

Sermon Series: Storm Shelter: Psalms of God's Embrace
To be used with: Session Six: The Shelter of God's Protection
Sermon Title Possibilities:
 My Hiding Place
Scripture: Psalm 91

Connection to Unit Theme: *Storm Shelter: Psalms of God's Embrace* is a study of the comfort we find in the Old Testament book of Psalms. Session 6 is called "The Shelter of God's Protection," and focuses on Psalm 91. The point of the study is "God is my ultimate protection."

These text based sermons draw from the same Scripture passages as the small group studies, but explore other themes from the passage. This way, you as the pastor can reinforce the passage without repeating the small group study.

Introduction:

Life is filled with problems, some small and some great. There are many "Jigsaw Christians" in the world today: every time they are faced with problems, instead of going to the Divine Hiding Place, they go to pieces. They are looking at their problems rather than to the Problem Solver. Psalm 91 is an expression of the child of God's confidence in divine protection and deliverance.

1. The Lord is my Protector. (v. 1)

The one who lives under the protection of the Most High dwells in the shadow of the Almighty.

There is a story of a believer, Frederick Nolan, who was fleeing from his enemies during a time of persecution in North Africa. Pursued by them over the hill and valley with no place to hide, he fell exhausted into a wayside cave, expecting his enemies to find him soon. Awaiting his death, he saw a spider weaving a web. Within minutes, the little bug had woven a beautiful web across the mouth of the cave. The pursuers arrived and wondered if Nolan was hiding there, but on seeing the unbroken web, thought it impossible for him to have entered the cave without dismantling the web. Therefore, they went on. Having escaped, Nolan later wrote, "Where God is, a spider's web is like a wall. Where God is not, a wall is like a spider's web."

- v. 1 "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty"
 Psalm 5:11 "But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you."
- 1 John 5:18 "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him."

2. The Lord is my Place of Safety (v. 2)

*I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."*

In 1960, the Mau Mau uprising gripped Kenya. During that time, missionaries Matt and Lora Higgins had to drive through hostile territory on their way to Nairobi, well aware that many had met violent deaths at the hands of Mau Mau terrorists in that area. After dark, about 17 miles from Nairobi, the Land Rover they were driving failed. Matt tried in vain to repair the vehicle. The couple was forced to lock the doors and pray for safety. They awoke safely, repaired the car, and traveled on to Nairobi. Some days later, they heard an interesting story from an individual who was in contact with terrorist groups: As Matt and Lori had slept that night; three terrorists had come upon them and intended to kill them. Suddenly, though, the terrorists had seen 16 strongmen surrounding the car, and fled in fear! Matt and Lora were puzzled about the identity of the 16 men-- until they returned to America several weeks later and heard the thrilling testimony of a friend: "On March 23, God burdened my heart for you. I called the men at our church, and SIXTEEN of us met together for emergency prayer on your behalf!" – Bill Bright, "How You Can Pray With Confidence" (1995 Campus Crusade for Christ), pp. 32-33.

- Proverbs 18:10 "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe."
- Proverbs 29:25 "The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe."

3. The Lord is my Deliverer (v.3)

*He Himself will deliver you from the hunter's net,
from the destructive plague.*

As believers, you and I have no grounds for fear, or any reason to be dejected. No conflicts or predicaments should crush us, as long as we can draw close to God. We have no idea how long the onslaught of trouble might last or how deep the troubled waters may get, but they will pass and we will have ultimate deliverance. Remember the Eternal, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Ever-Present God is not only our Refuge but is our Deliverer."

No rut is so deep you can't leave it.
No dream is so lost you can't retrieve it.
No pain is so great you can't endure it.
No sin is so bad God can't cure it. --Gerald Mann

- Psalm 34:17 "When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles"
- 1 Corinthians 10:13 "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

4. The Lord is My Shelter (v. 4)

*He will cover you with His feathers;
you will take refuge under His wings.
His faithfulness will be a protective shield.*

An article in National Geographic several years ago provided a penetrating picture of God's wings. After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage. One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze had arrived and the heat had singed her small body, the mother had remained steadfast. Because she had been willing to die, those under the cover of her wings would live.

- Colossians 3:3 "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."
- Psalm 119:114 "You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word."

5. The Lord is my Peace

*You will not fear the terror of the night,
the arrow that flies by day,
the plague that stalks in darkness,
or the pestilence that ravages at noon.*

The peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of trouble, but is rather the confidence that He is there with you always.

Long ago an art collector announced a contest, promising a large cash prize to the artist that could paint the perfect picture of peace. The challenge stirred the imagination of artists everywhere, and the paintings began to arrive. On the day the winner was to be selected, the judges uncovered one peaceful scene after another while the viewers clapped and cheered. The tensions grew. Only two pictures remained veiled. The judge pulled the cover from one, and a hush fell over the crowd. A mirror-smooth lake reflected lacy, green birches under the soft blush of the evening sky. Along the grassy shore, a flock of sheep grazed undisturbed. Unquestionably, this was the winner.

But then the judge pulled the cover off the last painting, and there were gasps of surprise. Stormy-gray clouds threatened to explode with lightning, wind and rain. A powerful waterfall cascaded down a rocky precipice. In the midst of the spray, a spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls. One of its branches reached out in front of the torrential waters.

This was peace? Could the artist have misunderstood the instructions? But then they looked more closely, and when they did, they announced the painting as the winner.

In the elbow of the branch, a little bird had built a nest. Content and undisturbed in her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs. With her eyes closed and her wings ready to cover her little ones, she manifested peace that transcends all earthly turmoil. Berit Kjos, pp. 45-46

- Isaiah 26:3-4 “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.”
- 2 Thessalonians 3:16 “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.”

6. The Lord is my Confidence.

*Though a thousand fall at your side
and ten thousand at your right hand,
the pestilence will not reach you.*

*⁸ You will only see it with your eyes
and witness the punishment of the wicked.*

Faith is confidence in the Rock of our Salvation for what He will do for and in us.

- Psalm 32:10-11 “Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”

Next time you're in an airport, observe the difference between passengers who hold confirmed tickets and those who are on standby. The ones with confirmed tickets read newspapers, chat with their friends or sleep. The ones on standby hang around the ticket counter, and pace back and forth. The difference is caused by the confidence factor.

If you knew that in fifteen minutes you would have to stand in judgment before the Holy God and learn your eternal destiny, what would your reaction be? Would you smoke and pace? Would you say to yourself, "I don't know what God's going to say--will it be 'Welcome home, child,' or will it be 'Depart from me; I never knew you'?" adapted from Bill Hybels, *Too Busy Not To Pray*, IVP, p. 113.

Adapted from “My Hiding Place” Sermon Gerald Flury, pastor of North Ridgeville Baptist Church, North Ridgeville, OH. On Sermoncentral.com