

Wisdom for the Anxious

Psalm 91

Sermon Handout

The call of Christ is not merely to cope with our fears and our anxieties. It is to be courageous. It is to advance the kingdom of God, living courageously and sharing our hope in Christ. It is not letting our fears define us or defeat us as we follow Jesus Christ.

“As the Stoics and Buddhists taught long ago, happiness cannot be reached by eliminating all ‘triggers’ from life; rather, happiness comes from learning to deprive external events of the power to trigger negative emotions in you.” Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*

Anxiety is fueled by the delusion of believing you have to save your own life and fearing that you don’t have the resources or ability to do it. Peace is knowing that God will never leave you or forsake you as you follow Christ by faith.

I. The Wise Person’s Profession and Pledge. Psalm 91:1-2

"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 91:1-2 (ESV)

Psalm 91 does not remove the cost of discipleship. That is a lie of the prosperity gospel which finds its origins in the deceit of the devil not the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ Temptation:

"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.’ And Jesus answered him, 'It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’" Luke 4:9-12 (ESV)

- **The wise person’s profession:**

“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.”

- **The wise person’s pledge:**

"I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.’"

"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" Romans 8:31-32 (ESV)

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39 (ESV)

The wise person sees that God alone is the Almighty and that only the person who takes refuge in Him is truly safe. Therefore, they make it their commitment to put their trust in Him alone no matter what they face!

II. The Almighty's Provision and Protection. Psalm 91:3-13

The psalmist lists several protections that come to the person who has committed themselves to trust in the Almighty alone.

- **Protection Against Things Seen and Unseen. (Psalm 91:3-6)**

"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." Psalm 91:5-6 (ESV)

- **Protection Against The Coming Judgment (Psalm 91:7-10)**

"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. 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." Psalm 91:7-10 (ESV)

"I think fearing God means that God is, in your mind and heart, so powerful and so holy and so awesome that you would not dare to run away from him, but only run to him. In other words, fearing God is not another requirement. It's the way you do covenant-keeping. It's the way you receive Jesus. It's the way you come to Jesus. You come reverently; you come humbly; you

come without any presumption that you deserve anything or that he owes you anything. You come trembling.” John Piper

- **Protection Against Stumbling and Falling (Psalm 91:11-12)**

"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." Psalm 91:11-12 (ESV)

III. The Almighty's Covenantal Promises. Psalm 91:14-15

- **Deliverance and Protection for Those Who Love His name:**

"Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him because he knows my name."

- **Responsiveness to Prayer and Comforting Presence:**

"When he calls me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble."

- **Rescue, Honor and Salvation:**

"I will rescue him and honor him. With long life, I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."
Matthew 16:25 (ESV)

Here's the question: Are you going to live a life of self-protection or self-preservation or are you going to live a life of courage ... trusting God when you are afraid and following Him to the end?

Small Group Study Questions

- 1. Psalm 91 begins with the picture of a person who “dwells in the shelter of the Most High” and “abides in the shadow of the Almighty.” What do you think it means practically to “dwell” in God’s presence rather than simply turn to Him occasionally when you are afraid?**
- 2. The lesson says that anxiety is often fueled by the belief that we must save our own lives and that we do not have the resources to do so. In what ways can the desire for control and self-protection contribute to anxiety in our lives?**
- 3. Psalm 91:2 says, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” What are some things—other than God—that we are tempted to make our refuge or fortress? How do those alternatives ultimately compare with God?**
- 4. The lesson emphasizes that Psalm 91 is not a promise that Christians will never experience suffering, danger, illness, or hardship. How should we understand God’s protection in light of the suffering experienced by Jesus and His followers?**
- 5. Jesus refused to put God to the test when Satan quoted Psalm 91 during His temptation. What is the difference between genuinely trusting God and presuming that God must protect us from every difficulty or consequence?**
- 6. Psalm 91 speaks of dangers that are both seen and unseen. What fears—whether realistic or imagined—most commonly disturb our peace? How might trusting in God's presence change the way we respond to those fears?**
- 7. The lesson says, “You come reverently; you come humbly; you come without any presumption that you deserve anything or that he owes you anything.” How does a proper understanding of the fear of God actually help us run toward God rather than away from Him?**
- 8. God says, “When he calls me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble.” How is God’s promise to be present with us different from a promise that He will remove all our troubles? When have you experienced God's presence in a difficult season?**
- 9. The final challenge asks whether we will live primarily for self-protection and self-preservation or with courage and trust in God. What is one area of your life where fear is currently influencing your decisions, and what might it look like to trust God and follow Him courageously in that area?**