

Bible Study – Psalm 91
(Sunday March 22, 2020)

***First, read the Psalm. Reflect on it. What does it mean to you? What points particularly strike you?
What elements of it puzzle you?***

1. In verse 1 it speaks of dwelling the shelter of the Most High and abiding in the shadow of the Almighty.
This is an example of “synonymous parallelism,” which is common in the Psalms. That is where the same thought is repeated twice in different but synonymous words (words with the same or similar meaning). So “dwelling” parallels “abiding,” “shelter” parallels “shadow,” and “the Most High” parallels “the Almighty.”
There is a similar, but not so obvious, parallelism in verse 2 where “the Lord” is parallel to “my God,” and “my refuge and my fortress” is parallel to “in whom I trust.”
Note that there is a progression from the third person in verse 1 “he who dwells ...”) to the first person (“I will say ...”) in verse 2. One is a general statement of truth, the other is an expression of person faith in that truth.
 - a. Where did you feel most safe as a child? Was it in a particular place, or with a particular person?
 - b. Do you share the same faith and confidence in God as the writer of this Psalm?
2. In verses 3-4^{b1} a particular image is used to describe God and his relationship with his people ...
 - a. What is a “fowler,” and who needs protecting from them?
 - b. What is conveyed by the parallelism between the first two lines of verse 4?
3. In verses 4^{c2}-5, a different image is used ...
 - a. Who would wear a shield and buckler, and why?
 - b. What do we need not fear in 5b?
4. Do the images of baby bird being protected by her mother (verses 3-4b) and a going into battle with the enemy (verses 4c-5) sit naturally together? What does this tell us about God?
5. “Pestilence” is referred to in verses 3 and 6, and “plague” in verse 10. Do you think the writer was referring to a literal epidemic or pandemic, or is this metaphorical language referring to an unspecified threat? [hint: look at the parallels used in these verses]
6. Do you think that we should take verse 7 as a promise that we won’t be touched by this current pandemic? Why, or why not?
7. What would you say to someone who quoted verse 8 as evidence that this pandemic is God’s punishment on the wicked?
8. Verse 11 may sound familiar to you. Look how it is used (and who uses it) in Matthew 4:5-7. What does this misuse of this verse, and Jesus’ response to it, tell us about how we should or should not interpret and apply this passage to our current situation?
9. How can you apply the promises of verse 15-16 to your life?

¹ “the “b” here refers to the second line of verse 4.

² “the “c” here refers to the third line of verse 4.