

## SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

— July 22, 2018 —

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**SERIES: Praise Your Way Through**  
**SERMON: Brick Walls and Spider Webs**  
**TEXT: Psalm 91**

### Central Message:

During World War II, a US marine was separated from his unit on a Pacific Island. The fighting had been intense, and he had lost touch with his comrades in the smoke and crossfire.

Alone in the jungle, he could hear enemy soldiers coming in his direction. Scrambling for cover, he found his way up a high ridge to several small caves in the rock. Quickly, he crawled inside one of the caves. Although safe for the moment, he realized that once the enemy soldiers looking for him swept up the ridge, they would quickly search all the caves and he would be killed.

As he waited, he prayed, "Lord, if it be Your will, please protect me. Whatever Your will though, I love You and trust You. Amen."

After praying, he lay quietly listening to the enemy begin to draw close. He thought, "Well, I guess the Lord isn't going to help me out of this one." Then, he saw a spider begin to build a web over the front of his cave.

As he watched, listening to the enemy searching for him all the while, the spider layered strand after strand of web across the opening of the cave.

"Ha, he thought. What I need is a brick wall and what the Lord has sent me is a spider web. God does have a sense of humor."

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*"To Know God and To Make Him Known"*

As the enemy drew closer he watched from the darkness of his hideout and could see them searching one cave after another. As they came to his, he got ready to make his last stand. To his amazement, however, after glancing in the direction of his cave, they moved on. Suddenly, he realized that with the spider web over the entrance, his cave looked as if no one had entered for quite a while. "Lord, forgive me," prayed the young man. "I had forgotten that, in You, a spider's web is stronger than a brick wall."

We all face times of great trouble. When we do, it is so easy to forget the victories that God has worked in our lives, sometimes in the most surprising ways. As the great leader, Nehemiah reminded the people of Israel when they faced the task of rebuilding Jerusalem, "In God we will have success!" (Nehemiah 2:20)

Remember: Whatever is happening in your life, with God, a mere spider's web can become a brick wall of protection. Believe He is with you always. Just speak His name through Jesus, and you will see His great power and love for you.

## **Central Message:**

In the *midst* of uncertainty, trials and suffering, believers need encouragement, and Psalm 91 gives that encouragement. It encourages us to say to God, "You are my refuge and strength." I may think that I need a brick wall for protection, but You want me to learn that with You, a spider's web can be as strong as a brick wall. Three assertions are made by the psalmists that form the core of the teaching of this text. We should not be concerned about whether God gives us a brick wall or a spider's web for protection because our trust is not in the wall, but in the One who made the wall.

**It does not matter if God gives you a brick wall or a spider web as long as you have the *comfort of His presence*.**

Psalm 91:1-2 (NASB)

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the

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Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!"

The psalmist, believed to be Moses, is not describing a physical place, but he is declaring a profound truth. When you have a personal relationship with God and you live daily in His presence, you can say with absolute confidence that He alone is your *refuge* and *strength*.

Hebrews 6:19-20

*<sup>19</sup> Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh.*

Psalm 46:1

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (KJV)*

Isaiah 26:3

*You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. (KJV)*

***It does not matter if it is a brick wall or a spider web as long as we have confidence in God's protection.***

Psalm 91:3

*For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper, and from the deadly pestilence.*

Psalm 91:4

*He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.*

Psalm 91:5

*You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day;*

Psalm 91:6

*Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or of the destruction that lays waste at noon.*

Psalm 91:7

*A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not approach you.*

Psalm 91:8

*You will only look on with your eyes, and see the recompense of the wicked.*

Psalm 91:9

*For you have made the LORD, my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place.*

Psalm 91:10-11

*No evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your tent. For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.*

Psalm 91:12

*They will bear you up in their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone.*

Psalm 91:13

*You will tread upon the lion and cobra, the young lion and the serpent you will trample down.*

After the detailed elaboration of the “refuge” metaphor in the opening confession of trust (vv.1-2), there follows a section that assures the speaker of verses 1-2 with a series of intensifying images that denote the effectiveness of trusting the Lord (vv. 3-13). As we noted above, this section may be divided into two analogously subsections, namely, verses 3-8 and verses 9-13.

## **1. The Assurance of the LORD’s Protective Outreach (vv. 3-8)**

The first subsection (vv. 3-8) is introduced by the conjunction “for” (Hebrew *kî*) that may be translated as “surely” (NIV) to introduce an emphatic statement: “Surely, it is *He* (emphatic pronoun) who will deliver you.” This subsection, in turn, may be divided into two further subdivisions, verses 3-4b and 4c-8.

The first subdivision (vv. 3-4*b*) begins with a metaphor from the avian world. In this section, the speaker of verse 2 is promised that the Lord will deliver him from the fowler’s snare (Ps 124:7) and from the deadly pestilence (v. 3). The Lord will cover the speaker with his pinions so that the speaker will find refuge under God’s wings (v. 4*ab*). Obviously, birds cannot protect themselves from these dangers. Consequently, the Lord is pictured as a mother bird that protects her young with her wings. Under her wings, the young will find a secure *place* of refuge from the perils of life’s journey.

The next subsection (vv. 4*c*-8) begins with the image of God’s fidelity as a large “standing shield” that protects the whole body and a “protecting wall” (v. 4*c*). Consequently, as a result of God’s personal escort, the speaker of verse 2 is assured that he need not fear the various threats of death: pestilence, demonic powers, violence or war (vv. 5-7). Under no circumstances will these horrific threats touch him (vs. 7*c*)! Instead, the speaker is encouraged to see these deadly threats as God’s punishment of the wicked (v. 8).

## ***2. The Reassurance of the LORD’s Comprehensive Protection (vv. 9-13)***

The second subdivision (vv. 9-13) parallels the first section (vv. 1-8) and repeats with different imagery the assurance that the Lord provides protection against destructive forces. The repetition of the divine name Most High in verse 9 suggests that this verse echoes the opening declaration of trust in verses 1-2. Moreover, with terms synonymous to those in verses 1-2, verse 9 also begins the second subdivision (vv. 9-13) with the Lord as a safe place.

Depending on one’s translation of verse 9, verses 9-10 promise the Lord’s protection from *all* evil. Because the speaker of verse 2 has made the Lord his lodging place, his refuge, and his tent, absolutely no evil will be able to touch him.

Verses 11-12 provide the basis for this remarkably comprehensive assurance. As a counter image to the personified demons of verses 5-6, these verses promise that

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the Lord will command his angels to protect the believer on his life’s pathway. As a result of this angelic protection, the believer is able to subjugate, according to verse 13, deadly lions and snakes. Significantly, in Luke 10:19, Jesus promised the essence of verses 10-12 to the seventy upon their return from their mission.

***It does not matter if it is a brick wall or a spider web as long as we have the certainty of God’s promises.***

Psalm 91:14-16

“Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him *securely* on high, because he has known My name.

<sup>15</sup> “He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.

<sup>16</sup> “With a long life I will satisfy him and let him see My salvation.”

Verses 14-16 offer a climactic assurance of the LORD’s “overriding commitment” to protect the believers who take refuge in him. These verses are unusual because they are a quotation of a divine decree of assurance. The double causal clauses in verse 14 suggest that this divine decree functions as God’s imprimatur to the expressions of trust in verses 1-13. In this climactic position, this remarkable decree expresses God’s “overriding commitment” in a series of seven first person verbs with a non-verbal clause near its center.

I will deliver

I will protect

I will answer

*With him I will be in distress*

I will save

I will honor

I will satisfy

I will show

Three features of the Lord’s comprehensive promise of protection call for special attention. First, the opening and closing causal clauses of verse 14 emphasize that the essential prerequisite for participating in God’s comprehensive plan for protection is an intimate personal relationship with the LORD:

*Because he loves Me*

I will deliver him;

I will protect him

*Because he knows My name.*

It does not matter whether God gives us a spider’s web or a brick wall for protection as long as we find comfort in His presence, we are confident of His protection, and we have the certainty of His promises.