

Wednesday Night Live | December 9, 2020

Refuge | Part 4 | God: My God

I know it's been a while; let's do a little review.

In week 1, we learned that **God, the Most High**, is our refuge. Therefore, we will not fear the fowler's snare, the stalking plague, the arrow by day, nor the terror by night. For the Most High covers us with His wings, and He is our shelter as a buckler and shield.

In week 2, the list of dangers grew. Yet, **God, the Almighty**, proved more than capable of defending those who abide in His long shadow. As such, we "shadow-dwellers" bear witness as God's omnipotence is put to the test. We will see the wicked fall and the righteous protected. For no man is safer than he who takes shade beneath the Almighty.

In week 3, we rested in the only name of **God: Yahweh**. In this name, we have no small security, refuge, and safety. Yahweh is unbound by all, and so nothing will harm us. We will bounce if we fall. We will walk atop hungry lions. We will saunter over venomous snakes. Because we know the name of our God, we will be delivered from all mischief.

Today, as we close out our series, we'll be talking about how God is not impersonal. He is not aloof or uncaring. He is not disconnected from us. No. **God is our God**. He has a personal, intimate, and unique relationship with us.

But, before we get there, as we've said every week, the Psalms are meant to be read as a whole and not pieced out bit by bit. Only when you read through a psalm in its entirety from beginning to end will the principles at the heart of a psalm reveal themselves.

READ: Psalm 91 (ESV)

¹ He who dwells in the shelter of the **Most High**

will abide in the shadow of the **Almighty**.² I will say to the **Lord**, "My refuge and my fortress,

my **God**, in whom I trust."

³ For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler

and from the deadly pestilence.⁴ He will cover you with his pinions,

and under his wings you will find refuge;

his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.⁵ You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,

nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

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 look with your eyes

and see the recompense of the wicked.

⁹ Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—

the Most High, who is my refuge—¹⁰ no evil shall be allowed to befall you,

no plague come near your tent.

¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you

to guard you in all your ways.¹² On their hands they will bear you up,

lest you strike your foot against a stone.¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder;

the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.

¹⁴ "Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him;

I will protect him, because he knows my name.¹⁵ When he calls to me, I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble;

I will rescue him and honor him.¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him

and show him my salvation."

The Psalmist says, "I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Now, really think about this for a moment. Even to presume to say that God is "my God" is audacious. Who are we—who am I—to assume ownership of one so great as God? Yet, that is precisely what the Scriptures tell us to do. In fact, the phrase "my God" appears nearly a hundred and fifty times in the OT and over fifty times in the Psalms alone! So, yes, even though He is God, the Most High above all others. And yes, even though He is God, the Almighty, powerful and without equal. And yes, even though He is

God, Yahweh, the One who holds all things together by the potent force of his name. That God is also *my* God as if He existed for my sake alone.¹

The English word "God" comes from the Hebrew word אֱלֹהִים (*el-o-heem*). In Greek, it is translated as θεός (*theos*). In Hebrews, *Elohim* shows up a staggering 2,606 times. In Greek, *Theos* occurs over 1,300 times. Now, while it can refer to *the* God, it can also be used more like a categorical term that refers to spiritual beings in general (i.e., angels, gods, etc.).²

This isn't as shocking as it may seem at first. We do this all the time. For instance, many women can be "mothers," but there is only one Mother to a child. Nor is this contrary to both the Christian and Hebrew belief in one God: monotheism. Biblical monotheism has God above all other spiritual beings even though the writers refer to the lesser spiritual beings as gods. Meaning, when the biblical authors use this *Elohim*, they acknowledge that there are other spiritual beings, but ultimately, there is only one true God above them all. There are many "gods," or to put it another way, there are many different kinds of otherworldly creatures, but there is only one—capital "G"—God.

There are many passages which highlight this idea, but here are just two:

READ: Isaiah 45:5 (ESV)

I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God...

Famously, Moses had this to say to children of Israel about God being above the other so-called "gods."

READ: Deuteronomy 4:32-40 (ESV)

³² "For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of. ³³ Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live? ³⁴ Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? ³⁵ To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him. ³⁶ Out of heaven he let you hear his voice,

¹ Goldingay, John, *Psalms 90-150*, The Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, Volume 3, Tremper Longman III, Editor, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2008), p. 43.

² General Editors, "Elohim," February 28, 2019, *The Bible Project*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5iyUik97Lg>, [accessed, December 9, 2020].

that he might discipline you. And on earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire. ³⁷ And because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power, ³⁸ driving out before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is this day, ³⁹ know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. ⁴⁰ Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

The point in Moses using both God's personal name, "Yahweh," and God's generic name, "Elohim," was not only to instill a personal relationship with Israel but for Israel to know they had a relationship with a god who is unlike any other. God wasn't merely a god among other gods. He was THE God over all other gods.

Now, back to our passage. There are three personas in Psalm 91. There is the speaker, the poet, and then there's God. Interestingly, one commentator called this the break of the "long silence," referring to the lack of God's voice since before Psalm 88.³ The effect of changing authors vastly heightens what is about to be said to us.⁴ How encouraging that the ground by which our confidence is secured is in words spoken to us and not by us.⁵

God says to the speaker:

READ: Psalm 91:14-16 (ESV)

¹⁴ "Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. ¹⁵ When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. ¹⁶ With long life, I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

Interestingly, no explanation is given for the sorrow and woes the speaker has experienced throughout most of the Psalm. From the threat of plagues to the dangers of battle to the perils of a rocky mountain pass, nothing is given an explanation for why such awful things have descended upon one so faithful and trusting. All that we are told is that God will deliver him. He

³ Tanner, Beth, *The Book of Psalms*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 2014), p. 701.

⁴ Goldingay (2008), p. 48.

⁵ Longman, Tremper, & David E. Garland, *Psalms*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition, Volume 5, (Grand Rapids; Zondervan Academic, 2008), p. 701.

will be the rescuer. He will not leave one so devoted to being overcome by the evils of this world.

Meaning, we might not even know the reasons why such discouraging things happen in this life, but through those things, we can get to know our God better. They act as a foil to our most impressive God. His brightness brings into sharp focus evil's darkness.

However, even though we are not given the reasons for those awful things, we are told *why* God acts on our behalf. We're told that the Psalmist "loves" God. This love is a deep longing for God (cf. Deut. 7:7-8; 10:15).⁶ It is an attractional force as if the speaker was drawn to God the way a magnet is attracted to iron (cf. Gen. 34:8).⁷ This is both feelings of delight and the committal of will (i.e., marriage vows).

As such, the Most-High-Almighty-LORD-God promises assistance. Specifically, God promises six kinds of assistance:

1. Salvation ("deliver," "rescue," and "protect")

We are delivered both in the here and now and the then and later. He guards us as a shield and a buckler. He shelters us as a bird uses her wings to shelter her young.

2. Communication ("answer")

Usually, it is the Lord who calls and the servant who answers. But here, there is a great reversal. We call out to God, and our God answers us.

3. Affiliation ("be with")

Companionship through trial is a rare and blessed thing. To know you are not alone as you walk the valleys of this world is of great encouragement (cf. Ps. 23:4). We are not isolated in our troubles. In fact, we are accompanied by our God (cf. Mat. 1:22-23; 28:20).

4. Recognition ("honor")

To have the acknowledgment of our God means we desire the acknowledgment of no other.

5. Satisfaction ("satisfy")

⁶ Longman (2008), p. 700.

⁷ Goldingay (2008), p. 48.

Happy is the man who is contented in the Lord his God, for he will not desire so much as a grain of salt even if the whole world is offered him.

6. Revelation ("show")

A God such as ours is willing to reveal mysteries. He makes simple men into wise men. He grants insight into our past, present, and future. Our God wants to reveal his own salvation to us. He doesn't want to hide or mislead us. He is a God of revelations.

The speaker gets all of that—we get all of that—because we know God's name and we love our God. This relationship with this Elohim is a personal relationship. Oh how unworthy we are.

So, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

To have a personal relationship with God is to be protected by Elohim.

Paul later reiterates Psalm 91 when writing to the Romans. He says...

READ: Romans 8:28-39 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.