

April 24

Psalms 88, 91, 95, 108, 109

For good reason, the book of Psalms has been called “the churches first hymnal”. We find excerpts of this book throughout the New Testament, from the anguished cry of Jesus on the cross (Mk 15:34, Ps 22:1) to the joyful praise of Revelation (Rev 15:4, Ps 86:9). Today, many of our greatest hymns and worship songs find their inspiration in these Biblical treasures.

Psalm 91 is a wonderful chapter of the Bible. I think that the key thought of this Psalm is clearly stated in verses 9 and 10. <sup>9</sup> **If you make the Most High your dwelling— even the LORD, who is my refuge—<sup>10</sup> then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.**

This is a Psalm meant to bring confidence and assurance to the believer that he or she will certainly be protected by the power of God in times of trouble and pestilence. The very next verses after the ones I just read say this: **“For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all of your ways. They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”** Do you remember where else we have heard those words – and who the speaker was? Satan quoted those words from Psalm 91 to Jesus during the temptation experience in Matt 4:5-6, when he urged Him to leap from the pinnacle of the Temple in order to prove that He was the Messiah. It would be a spectacular feat that would attract all kinds of new followers and, because of the promised angelic assistance; there would be no danger whatsoever! Satan was quoting Scripture to Jesus. Jesus’ response was to quote Scripture back, in this instance, the command from Deuteronomy that says, **“Thou shalt not put the Lord your God to the test.”** This is a Psalm for everyone, but that small portion of it is applied in the New Testament to Jesus!

Psalm 91 surely is a great comfort. But is it true? I mean, **“Then no harm will befall you and disaster will not come near your tent?”** Protection here is promised from enemies and from pestilence. But for twenty-one centuries we have been persecuted and sometimes killed and Christians have succumbed to heart attacks and cancer! So how is this true? The answer, as we have found many times before, is that God surely does deliver, but oftentimes it is “through” or “out of” instead of “from” the difficulty.

The classic statement of this truth is found in Romans 8:28 and 29; **“...all things God works for the good of those who love Him...”**

Now let’s look at Psalm 95 – the key verses are 6 and 7 and they mirror the heart of the great Psalm 100 in almost identical language: **“Come let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care.”** It’s a beautiful invitation that I’ve used often as a call to worship. These verses are so important because nearly every truth of Scripture depends upon understanding it. God is the Creator – He is in a class with no other occupants. We are the creatures and as such, two things quickly follow: (1) We are totally dependent upon Him and (2) we are accountable to Him. If anyone really understands that, they will quickly

realize the need of being in relationship with Him and that He is truly worthy of our worship.

These verses in Psalm 95 which exhort us to “come and worship” remind me of the conversation in John 4 between Jesus and the woman at the well. Yes, there is a discussion as to the “how’s and where’s of worship” but to me, the most astounding revelation is that our Heavenly Father is seeking people to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Jesus declared to the woman at the well, **“...a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.”** God is seeking worshippers, not to augment His glory, but because it is right for Him to be glorified.

Pastor and musician, Joseph Arlington, once said, “The Father is looking for worshipers. So if you are looking for God and you just can’t seem to find him, then stop what you are doing and worship Him...and He will come and find you.”

Brian Doerkson wrote a simple worship song that allows us to respond to the Psalmist’s exhortation to “come and worship”.

Come, now is the time to worship  
Come, now is the time to give your heart  
Come, just as you are to worship  
Come, just as you are before your God  
Come.