

Session 2

December 13, 2020

SHAKING OFF FEAR

Psalm 91:1-6; 9-16

I love psalms like this; they represent God's truth, written in beautiful language and using creative imagery. The theme is God's protection in every circumstance. Notice how the pronouns shift throughout, from *the one*, to *I*, to *He*, to *you*. There is something for everyone, so everyone is addressed! Notice how the one speaking shifts as well, from the psalmist (vv. 1-13) to the Lord Himself (vv. 14-16). All these techniques are used to convince the reader that God really is watching over us. Three characteristics of our Lord give us security in the midst of our fears.

God's divine power (vv. 1-6). While the Holman interpretation is valid, the Hebrew of verse 1 is literally "in the secret place" of the Most High. Hence the picture goes beyond simple protection to depict an intimate security. God's secret place is impenetrable. The intimacy is reinforced in the second phrase: to be *in His shadow* is to be up close and tucked under, as a mother hen tucks her little ones up under her (see verse 4). In verses 1 and 2, His power is described by *who He is*: He is the *Most High* and the *Almighty*; a *refuge*, *fortress*, and *God*. For these reasons He can be trusted. In verses 3-6, His power is demonstrated by *what He does*. His protection is complete, ranging across every spectrum, from the specific traps set by the adversary to sweeping plagues of disease (v. 3); and from the powers that attack in stealth and darkness, to the bold onslaught that comes at mid-day. Those devastating forces are still no match for the sovereign God who protects us by His power. For reflection: *The term omnipotent means "all powerful." The term omniscient means "all knowing." The term omnipresent means "everywhere present." How do these three attributes of God work together to protect us from any and all attacks?*

God's divine protection (vv. 9-13). Because of God's divine power, He is able to provide divine protection. The imagery of verse 1 is repeated here. God is spirit, yet His very presence acts as a dwelling place. This is akin to Paul's emphasis of believers being "in Christ;" we are immersed in the Divine Presence. Verses 11 and 12 introduce God's angels to the mix. While this passage was quoted by the devil in the temptations of Christ (see Matt. 4:6), the text itself is not messianic. In other words, the promise is not personally applied to the Messiah, but to all believers. Second, while this text is likely the origin of the concept of personal "guardian angels," this too, is inaccurate. The context is much more expansive: the angelic host is under orders to watch over the host of God's people, to protect them along the way and to keep them from stumbling. Verse 13 is both more active and metaphorical. Not only will the believer not stumble, but the footfall of the devoted will crush the crouching lion and trample the deadly serpent. For reflection: *Believers are not likely to take on wild animals or deadly snakes. So what applications can be made from these verses? In other words, what do such dangers represent?*

God's divine promises (vv. 14-16). The change in the speaker here is as abrupt as it is delightful. Because of His divine *power* and His divine *protection*, God is willing to make a series of divine *promises* to those who are *lovingly devoted to Him* (v. 14). This is an act of unmerited grace. The believer neither demands nor deserves God's attention. But because of his absolute confidence in God, God responds with His loving embrace. The eight-fold promise

includes: deliverance and protection (v. 14); reply, rescue, and honor (v. 15); longevity in this life, and salvation for the next one (v. 16). For reflection: *In light of all the current circumstances our world is facing, how can you use God's promises in Ps. 91 to encourage believers who live in fear? What about nonbelievers?*