

SHELTER

Week 1 – Make HIM your dwelling place

Psalm 91

¹ Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

² I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."

³ Surely he will save you
from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.

⁴ He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

⁵ You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,

⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.

⁷ A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.

⁸ You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.

⁹ If you say, "The Lord is my refuge,"
and you make the Most High your dwelling,

¹⁰ no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.

¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;

¹² they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

¹³ You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

¹⁴ "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

¹⁵ He will call on me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,

I will deliver him and honor him.

¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.” (NIV)

Psalm 91:1–2

¹ Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

² I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” (NIV)

Introduction

- Protection, fear, suffering, angels, spiritual conflict, and the promises of God.
- The psalm begins somewhere unexpected.
- Before the psalm describes a single danger, it describes a **PERSON** — the one who dwells with God.
- We tend to ask, “What is God going to protect me FROM?”
- Psalm 91 first asks, “Where have you made your HOME?”

Illustration

The difference between a house and a shelter

- A storm shelter can be perfectly engineered.
Reinforced walls, secure door, designed to withstand wind.
But its strength does not benefit the person standing outside admiring the specifications.
- Knowing that a shelter exists is different from taking refuge there.
The difference is not whether the shelter is strong
it is where the person is living when danger arrives.
- Guardrail: the illustration describes personal trust
not a promise that everyone who prays escapes every tornado.

THE QUESTION IS NOT ONLY WHETHER GOD IS A REFUGE.
THE QUESTION IS WHETHER I HAVE MADE HIM MY REFUGE.

Today’s objective

- Move from knowing ABOUT the Almighty to making a personal confession of trust in Him.
- Not merely crisis religion — a life lived in His presence.

- I. **God’s invitation to me.**
Make his presence my dwelling place.

- A. The opening describes a person, not a religious technique.
1. “Whoever dwells” — Hebrew *yōshēv*, participle from *yāshav*: sit, remain, inhabit, dwell.
 - a. The participle portrays someone characterized by dwelling the verse does not issue a command to perform a ritual.
 - b. The psalm opens with relationship **BEFORE** it speaks about rescue.
 2. “Shelter” — *seter*: hiding place, concealment, a place of protection.
 3. “Shadow” — *tsel*: shade, shelter from exposure; in the ancient climate shade could be preservation, not merely comfort.
 4. “Will rest” — *yitlonan*, from *lun*: to lodge or spend the night.
 - a. The two lines form Hebrew parallelism...
Shelter/Most High and shadow/Almighty interpret one another.
 - b. Do not preach *yāshav* as “permanent” versus *lun* as “temporary” as though this were a fixed lexical distinction; the poetic combination is the discovery.
- B. The context invites us to consider **where** we consistently place our confidence.
1. It is possible to believe God exists and still organize life around other sources of ultimate security.
 2. We need savings, medicine, wise counsel, and planning — but none of these can occupy God’s place.

God’s presence is not merely a place to visit in crisis.
God’s presence is the place we are invited to live.

Psalm 27:5

For in the day of trouble
 he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
 he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
 and set me high upon a rock.

- David speaks of God hiding him in His dwelling in a day of trouble.
- The day of trouble is real; so is the divine refuge.

John 15:4–5

⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

- Jesus calls His disciples to remain in Him.
- Sustained dependence.

Illustration options

- A tree’s shade
You can describe shade perfectly without ever stepping out of the heat.
- A home versus a hotel
A hotel is where you spend a night; home is where your life is oriented.
- Ruth 2:12: Ruth seeks refuge beneath the wings of Israel’s God
protection described as covenant trust.

Application

- Is prayer my first response or only my last resort?
- Where does my mind go when fear arrives?
- Am I asking God to bless a life arranged without reference to Him?

God’s invitation to me.

Make his presence my dwelling place.

II. The security of the shelter depends on who God is.

A. Four descriptions of God appear in two verses.

1. Elyon — “Most High”
God’s supremacy; no threat stands above His sovereignty.
2. Shaddai — “Almighty”
3. YHWH — “LORD”: the personal covenant name of Israel’s God,
4. Elohai — “my God”
the majestic God is personally confessed as the worshiper’s God.

B. The poetry moves from the majesty of God to personal allegiance.

1. The writer does not begin by cataloging the size of the enemy.
2. He begins by declaring the identity of his refuge.

OUR CONFIDENCE IS NOT GROUNDED IN THE SIZE OF OUR FAITH.
IT IS GROUNDED IN THE CHARACTER OF OUR GOD.

Genesis 17:1

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless.

**God identifies Himself as God Almighty in His dealings with Abram.
This title belongs to the larger story of God’s covenant faithfulness.**

Exodus 34:5–7

⁵ Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

- The LORD reveals His name and character.
- Knowing His name means more than memorizing a pronunciation.

Illustration options — choose one

- A child hears “I’ve got you.” The promise matters because of WHO is speaking — not because of how loudly the child repeats it.
- An ancient fortress: Its usefulness depended on its strength and the power defending it. Psalm 91 calls God Himself our fortress.
- Military command: The confidence of a unit rests partly in the capacity and faithfulness of the authority behind it; God is no limited human commander.

Application

- When anxious, rehearse God’s revealed character before rehearsing every possible disaster.
- Worship is not denial of danger; it is recognition of God’s supremacy in the midst of danger.

God’s invitation to me.

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The security of the shelter depends on who God is.

III. Move from truth to trust.

- A. The voice changes between verses 1 and 2.
 - 1. Verse 1: “Whoever dwells...” — general declaration.
 - 2. Verse 2: “I will say...” — personal confession.
 - 3. Notice the possessives: MY refuge, MY fortress, MY God.
 - 4. “I trust” — batach: to rely upon, place confidence in, entrust oneself.
- B. The refuge and fortress images are complementary.
 - 1. Machseh — refuge, a place of shelter.
 - 2. Metsudah — fortress or stronghold, a defensible place.
- C. **The psalm is not asking us to manufacture confidence by positive speech.**
 - 1. The confession is meaningful because its object is the LORD
Not because words possess independent magical power.
 - 2. Our confession should agree with Scripture and produce obedience.

FAITH IS MORE THAN BELIEVING GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY.
FAITH IS ENTRUSTING MYSELF TO HIM.

Psalm 18:2

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
 my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
 my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

- David layers rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, and stronghold imagery
— language of dependence, not self-sufficiency.

Proverbs 3:5–6

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart
 and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶ in all your ways submit to him,
 and he will make your paths straight.

- Trust in the LORD rather than making our own understanding the ultimate authority.

Straw Man

- “If I have enough faith, nothing painful will ever happen to me.”
 - No. The same psalm later says God will be WITH His people IN trouble (v. 15).
- “If a believer suffers, they must not have dwelled correctly.”
- Scripture rejects that simplistic conclusion
 - Job, Jesus, Paul, and the faithful sufferers in Hebrews 11.

Illustration options — choose one

- A bridge
Knowing the engineering specifications and actually crossing it are different acts.
The bridge bears the weight, not the intensity of your feelings.
- A child jumping into a parent’s arms
trust is expressed in reliance upon the one who catches
not in the child’s performance.

Application

- What am I treating as my ultimate fortress: finances, influence, control, health, reputation, or the LORD?
- The test of trust is not how loudly I declare it, but whether I obey God when circumstances are uncertain.

God’s invitation to me.

Make his presence my dwelling place.

The security of the shelter depends on who God is.

Move from truth to trust.

IV. Where we dwell determines how we live.

The Security of God's Presence Produces the Courage to Live Differently.

- A. God’s protection is not permission for spiritual passivity or presumption.
 1. Satan quotes Psalm 91:11–12 to Jesus in Matthew 4:5–7

Matthew 4:5-7

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’ ”

⁷ Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

Unpack

- Jesus refuses to test God.
- A true promise can be quoted accurately and applied falsely.
- God commands angels in Psalm 91:11
 - The believer is not instructed here to independently command them.

B. The New Testament calls us to abide in Christ, obey His Word, and walk in the Spirit.

1. Our confidence is not “**I can control outcomes.**”

It is “**I belong to the Lord.**”

2. Holy Spirit - ask Him to deepen knowledge of God, expose misplaced trust, empower obedience, and replace paralysis with courage.

C. **A sheltered life is not an inactive life.**

1. Confidence in God should make us more available for prayer, service, witness, generosity, and difficult obedience.
2. We can act wisely, seek medical help, prepare for storms, and still place ultimate trust in God.

WE DO NOT TRUST GOD SO THAT WE CAN CONTROL THE FUTURE.

WE TRUST GOD SO THAT WE CAN OBEY HIM IN THE PRESENT.

Matthew 4:7

Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

- Jesus’ response to the misuse of Psalm 91: do not put the LORD your God to the test.

Psalm 91:15

He will call on me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble,

I will deliver him and honor him.

- God's own climactic promise
- He will be with the worshiper in trouble.
- Protection and trouble are not mutually exclusive.

Illustration

- Daniel 3: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trust God's power to deliver, but refuse to make obedience conditional on rescue.
- The wise traveler: Wearing a seat belt is not unbelief. Wisdom and trust are not enemies.
- A soldier under command: courage does not come from being invulnerable, but from knowing whom one serves and carrying out the mission.

Application / action statement

- Choose one area where fear has delayed obedience. Take the next faithful step this week.
- Begin each morning with the confession of Psalm 91:2 — not as a charm, but as an act of worship and dependence.

Conclusion — return to the opening question

- The first question in Psalm 91 is not how we can escape every storm. It is where we are dwelling.
- We have a Most High God; the Almighty is our refuge.
- The truth must become personal: MY refuge, MY fortress, MY God.

DON'T JUST ADMIRE THE SHELTER.
MAKE THE LORD YOUR DWELLING PLACE.