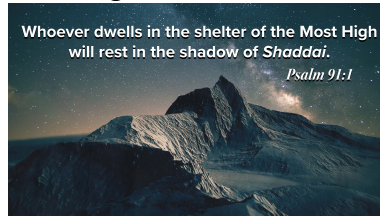
And then verses 14 through 16 have God himself telling us the very same thing. If we love Him, He will rescue us.

Those are some big promises, particularly when they follow all that came before them.

How are we able to trust in God for protection, especially when we know that sometimes we don't really *feel* protected?

Sometimes that deadly sickness still knocks on our door, or the door of someone we know and love. Sometimes we do still feel very alone. Sometimes we do feel trapped.

How are we to know God is still protecting us in those moments?



Psalm 91 contains that answer, but we have to go all the way back to the first verse to find it. In fact, we're going to hone in on one single word for that answer.

*¹ Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of Shaddai.*

Okay, I have a confession to make. I made a little substitution in the first verse.

Chances are in your Bible you won't find the word *Shaddai* at the end of that verse. It's most likely that you'll find another word that we'll get to in a moment, and *Shaddai* will be buried in the footnote.



But I wanted to first focus on this Hebrew word *Shaddai*.



In Genesis 17, our first reading this morning, God reveals Himself to Abraham as *El Shaddai*.



That *El* in front of it means "God," so if it's a name that God calls Himself and a name He wants us to know, it must be important.



Shaddai carries with it a few different translations and meanings. Together this morning, I want to unpack some of the translations for this word.



One way it can be translated is “of the mountain.” So *El Shaddai* would be “God of the mountain.”

Israel took this literally, and for good reason. When Moses met with God, he had to travel up Mount Sinai to do it. Mount Zion becomes the location of the temple in Jerusalem. Probably the most famous of all of Jesus’ sermons took place on the side of a mountain, and is literally known as the Sermon on the Mount.

I think we were meant to take some symbolism in this idea of “God on a mountain”, though.

In other words, we were meant to know that God is above. He is highest. He is over all. There is nothing that can rise to a position above God.



Shaddai is also close in appearance to other Hebrew and Near Eastern words that carry connotations of a mother nurturing her child, so another way that *Shaddai* is translated is “sufficient.”

And so *El Shaddai* can mean the “All-sufficient One.” He sustains, he nourishes, he gives strength.

There is nothing that God cannot carry us through.

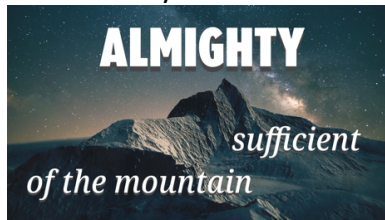


Finally, and probably the most universally accepted, *Shaddai* can mean “mighty.” *El Shaddai* in this sense would mean “God Almighty.” This is actually the word that you’re likely to find in your Bible: Almighty.

In this sense, God is the “Overpowerer.” There is nothing that is stronger than He is. There is nothing that He cannot only rise to meet, but simply overpower.



Is the true translation of *Shaddai* one of these three and not the other two? I don’t know. I’m don’t know that Biblical scholars know exactly which is the true meaning.



What I believe though, is that we can waste a lot of time trying to figure out exactly what things like *Shaddai* actually mean. I believe all of these ideas together give us the most complete version of what God means when He tells us His name is *El Shaddai*.

There is nothing in this world, or in any world, that will ever be higher than He already is. He wants to be the One that strengthens and nourishes and protects us. And we know these things because He is Almighty. He overpowers anything and everything.

And Psalm 91 tells us that is the God that we can run to, and that He will protect us.

I don’t really know what is more awesome than that. If that very thought doesn’t leave you even the smallest bit awestruck today, I’m not quite sure what will.

We are here today worshipping a God that will always and forever be higher and stronger and mightier and more capable than anything we will ever face in our lives.

And yet, that is the very same God that is reaching out to us to offer us His own protection. He is reaching out to us so much that He limited Himself to enter into our world and live as we do so He could die as we die.

And then He showed us that even death cannot rise to His power and might.

And He wants to know you and to show you His grace and His mercy.

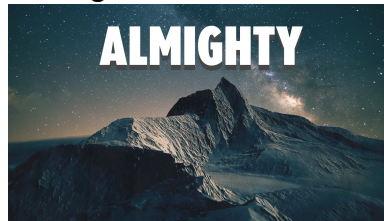
What is more important than that?

You are here today to hear about an Almighty God. You are here today to hear about a God that is higher, that is sufficient, that is more than enough. And He loves YOU.

And so if we go back to Psalm 91, and if in your life you are feeling trapped, if you are feeling fearful of what is happening around you, if you feel you are walking alone, well I would tell you that you can rest in the shadow of *El Shaddai* – of God Almighty.

If you are feeling that you are separated from Him, that there's no reason for this high and mighty God to want you, I would tell you there is nothing that is bigger or stronger than our God. If death cannot stop Him, there's nothing in your life than stop Him either.

If you're willing to give up your own struggle, and if you're willing to trust in His protection no matter what may come – then you also get to find that rest.



I'll end today as Psalm 91 ends.

If you call on Him, He will answer you.

He will be with you in trouble.

He will deliver and honor you.

He will satisfy you and He will show you His salvation.

And you can trust all of this because He is *El Shaddai*.

He is Almighty.

And all of *El Shaddai's* people said...