

**Living In The Shadow Of The Almighty #1**

**Refuge**

**Psalm 91**

Wednesday, August 20, 2003 • Dr. David McKinley

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Thanks Chris and to all of our praise team tonight. Would you just say thank you to Rick, our band, our singers tonight, [applause] and a..., [pause for applause] let them know how much you have appreciated their a..., leadership. It's been great tonight, to come together and to get connected again and I'm so thankful many of you were here early to be able to enjoy a great meal. I'm thankful that you're here and a part of this gathering tonight and truly excited about what we're going to begin to do in a Journey of life and of faith, of study and of fellowship as we share together over these a..., Wednesday evenings of the fall. A..., during the course of this summer I've been making a personal pilgrimage in my life back to a familiar portion of the Scripture that I have read and loved a..., really from the time that I was a teenager. I decided that I was going to make the summer of 2003 the summer of Psalms in my life and that I was simply gonna to go back to what I really have found to be, often, the most worn, the most marked, the most used portion of every Bible that I've ever owned and that is the Psalms. And just to read them again and to try to absorb again something of the life of faith and something of the a..., realities of life through reading the expressions that are found in the wonderful beautiful book, right in the middle of the Bible, the heart of the Bible is the Psalms. And whether you are facing the undertow of life, being pulled down, or the overflow of life, excited and celebrating, there's a Psalm that matches the mood and the emotion of your life.

I like what Ray Steadman had said in his commentary on the book of Psalms, he says:

*"The book of Psalms, particularly reflects the variety of human hopes. Every experience of man's heart is reflected here. No matter what mood you find yourself in some Psalm will reflect that mood, for the amazing book records every one of man's emotions and reactions."*

You know there are a lot of things that we do to express ourselves. Sometimes it's on the high side, sometimes it's on the low side, but I promise you, whatever kind of day or experience or circumstance you may be finding yourself in right now, the book that we're gonna look at and investigate and embrace together is gonna give expression to where you are

in life today and it's a book that is filled with power, a book that is filled with encouragement and a book that I think really will make a tremendous difference in your life because the Psalms are the song book of the Bible. And just as in music, we have everything from jazz to blues and from ballads to choruses of praise, so it is that in the Bible and in the book of Psalms we find these very things. Now the Psalms are amazing because there are 150 of them, 150 Psalms. But in reality those 150 Psalms or songs that you find there have been gathered together into 5 different books and those 5 books throughout history, especially among the Jewish people have often been seen as songs that portray the experiences that they have had as a nation.

In fact if I can just give you this little chart and let you take a look at it with me you'll see that in the Jewish mindset, often the Psalms are seen as though they were a..., paralleling the 5 major books of the Bible, the opening books of the Bible, the Pentateuch.

And that Psalm 1 thru 41 parallels Genesis and when you read those Psalms what you read are expressions of what it is to be created of God and to have a need for God in life.

When you read Psalms 42 thru 72 you read, as though it were, something out of Exodus, what it means to be captured, to be oppressed and the people of God as they were expressing the frustration of capture and oppression in their lives.

When you read Psalms 73 thru 89 you read, as though it were, the book of Leviticus and it's all concerned with worship and many of the expressions of worship and the heart of worship is found in this portion of the Psalms.

And then when you read Psalms 90 thru 106 it's like the numbers, the book of Numbers, the cries from the wilderness, the wanderings and if you've ever wandered in life and ever wondered what God was letting a..., happen and unfold in your life, then these Psalms may be for you.

And then Psalm 107 thru 150 in the Jewish mind has always been parallel with Deuteronomy, it's the echo, the rehearsal, the repeating again of, of God's faithfulness and of God's goodness and of the confidence that the God who delivered in the past will deliver again in the days to come.

And so you find all of these things, as though it were, being paralleled in the life of the nation of Israel of whom this songbook gives expression. But of course in our lives as well and so it's a wonderful and an exciting study and tonight we're going to dive in to what I have simply entitled as a series, *Living In The Shadow Of The Almighty*. That's why I love that song that Chris just sang for us tonight because it's a song that expresses living in the shadow of the Almighty and Psalm 91 is the Psalm in which we find that phrase and that I invite you to turn to with me tonight and for us to begin looking at and investigating together, because I really believe this is the launching point for us in these days

and in this time together. Thank you so much for coming tonight! I hope that you'll be here each week. I hope you'll bring friends. I hope you'll always bring a Bible and I trust that God will do something very significant in your life as a result of being here and making the connection midweek at the Prestonwood Connection Service. Psalm 91 in verse 1:

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

And then the psalmist says it this way and I want you to look at it with me, verse 2:

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

I don't wanna just read that for you tonight, I want you to get that into your mind and into your heart. We said that to abide in His presence is to know the shadow of the Almighty, but it becomes personal in your life when you begin to make the Lord your refuge. And so I want us to say out loud, proclaim together, to one another tonight, this statement of faith. Would you share it with me?

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

Let's say it one more time together.

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

A refuge, the Bible says that God is our refuge and if there's anything that we need in the course of this life and the journey that we make is that we need to know that there is a refuge, a refuge for the storms that come to life, a refuge when we are hurting and in need in life, a refuge from the heat and the intensity, the pressure and the demands of life. A refuge that provides a place to be restored and to be renewed and the Bible simply says that God, our God is our refuge. And just as a shelter, a refuge provides physical protection for those in need so it is that God our refuge has promised to provide protection and strength and renewal for every one of us. Because when the emergencies of life come and when the uncertainties of life befall us, we need to know how to make the 911 call and Psalm 91, verse 1 is the 911 call of the Bible. It simply says:

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

And then he says my God is my refuge and there's something that I want you to hear and to understand tonight and it is that God is going to take care of you. Over in the book of Matthew, Jesus tells of how God cares, even for the sparrows, that even the birds do not have to harvest because God

provides for them and how God cares for every sparrow, every bird of the field, that God provides for every living thing.

I heard about a pastor who came home one afternoon, walked out in his backyard to look up and to see that in a tree a little kitten had climbed up into the top of that tree. He was bothered and concerned and decided that he needed to try to do something and so he did everything he knew how to do to try to coax that little cat, that little kitten down out of the top of that tree. He went and got some milk and he did just everything that he could but the tree wasn't all that tall and that big, but it was just high enough that he, he couldn't get to it and he kept tryin to think what can I do, what can I do? So he came up with an incredible idea. He decided that maybe if he would take a rope and throw it up and tie it up into the top of the tree and then get that rope and begin to pull it down that maybe he could somehow pull it down enough to where he could get it low enough to get his hands on that little kitten. Well, so he began to do that and he started tugging on the rope, but he really was just kinda shaking the tree, he didn't have quite enough, so he came up with a great idea, he though I'm gonna tie the rope to the back of my car and I'm gonna very carefully just ease that car forward so that I can get that tree to just sort of, you know, bend over and surely enough he started moving and the tree started bending and bending and he was being ever so careful as he was making his progress and he noticed it was just about where he thought he could get to it, decided to go just a little further and guess what happened? The rope snapped and the tree fa.....pp shot straight up. [pause for slight congregation laughter] Suddenly the kitten was nowhere in sight. [pause for more laughter] He couldn't find that cat anywhere and so he was in the process of tryin to figure out what in the world am I gonna do about this cat. Well, he had to be back at some meetings in the church so he decided the only thing that he could do was just to commit the cat to the Lord and go on, and so he did. [pause for more laughter] Well, about 4 days later he was in the store one afternoon, ran into a lady who attended his church. He had known this lady for a very long time and one thing he knew about this lady is she did not like cats, she'd made it very clear. She was outspoken about the fact that she didn't care a thing about cats. But he noticed that she had some cat food in her basket and so he simply said, "You know, I, I just wanna ask you a question. I notice today that you've got cat food, you've always told me how much you hate cats." He said, "What in the world are you doin with that cat food?" She said, "Pastor, you are not going to believe this," [pause for more laughter] she said, "My daughter has been cryin and complaining and just tellin me day and night that she wanted a cat and I don't want cats and I don't like cats, but I told her that if God sent her a cat she could have it." [pause for more laughter] And she said, "Pastor, I promise, I saw her she went out and she got in the front yard one afternoon, got on her knees and asked the Lord for a cat and no more than she said, 'Amen' a cat just landed right in front of her." [pause for much more laughter] She said, "I couldn't believe it." [pause for more laughter] Well, God provides a refuge for every one of us and if God takes care of the kittens and God takes care of the birds and God takes care of everything else, let me tell you something friend, God is going to take care of you, because He is your

refuge. I want us to continue reading now this Psalm beginning in verse 3, the psalmist says:

<sup>3</sup>Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence. <sup>4</sup>He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you will take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. <sup>5</sup>You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, <sup>6</sup>nor of the pestilence that walks in the darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. <sup>7</sup>A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. <sup>8</sup>Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked. <sup>9</sup>Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your habitation, <sup>10</sup>No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; <sup>11</sup>For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all of your ways. <sup>12</sup>They shall bear you up, in their hands, Lest you dashed your foot against the stone. <sup>13</sup>You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. <sup>14</sup>"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he's known My name. <sup>15</sup>He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in the trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. <sup>15</sup>With long life will I satisfy him, And show him My salvation."

What an incredible statement of promise and of protection that God has given to you and God has given to me. Now here's the question tonight. How can I know and experience the refuge of God in my life? If God's Word just openly and clearly declares that God is a refuge for His people then the question is from whatever pathway of life you may have come into this building tonight how can you know and experience God's refuge right now, where you are, tonight? Well, let me just suggest several things. You might wanna jot these down because if they don't have great weight in your heart tonight there will come a day not so far in the future that they will.

Number 1: You and I must **ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S COMMITMENT TO CARE FOR HIS CHILDREN**. If I'm going to experience the refuge then I just have to acknowledge what I've been trying to sort of set up and say to you here tonight. I have to acknowledge God's commitment to care for his children. Everything that we have just read is not my word, or my encouragement, or my expression to you; this is the very Word of God and God is saying to you that He is a refuge for you and that it is His character, it is His very nature to care for you and to care for every need in your life. Interestingly enough as we begin to read these opening verses where we spent a little time at the outset, we understand that actually there are 4 different names of God that are given here in the opening words of this Psalm. You see that's what I love about the Psalms, you can read them, as though you're reading poetic expression, but then suddenly you realize that you're grasping something of incredible truth and here's what it says: [Psalm 91:1]

He who dwells in the secret place of the **MOST HIGH**..

He is the Most High God. In the Hebrew, the word is Elyon, the Most High is the Elyon and what it speaks of is the superiority of God, that while this earth and those who dwell therein have many gods and there are gods of all kind that people look to and surrender to and worship, there is only one God who is the Most High God and when you make that God the shelter of life, when you understand who He is then you begin to live life in a completely different capacity. Reality changes for you when you know the God who is the God of superiority, the Most High God. He's not a little God. As our pastor was preaching Sunday, we serve a big God and how vital it is day in and day out in my life that if I am going to know the refuge of God in life that I focus on the God, who is the God of superiority, the Most High God who is above and beyond all others and all else and because I know this God and I trust this God, I am not captured by the limitations and the things that are lacking in the false gods of this world because I serve the Most High God.

But not only does it say:

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High...*

But it says that one:

*...Shall abide under the shadow of the...*

What's the next one?

### **...ALMIGHTY.**

That's the word in the Hebrew, El Shaddai, the Almighty One. It speaks of the strength of God, His power, His authority, His strength and though I may be going through hardship and difficulty and uncertainty, because God has promised to shadow me in His wings, He is the Almighty One and no one and nothing can get to me when I am under the hand of His protective care. He is the God of strength and when I come to the very end of all of my strength and when I come to the very emptiness of all of my sufficiency, there is still a God who is strong and able and capable of protecting me and seeing me all the way through. He is the Most High God. He is the One who is Almighty.

But then the Bible goes on to say that:

*I will say to the **LORD**,...*

Verse 2:

*I will say to the **LORD**,...*

The word there that is found is the word, Yahweh, Jehovah. And when we speak of Jehovah God, we are speaking of the One who is the I AM. You remember that when God appeared to Moses and the burning bush, He told him that I AM is going to send you back and send you to the people of, of God

and to the ne...land of Egypt and you're gonna lead people out and, and when Moses didn't know where he would find the sufficiency, the strength, the ability, God simply said, I AM that I AM, and whatever you need, He is. And tonight what we are saying is simply this, that we have to acknowledge God's commitment to care for His children. He is the God of superiority, He is the God of strength and He is the God of sufficiency and there is not anything, listen to me, anything that you need tonight that God cannot and will not supply in your life. I didn't say He'd change everything about what you're facing in life. I said there's not anything you need that He will not supply in life and therefore we begin to tap in to the very sufficiency of this God. We get beyond ourselves and we get into Him and to His strength and His power, the eternal unchanging God.

And then the Bible goes on to say:

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High [**superiority**]  
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty [**strength**]  
I will say of the Lord, [**sufficiency**]  
"He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in whom I trust."*

The word God is the most common use that we find in the Old Testament. Over 2300 times we find this reference, Elohim. Elohim, just means the **sovereign** God. It's the word that you find in Genesis chapter 1 in verse 1.

*In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth.*

And the wonder of it all is that in the word Elohim, we have both the mystery and the unity of the trinity of God, but He is the Sovereign One, He rules and oversees all things and though there are many things in life that I don't understand, I can't explain, I many times don't like; the reality is, is that I have a God who is the Sovereign One and His very nature and character is to care for my need, to see my concern and to promise that He will see me through whatever may befall me.

A number of years ago in *National Geographic Magazine* there was a incredible story about a massive fire that burned a... acres and acres of land in the Yellowstone National Park and after the fire had ultimately been quenched and been brought under submission and control a group of fire fighters and forest workers went in to just sort of try to assess the damage and according to this article, apparently as they were making their way through all the charred embers that were there, they looked and noticed that there was a, a rather a..., unusual figure at the base of a tree and it was charred. And ultimately one of the workers realized that it was a bird that had tried to find shelter and it literally had just been incrustated and burned in that tree. He simply reached over and took a walking stick that he had and he punched at it just to sort of obliterate the remains that were there and when he did 3 little chicks came running out from under that bird that was there. And then they began to understand that a, a mother bird, instead of taking flight tried to find a place to hide and to shelter her little chicks that were there. What an incredible

picture that is of the shadow of the Almighty, of the shelter of His wings. 2000 years ago God expressed the ultimate expression of love and care for you and for me when He let His Son taste death for us, that we through His death might receive the gift of eternal life, that we might be protected, that we might be blessed and that we might be given the greatest of all gifts. You see, how do I know that God is my refuge? I acknowledge His commitment to care for me.

There a second way in which we begin to experience the refuge of God and that is not only to acknowledge His commitment to care for you but to **BELIEVE GOD'S PROMISE TO CARE FOR YOU**. You say, "Well, what's the difference?" Well, there's a lot of difference. There are a lot of people who acknowledge that God cares for His children, there are a lot of people who would say, O God help us. There are a lot of people who would say we need the refuge that is found in God, but the reality is, is that when life begins to press and to distress and to stress, many of us instead of believing God's care, begin to rely on our own strength. Instead of running to the Lord we, as though it were, live in terror. For this reason the Bible says here as we read it a..., looking here in verse 5:

*You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,...*

You, not just us, not just we, not just ya-all, He's saying you, every one of you shall not be afraid of the terror because you can believe in the refuge of your God. And therefore what the Bible is telling us is that faith must become personal. It's not just enough to acknowledge the truth of God, it is true, God is who His Word proclaims Him to be and He is superior and He is strong and He is sufficient and He is sovereign. But then what must happen in life is that when I face a crisis I have to believe this refuge. The personal faith factor.

Paul Tournier said:

*"Faith is not a shelter against difficulties but belief in the face of all contradictions."*

And in my life I go to the One who begins to shelter me because I believe Him even when I don't understand and can't explain what's happening in **< turn tape >** You see I always have 2 choices in the crisis of life, one is fear, the other is faith. Our world today is living in fear. Fear is both a possession and an experience in the lives of people, but so can faith be. Faith can be a possession that is personal and real, something that you know about that you understand, but it has to become an experience in your life and that faith must be rooted and grounded in the truth of the Word of God, but you must believe and I must believe in the truth and the trustworthiness of God and of His promise in life because He has promised to care. The question is, am I willing to trust Him with my life?

Oswald Chambers said it this way:



*"Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading."*

And when the crisis, when the crush comes in life, what matters is, letting your faith be so real that you say, You are my refuge, the God in Whom I trust.

A year ago we started The Connection Service and wanted to emphasize some special times of prayer together for need and at that time one of the things we attempted to do and have done along the way is to capture some video testimonies of people in need, of people who are thanking God for what He's done, from breakthrough experiences in life and victories of faith and that's been a wonderful part of this service when we've come together. But the first of the videos that we ever shared together in this service and then a call to prayer at the close of it, was a video sharing the life's journey at that time of a man by the name of Bill Albright and his wife Shannon, their 2 children Liz, at that time age 15 and son Tyler age 12 and on that video that night sitting here in a service just like this, Bill related the fact that his wife Shannon in March had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and then that they had begun to go through a series of treatments and, and the ups and downs of that and simply that evening asked us if we would pray for he and his kids and for his wife Shannon. Well, tonight, Bill I've asked to come back and to join me here for just a few minutes and to share with us a little bit about what's happened as we've prayed and been a part of that process since that time and something of the journey of faith that he's made in, in days a..., that have been gone by. Now you'll notice that a..., he's a bit taller than I am and so I feel a little intimidated having this giant next to me but a..., Bill first of all would you just kinda pick up the story and just a..., give them a, a moment of what happened in the months that followed.

Bill: Okay

David: Thank you.

Bill: Well, it was a..., 6 months and a week from the day of the diagnosis until Shannon passed away, the middle of October of last fall and although it was no tremendous surprise it was a..., obviously something that at the time felt like is was a, a very long period in our lives but yet ended up being just a season and it a..., ended up being probably one of the most a..., amazing spiritual pilgrimages and continues to unfold that way a..., that I've ever experienced in my believing life. A..., I would have never anticipated that God's words would be as true as they would be, that there would be a peace that would surpass all understanding and that there continues to be a peace that surpasses all understanding and there continues to be a..., evidence of God pulling the curtain back and showing me a..., who He is and what an incredible Almighty God that He is every step of this journey.

David: Bill I know that a..., because, just the things that you've shared that you have had to find refuge in the Lord. You're now making the

journey as a parent, you now have a 16 year old and a 13 year old right in the middle of those years of life, but also making this journey with God, wanting to be a man who continues to be faithful and true in your walk with Christ. Tell us something of, of how you found refuge in the Lord, facing the death and the loss of your spouse, but also going forward.

Bill: Um hum.

David: How have you found God to be your refuge?

Bill: He has a..., and most of it has been me, a..., when I spend the time that it takes to be with Him and fellowship with Him and plug in to who He is a..., it has restored and re...refueled me to be able to press on and to go on a..., for a..., me just a practical thing when I was bringing the kids to school and going to the hospital I would spend probably and some of the guys, we almost had a parking lot ministry out here which been a..., anywhere from probably 15, 30 minutes a..., in, in my car facing the cross, lookin across the lake and just spending time a..., bein prepared for the day. Once Shannon passed away and I was bringin the kids, droppin them off at the school this year I found those times grew to be an hour, 2 hours and a..., have been a delightful time of bein able to seek Him and to draw on His strength and for me it was so true that His strength is perfected in our weakness and as I emptied myself out and He poured Himself in a..., things began to take on a much different and much more eternal light and viewpoint than I ever had expected that they would.

David: In terms of trusting, is there a statement that you've learned about trusting the Lord?

Bill: Well, I think I told you, you know, I a..., I can't track Him, a..., but I trust Him. Hey that makes sense some days, a..., some weeks, some months, some years, but I do trust Him at the end of the day. It boils down that I believe that He is a God of love and how can you get mad at someone that is?

David: Amen

Bill: So!

David: Amen, thank you Bill, thank you for sharing and giving that. Amen. [applause]

Because we prayed and shared those moments with that family and then walked through those days that followed, it has been a precious thing to see a man take shelter a..., under the wings of the Almighty and to begin to see what it is to see God as his refuge and it does come down to one thing, a question that every person in this room has to answer. Can God be trusted? Can I trust Him? Can I trust Him when I don't seem to have enough money? Can I trust Him when I face a bad medical report? Can I trust Him when I'm struggling with decisions in life? Can I trust Him when a..., things don't turn out the way I've planned for them to be or expected them

to be? Can I trust God? Well, the Psalm again, not only calls us to acknowledge God's commitment to care for us but it calls us personally to believe, to say I put my trust in the Lord.

There's a final step that we have to make if we're gonna take refuge in the Lord and that is that we have to call out to God for refuge in our ar...in our hour of need. We have to **CALL OUT TO HIM AS OUR REFUGE IN OUR HOUR OF NEED**. Look at the close of the Psalm, it says here in verse 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.*

And would you hear those words, the Word of God speaking to you tonight? God asks one thing of you, that you call out to Him. Instead of doing it your way and trying it your way and just, you know, gritting your teeth and lowering your head and pushing yourself forward, is there that point in that moment in time when you would begin to put your trust in Him and to call upon His name? Because the secret to experiencing His refuge is believing His promise and calling out to Him in the hour of need to meet you at every point of concern. You see it's only when we begin to release that we begin to receive. When we release to God our weakness, our insufficiency, our frustration, our brokenness that we can begin to receive from God His strength, His power, His refuge.

I opened with the words of Ray Steadman, I wanna close with some of those words. He simply says:

*"The Psalms are designed to teach us to do one primary thing, to worship. Thought they reflect every human emotion, they do so in a distinct and important way. They are emotions seen in relationship to God. Every Psalm is written as in the very presence of God. The book, therefore, teaches us how to be honest before God. If you have a problem in your life, tell God about it. Don't hide it, especially do not become pious and sanctimonious and try to act as though there's no trouble. If you feel angry with God it's best to say so. If you're upset about something tell Him your sense of disturbance, but remind Him also that you know how foolish it is to be upset with Him. If you are resentful, bring that out. If you are happy and joyful express that. This is what worship is, a heart pouring out honest reactions to a God who can both correct and restore. If we learn to be honest before God even about our troubles and problems, wrong moods and resentful attitudes, ~~He-sha~~...we shall quickly find His grace answering our needs."*

God's grace answering every need. God's grace becoming the refuge of your life. The Bible tells us this same thing about the ministry of Jesus. It says: [Hebrews 4:16]

*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace...*

Why?

Because we have a priest who ~~cannot~~ ~~sy~~...who sympathizes with our weaknesses.

*Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every hour of need.*