

## **NO FEAR – UNDER HIS WINGS**

**NEED:**                   **CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S PROTECTIVE CARE.**

**PROPOSITION:**       **CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S PROTECTIVE CARE GIVES  
VICTORY OVER FEAR.**

**OBJECTIVE:**           **TO EQUIP GOD’S PEOPLE FOR A LIFE OF VICTORY  
OVER FEAR.**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

A few days ago our counselor, Lynn McMasters, shared with me about an encounter with a young man at one of the funerals for the youth at the Green Lawn Church of Christ. She noticed the young man and that he was extremely troubled. She approached him to offer to be of help to him. The young man blurted out to her, “But we are not safe any where. If you can go to school and be shot and you can go on a church youth trip and be killed in a bus wreck, you are not safe any where.” The young man was almost incoherent under the grips of fear.

Since the shooting of those 13 people at the high school in Littleton and then the consequent suicide of the two young killers, there has been a tidal wave of fear across this country. It has especially affected our teenage population. One of our young grandchildren began to have frightening nightmares after that incident in viewing some of the reports on television. We are living in the kind of days where fear is doing destructive things to people.

It may well be said that the experience of fear itself may do more harm to us than the thing we fear. I remember reading an ancient legend that tells of a man traveling in his carriage to Constantinople. Suddenly in the middle of the road an old man appeared, wearing a heavy cloak and hood, his arm stretched high to the heavens. The traveler brings his carriage to an abrupt halt, and a strange figure appears at the traveler's side. His eyes burning, he says, "Take me to Constantinople!"

"Who are you?" the traveler demands.

The hooded figure says, "My name is Cholera. Take me to Constantinople!" The traveler draws back in terror. "No!" he shouts with a trembling voice. "You will kill the city!"

"I could kill you now" Cholera whispers. "But you take me to Constantinople, and I promise I will kill only five people."

Reluctantly, the traveler bids the old man to get into the carriage and delivered him to Constantinople. Two weeks later 120 have died in the city. Meeting Cholera on the street one day, the traveler accosted him and shrieks, "You lied! You said you would only kill only five people."

Cholera shakes himself loose from the traveler's grip. "I didn't lie. I kept my promise. I killed only five. Fear killed the rest."

To you as a graduating class I have a word of counsel this morning. Fear is a terrible companion for life. You need an antidote for crippling and killing fear. Psalm 91 offers an antidote to fear. The Psalmist presents God as the one who is able to provide such protection that there will be no reason to be afraid.

We do not know anything about the specific background about the Psalm, including who wrote it but it has been a source of encouragement to the people of God century after century. I remember a friend sharing with me who had served as a pilot during the days of the Second World War how that this Psalm kept him from fear. While he was flying over Europe with anti-aircraft shells bursting all around him, he kept quoting a part of this Psalm and claiming the presence of God. My graduation gift to you graduating seniors and your families is Psalm 91. Consider it with me.

## **I. THE DEADLY DANGERS THAT WE FACE.**

The Psalm is not unrealistic about the nature of the world in which we live, and though he uses images that come out of his world, they speak to us of the realities of our own world. There were fear-provoking circumstances that faced him and the people of his generation. We still have the same kind of fear-provoking circumstances in our day.

Let's take a look at some of the dangers that he presents. "Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and the deadly pestilence." The fowler's snare is the trap with which man would catch a bird. There is an enemy out there that sets traps for us and would

ensnare us to our own hurt. They were there in that world and they are still with us in our world. The “deadly pestilence” is some dreaded disease that would take away life. In that day there were many. Medical science has eliminated some of the deadly pestilence but it has not been able to eliminate all of them. There is still cancer, heart disease, AIDS, and a dozen other killers that stalk across the land.

Then he adds “You will not fear the terror of night nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at mid-day.” The terror of night may well have been a military attack that came in the night or a malicious robber that broke into the home. The arrow that flies by day was obviously the danger that came at times of military attack. The pestilence that stalks in the darkness could be disease or any other danger that would come under the cover of night. The plague that destroys at noon day could be any physical malady that fell on people.

Then in one other statement he talks about dangers that we encounter in nature. “You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.”

The danger that we face come in many different forms and shapes.

1. The dangers can be seen and unseen.

There are threats out there that we are aware of but there are some that we are not even aware of. They come in the cover of darkness. The thing you fear most will likely never

happen to you but there may be something out there that will bring destruction to your life that you are not even aware of. The dangers in our world are real.

2. The dangers can be physical and spiritual.

We should probably see in these statements both dimensions of danger. Some of them are real in the physical realm – disease, violence, war, and a hundred different things.

Some of them are spiritual. There is an adversary to God and to man that stalks our path and seeks our destruction. Only a fool would not consider the dangers that we face.

They deserve your careful attention. The Psalmist thought upon them and had found for himself a way to live calmly and confidently in the midst of those dangers.

## **II. THE PERCAUTIONARY STEPS WE TAKE**

There is a rather obvious path to follow or some cautionary steps to take. If you will take these steps, you will not be overcome with fear. Instead, you will enjoy an awareness of divine protection in the midst of life's dangers.

1. We confess our faith to the Lord.

This is where the Psalm begins. "I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my strength, my fortress, my God in whom I trust." This is really some confession that the Psalmist is making of the Lord and to the Lord.

One expositor has suggested that when he speaks of the Lord as his refuge, he is speaking of the Lord as the one in whom he has faith. When he speaks of the Lord as his fortress,

he is speaking of the Lord as his defender. When he speaks of God as my God, he is speaking of God being everything he needs in life.

When troubles come or you think about troubles coming, what do you confess? Do you focus on the dangers that you face or the Lord who is your refuge and defense and God in the midst of the danger. If you want to live a life free from fear, you confess your faith in the face of the difficulties?

You speak of the Lord and to the Lord as the one who is able to keep, to preserve, and to protect you in the midst of whatever life may bring.

## 2. We turn to the Lord.

Psalmist gives us another insight to the steps that we take with this word: “He will cover you with His feathers and under his wings you will find refuge.” The imagery that he is using is that of a mother eagle or a mother bird. Whenever there is the approach of danger, the mother eagle will raise her wings and give out a sound that is a signal of danger to her little eaglets. When they hear that warning from the mother or the sound of the approaching danger, they find hiding under her wings. She covers them with her feathers and protects them with her beak and claws. If you know anything about a mother eagle you will know that in the realm of nature the eaglets are safe under her wings. Where do you go when you become aware of danger. How do you respond when you become aware of a threat? How do you respond to a circumstance that would provoke you to fear? The Psalmist found victory by taking his refuge in the Lord. Either our God is able to keep us or He is not able to keep us. If he is able to keep us, then the

place for us to flee to when we become aware of danger is to Him. We need to find hiding under his wings.

### 3. We delight in His presence.

There is a third step suggested in the language of the Psalm. You find it in these words:

“If you make the most high your dwelling, even the Lord, who is my refuge – then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.

The key idea in that statement is having the most high as your “dwelling.” This is a step beyond having the Lord as your “refuge.” It is a part of what is stated in the very first verse of the Psalm. “He who dwells in the shelter of the most high and will rest in the shadow of the almighty.”

Those who find security and confidence in the midst of a dangerous life are those who have the Lord as their habitation or dwelling place. God, the almighty, is their home.

This is talking about a deep and intimate relationship with God. It is making the Lord so much a part of your life that it is like having Him at your home.

In the last paragraphs of this Psalm, the Lord speaks to the Psalmist. The Lord says, “Because He loves me I will rescue him; I will protect him for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him with long life will I satisfy Him and show Him my salvation.”

Did you catch the key words? Loves, acknowledges my name, and calls, these are the

key actions that the Psalmist takes. He loves the Lord, he acknowledges the Lord with great confession, he calls upon the Lord in prayer and the Lord responds by rescuing, protecting, being with him in trouble, answering him, delivering him, and honoring him. The Lord responds with giving him the satisfaction of his complete salvation.

This obviously describes more than a casual Sunday morning relationship with God, If God is your habitation, the one you love, if He is more to you than just a deity to whom you tip your hat on Sunday. He is so much a part of your life that your life cannot be described without talking about Him.

Let me ask you a personal question, “Would your friends be able to describe your life without any reference to your relationship with the Lord?” If they could, then He is probably not your habitation. If you are to find freedom from fear in this turbulent world, you must have the Lord as your habitation.

### **III. THE DIVINE PROTECTION WE ENJOY.**

The beautiful poetry of this psalm the Psalmist sets forth a view of a life that is safe and secure in the Lord. It is the kind of protection all of us would desire for our lives.

1. The protection of His presence.

Vs. 4. “He will cover you with His feathers and under his wings you will find refuge.”

The picture in that is a very intimate and close picture. Could there be anything closer and more intimate than being under the wings of your mother if you were a young eaglet. In the strength of her wings to cover you, you have confidence in her motherly instinct

that made her willing to suffer death itself before she would allow you to be harmed. You would be able to hear the thumping of her heart as you nestled close to her bosom. It is the presence of the Lord around us and in us that gives us security in the midst of the storm.

This is a good place to address a question some may have. If God is such a safe place of hiding from danger, why do so many Christians suffer harm? Why did that beautiful, Christian teenager at the high school in Littleton suffer death? Why was she martyred? Why did the wonderful group of teenagers from the local Church of Christ undergo such a tragic accident in New Mexico? Isn't this a contradiction to the idea that the presence of God protects us?

While I will admit there would seem to be an apparent contradiction, this does not mean there is a real contradiction. Dr. Alexander Maclaren helped me with his insight into this problem when he wrote, "The evil that is in the evil will never come near a person sheltered beneath God's wings." Here he makes a distinction between the evil and the evil that is in the evil. Actually in the experience of the Christian what would seem to be an evil turns out to be a good when they are sheltered under His wings. It is the experience of Joseph who said, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."

It is my humble judgment that that faithful teenage girl at the high school in Littleton will accomplish more for the kingdom of God in our country through her death than she would have by living out a normal life. It has been a wake up call to the church in America to have martyred's blood upon America's soil. In 1999 there is blood on

American soil that is there because someone dared to be faithful to Jesus Christ. She died as a witness to her faith. So indeed we are under the protection of His presence.

## 2. The protection of his agents.

The Psalmist goes a step beyond the protection of His presence to speak of the protection of angels. “For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift their hands so that you will not strike your foot against the stone.”

We do not know as much about angels as we might like to know. It is enough to know that they are heavenly agents on assignment to protect the people of God. If you are one of those who have taken precautionary steps that this Psalm talks about, then you can be confident that your life is under the protection of these unseen heavenly agents.

Do you see the wonderful protection that surrounds a child of God and the implications of this. This means that before any harm can come to me, it must make its way through the very presence of God. If I am under His wing then you must break through His wings before you can touch me. If I am surrounded by His angels then you must have an angelic mission in order to touch me. They are there to keep me from harm. So if anything would seem to be harm befalls me I can know that it has come through the presence of God and by permission of the angels of God so surely God intends it for my good and not for my destruction.

This will enable you to “tread upon the lion and the cobra; and trample the great lion and the serpent.” It reminds me of that great affirmation of Paul in the Roman Letter when he said, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!”

All of us are faced with a choice. We can choose to live by our fears or live by our faith. Life is such is that it will require of you either fear or faith. I want to encourage you young people to take those precautionary steps so that you can enjoy the protection of heaven around your life as you move into a dangerous and uncertain future. You indeed can walk upon your most feared adversary in victory.