

Guest Preacher - Rev Dr. Malcolm Maclean

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Preacher: Rev. Malcolm Maclean

- [0 : 00] We can turn back to the psalm we read there, Psalm 91!
- God in whom I trust. Sometimes when we look at a psalm, we might find the content seem a bit confusing.
- And that may be because we don't realize the number of speakers that there are in the particular psalm.
- And when we look at this particular psalm, how many speakers are in it? Well, there's at least three, but there could be four.
- If there's four, we have in verse 1 just a brief description of a secure place.
- [1 : 35] And then in verse 2, somebody responds to that brief description and says that they will say to God that He is refuge and fortress and so on.
- And then in verses 3 to 13, somebody else speaks. Because we can see that from the change in the pronouns. The pronoun in verse 2, where they're all first person.
- But then when we come to verses 3 to verse 13, they are second person. Somebody is answering what the person has said in verse 2.
- It is possible that the same person says verse 1 and verse 2. But that doesn't affect the reality that in verses 3 to 13, a friend answers him and gives a whole list of ways in which God will help him.
- And that in itself would be very good to have a friend that gives you lists of assurance.
- [2 : 49] But then in verses 14 to 16, somebody else joins the conversation. And the person speaking in verses 14 to 16 is God Himself.
- Now, of course, the Holy Spirit has obviously inspired the entire psalm. But it's almost as if when the psalm is being used in the worship in the temple and so on, that there will be these at least three divisions with different participants.
- And somebody would say verses 14 to 16, and it's God speaking directly. So I think these details show to us the interest that God has in His people recognizing the degree of security that they have.
- A general statement is made in verse 1 about it. Then somebody speaks to God about it in verse 2. Then in verses 3 to 13, a friend speaks to that person about the security.
- And then in verses 14 to 16, God strengthens the statement. And, of course, we do need security.
- [4 : 27] Security in lots of ways. The psalm itself is an interesting picture of communion.
- There is, in verse 2, perhaps individual communion. The man, in verse 2, responds to God and addresses the Most High.
- But then he's joined by a friend who shares the interest in the theme that he is focused on.
- And in desiring to encourage his friend, he doesn't just say to him, well, that was a good statement.

Instead, he lists a whole number of ways in which God can help him. And, of course, that is what communion is about, isn't it?

[5 : 36] I mean, the very word tells us there's a commonality. There's a connection. There is a sense of wanting to help the other person.

And it's good to have a list of things to say about the ability of God. But communion is more than what happens between two individuals at an earthly level.

I mean, the Apostle John reminds us that our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son.

And, therefore, we shouldn't be surprised if God joins in. Because here he does so in verses 14 to 16.

And I suppose we could say that in verses 14 to 16, God strengthens the previous statements.

[6 : 47] He doesn't, as it were, give any more truths. But they come with more power.

And is that not what divine communion does? That the Holy Spirit, who is indwelling in the hearts of God's people, can make God's word seem stronger within us.

A fellow believer may quote many verses to us, and we are aware of what these verses say, and we appreciate what they say.

And then God, as it were, draws near. And we become conscious that he is speaking into our souls.

And his word, well, it's powerful. The witness of the Spirit, we might say, witnessing with our spirit.

[8 : 14] Testifying to the reality of what God promises to those who trust in him. So it's an interesting picture of communion, this psalm.

The psalm has got one rather interesting feature. Well, it's got several interesting features. But it's got one we could call peculiar feature. Because as far as we know, it's the only passage of Scripture that the devil has ever quoted.

He may have quoted other passages, we don't know. But we do know that he quoted this one. And he quoted it to Jesus, when Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness.

He quoted verses 11 and 12. In the second, well, it depends on which order. But he quoted the verses 11, sorry, to verse 13, verse 11 and 12, sorry.

He quoted them to Jesus when he was tempting him in the desert. Although it is quite interesting that he didn't go on to quote verse 13.

[9 : 40] But anyway, the fact that he quoted verses 11 and 12 points to something rather intriguing.

Because it suggests that the devil realized that the primary figure in this psalm is Jesus. And when we look at the dimensions or the contents of all the promises that are listed in this psalm, then we can see how in its full meaning it applies to Christ himself.

So, did he have need of assurance?

Not every day in the sense of a deeper assurance. because all of his life he lived in perfect harmony with his heavenly father.

But we do know that there came a time when he needed assurance because it was absent in a certain sense.

[11 : 12] Although not in any complete sense. But when he cried on the cross my God, my God why have you forsaken me?

Well, who can describe what the Savior felt? But he did sense the absence of God.

in all the midst of the fierce hostility that was going on around him. And indeed, not just from the visible powers that were against him, but from the invisible hosts.

and although we know that eventually he destroyed the principalities and powers, he still needed to turn to God's word because that is what he's doing when he makes that cry.

His mind turns to Psalm 22 and all its details about the agony of the sufferer recorded there.

[12 : 51] and in ways that we cannot understand. It helped him as he dealt with the provision of our salvation.

that if we contrast Psalm 22 with Psalm 91 and we see here the security that is promised to the Savior.

and at the end we could almost say in verses 14 and following God helps him with his great power.

So we can go home and read the Psalm tonight and just apply it to Jesus because he did didn't he twice he took his disciples through the law the prophets and the Psalms and showed how they spoke about him.

But tonight I want us to think of these verses as how they apply to us. One of the reformers a man called Biza was backsliding.

[14 : 28] As a young man he was backsliding. Things were getting too much for him. But eventually he came to realize that his backsliding was wrong.

And he decided to go to Geneva to see if he could get help from Calvin. And as he arrived at the church I don't know what day it was but as he arrived at the church because they had services every day at that time.

But as he arrived at the church the congregation was singing Psalm 91. and they were singing the first two verses of the psalm. And Biza said that the effect of the words was overpowering.

and the strength he got from them assured him that God could still use them.

And he felt that his restoration had taken place and that he could face the future in the security of God.

[16 : 07] And he became one of the great reformer. But we don't have to be in his high place in order to get benefit from this psalm.

All of us need to be in this secret place of the Most High. It's our home, isn't it?

I thought of calling this sermon At Home with God. Not our heavenly home and the world to come, but our home now in this life, as we travel through this world.

I just want to think of three things as we make our way through it. How do we get to this home? Because we weren't always in it, but how do we get to it?

The move we make to get to it. And then there is our new home. What's it like? And then lastly, our responsibilities and our new home.

[17 : 32] So firstly, our home, the move to it. How do we come to live in the shelter of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty?

community. Well, we once lived in another home, another address.

And what was the name of that previous address? You could just call it Life Without Christ. That was the name of the street we were in, the name of the home we were in, the name of the life we lived.

Everything about us, life without Christ. We might have been religious, very religious. We might have had no religion at all.

We were without Christ. That was our postal address, life without Christ. someone were to ask us, where does he live?

[18 : 51] He or she lives in a place called life without Christ. But this psalmist, he didn't always dwell in the shelter of the Most High.

But he was aware of the amazing promises that the Bible contained about how we could move a dress. How he could move from being living in the place life without Christ.

How he could move from that very insecure situation to living in the shelter of the Most High, in a secret place.

He knew about the wonderful promises that God had given in His Word about a coming deliverer. I mean, how many promises do we need? I mean, you and I have got a lot more than the author of this psalm had.

The author of this psalm had never read a word of the New Testament. But he still had plenty of promises. In fact, he hadn't read many of the promises of the Old Testament.

[20 : 08] Because many of the ones, like Isaiah and so on, were probably written after this man lived. But he had enough promises about our coming Savior to make him change a dress.

He wanted a way from the place of insecurity to the place of security. And as you read about these amazing offers, promises that God had given, these amazing promises that God had provided, he discovered something totally amazing.

At the price for moving house, there's no price. It's free. You can move instantaneously from the street called life without Christ to the place called the shelter of the Most High.

And this man embraced it. He took the opportunity of moving. How did he move?

I mean, when you and I move house, we have to do lots of things in order to move. But how did this man move from being without Christ to being in the shelter of the Most High?

[21 : 53] Well, he just moved by faith and repentance. I mean, that's all it took. he trusted in the God who made the promises, in the Messiah who was to come.

And he repented of his sins. He was sorry for them. He regretted that he had done them.

And as he looked around the street called life without Christ, he saw plenty about which he should repent. And he did repent.

His repentance may have been deeper than others, or it may not have been. The point is that he did repent.

and he did trust in the God of the promises. And he discovered when he did so that he moved location.

[23 : 07] And he was no longer living in the street called life without Christ. But he had moved from insecurity to security.

And I suppose the challenge comes to us. Have we done that? Just stress that it is free.

And there's nothing stopping anyone doing it if they haven't done it already. doesn't cost anything to move to our new home as far as the gospel is concerned.

But then we've done that. We find ourselves in our new home. And what is it like? Well, what's the name of the new street in which we live?

Well, it's got two names actually, according to verse 1. It's the shelter of the most high, and it's the shadow of the almighty. Shelter is probably something like a tent.

[24 : 34] And the shadow of the most high, well, the shade protected people from the sun. Both of them are pictures of the protection that God provides.

the believer, this sinner, who has moved from life without God to being in the presence of God, what does he find about God?

Because he's just started on a journey of incredible discovery. God is God. What do we discover about God after we believe in him?

Well, we discover, for example, that God is our protection. That all of God is our protection.

We discover that his power is for us. We discover that his wisdom is for us. We discover that his love is for us. We discover that his justice is for us.

[25 : 44] We discover that everything about him is for us. And it's not that just on one particular day he shows his power and the next day he shows his love and the next day he shows something else.

But rather all of them constantly are working together. That God's love is never apart from his wisdom and his power. power and God's power is never apart from his love and whatever else we can say about him.

What an amazing protection to have. God, God in all his fullness. We can take that definition in the shorter catechism that God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable and his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

And he is that at every moment. It is so big that we cannot really comprehend it. Our God is our protection.

Jesus said about himself that he was the good shepherd and no one could pluck them out of his hand. And in order to strengthen it he said, neither can they pluck them out of my father's hand.

[27 : 00] The apostle Paul said our life is hid with Christ in God. God is our protection. The almighty is our protection.

He also discovered that in this new house there is plenty, divine plenty, provision from the God who protects him.

and what is the plenty that God has for his people? Well, it's described in his promises, his incredibly rich, wonderful, astonishing promises.

And in this psalm, there's a whole list of them. Basically in the psalm, the promises there are reminding us that God is in control of providence, that a whole list of things cannot happen to us unless he allows it.

That's only one aspect of his plenty. He's rich in mercy and rich in grace. And the amazing thing about the cupboards in the Lord's house is that they're always full.

[28 : 15] full. And we can use as much of them as often as we want and as frequently as we want, and we never deplete them. When we go to a cupboard in our own earthly houses, it's inevitable that when we take something out, there's less in it.

But in the storehouse, the heavenly storehouse, it's always full. And at this precise moment, millions of people on earth are taking strength from it.

But God's strength is still the same. His love is still the same. There is plenteous provision in this new address.

And coming into this new place to live, he discovers that he now has a plan for his house.

That God's got a, I mean, we've all got plans for our houses, what we're going to do with them and so on. And God's got a plan for his house.

[29 : 27] And those who come into it, who discover that he is the shelter, and who discover that they're in the secret place of the Most High, they realize that in an astonishing way, they are participating in the owner of the house's plan.

And that the Almighty is protecting them for a purpose. And that he's going to take them through this life in order that they can participate in his eternal plan to be fulfilled in the world to come.

God's plan for this dwelling place, well, it's a plan to bring rest, fullness of joy.

And he'll protect all his people in order that they will get there. The secret place of the Most High can be a foretaste of the fullness that is yet to come.

So God becomes their protector, and God becomes the source, the provider of all that they have, the plenteous blessings that are theirs. He reveals to them his plan.

[30 : 48] And what an astonishing plan it is. to sit in the secret place of the Most High and have him tell us what his plans are.

His plans are in his word. They feed our souls. And as he moves into this new abode, and as he stays in this new abode, in the shelter of the Most High, the secret place of the Almighty, he senses the peace of the place.

Outside, things are very different. Inside, he tastes the peace of God that passes all understanding.

It becomes the atmosphere. As Paul reminded the Philippians, that the peace of God could protect their hearts and mind. peace.

Total security. Peace. As Isaiah said, peace like a river. It just flows and flows.

[32 : 07] It's a wonderful place to live, isn't it? peace. The secret place of the Most High.

The shadow of the Almighty. But very briefly, we've got some duties to perform. And these duties just happen under the thread of communion, we might say.

peace. And the psalmist tells us how to do it. How do we appreciate the security of the secret place?

peace. How do we appreciate the security of the shadow of the Almighty? Well, he almost tells us in the words that he uses.

Because he gives us four names about God. God. And they all mean something. He's the Most High. He's the Almighty.

[33 : 15] He is the Lord with capitals, L-O-R-D. And he's God. And he's not just using them for poetic variety.

Rather, he's telling us something about the greatness of the God in whose presence he now is. that God is supreme, sovereign, the Most High.

There can be nobody higher. And to be in his shelter will indicate that the shelter that they have is elevated. It's where the Most High dwells.

And as we quoted that verse earlier from Paul, our lives are hidden with Christ and God. But it's good to remind ourselves of that. And then there's the Almighty, El Shaddai.

And the word Shaddai here might not mean Almighty. That's just one possible translation of it. Because the word, it's not here in the psalm, but the word El doesn't, by itself means Almighty.

[34 : 34] and there is the real possibility that the word Shaddai means sufficiency, the source of all that we need.

And in this new address, there will never come a moment when there will be an empty space in the Lord's provision.

God is there. He's God all sufficient. And he's the Lord with capitals, that's the covenant God, the unchangeable God, a God who is the same always, consistent, reliable.

powerful. And then he's God, powerful God. How do we get security in this new house, in this new address?

We don't get it by looking at ourselves. We get it by looking at God. God. And the psalmist used the names he knew.

[36 : 00] We can use the names we know. And then even with Jesus for himself, how many wonderful names he has.

And we're meant to use them to strengthen our sense of security.

There's the names of the Father, and the names of the Son, and the names of the Spirit. Even Jesus, when he prayed, used names to describe his Father, like righteous Father, and holy Father.

And when we think of God, we're to think of the variety of the names that are there about him. But we're also got to use personal pronouns.

Is that not what's found in verses one and two? Or verse two, exactly. My refuge, my fortress.

[37 : 17] The word my is very important. As Paul said, again to the Philippians, my God shall supply all your need according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

What does the little word my tell us? It tells us of what we possess. I mean, that's basic to the word my.

It's what we currently possess whenever we're using it. if I had a car on Monday morning, I could say it's my car.

If I sold it at lunchtime, I can't say in the afternoon it's my car. We say to God, my refuge, my fortress, my possession.

It's a sense of gratitude, isn't it? As well as almost a sense of incredulity. It's all mine.

[38 : 36] All that God has is mine. That's not being presumptuous. It's just taking to ourselves by faith what God has promised.

And in the secret place, it's very important to use the word my. Apply it to ourselves. The last thing I want to mention is, as the psalmist does here, we are to remind ourselves of the security of the house.

In his world, it was a shelter. and a shadow from the heat. These were the pictures that he would use to bring to his own mind, the direct provision of God.

But they are only pictures of the reality. see. And as Paul reminds us, if God be for us, what can be against us?

They may do lots of things to hinder our temporal journey, our spiritual security.

[40 : 14] spiritual security. It's as safe as God. It's extraordinary. So it's good for us to look around where we live.

We live in the presence of God. our address is the shadow of the Almighty, the secret place of the Most High.

Shall we pray? Lord, sometimes your word seems too good to be true.

too idealistic. And we can say within ourselves, if others knew my position, they wouldn't be saying these things about my security.

But it's your self that says them. And you encourage us. to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, to rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

[41 : 46] Help us, Lord, to make our home with you, that we would find our security in God and not in anything else.

We have lots of things to face. we have to face temptation. We have to face the circumstances of life, which may become harder and harder.

We have to face leaving this world. But we can do them all in a secret place.

So help us, Lord, to live there and to experience his benefits. So bless each one of us for your own name's sake.

Amen. Amen. we'll sing from Psalm 91 in the Scottish Psalter. And we'll sing verses one to four.

[43 : 03] four. On page 351.

He that doth in the secret place of the Most High reside, under the shade of him that is the Almighty shall abide. Verses one to four.

He that doth in the secret place of the Most High reside, under the shade of the In the days the Almighty shall abide.

I hope the Lord my God will say, He is my refuge still.

He is my heart blessed and my God and in the Christ my will.

[44 : 42] I surely He shall thee save and give deliver us O subtle power still and grow the noise of best land.

This hither shall high trust I his wings be this faithfulness shall be a shield and power unto thee.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.