

THE BRAVE SPARROW QUARTERLY

VIGILANCE

ISSUE 1, JANUARY 2024



FEATURING:

ARE YOU STILL SLEEPING?

MY NAME IS SURRENDER

PRESUMPTION

ENTERTAINED BY THE ENEMY

4 WAYS TO KEEP WATCH

A STUDY OF PSALM 91

Vigilance: The Brave Sparrow Quarterly
Issue No. 1, January 2024
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Published by:
Brave Sparrow Publishing
Birmingham, Alabama 35219
www.brave-sparrow.com

ISBN: 9798876052377

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“

Vigilant adjective

: alertly watchful especially to avoid danger

Synonyms: alert, attentive, awake, observant, open-eyed, watchful, wide-awake

Antonym: asleep

”

NOTE FROM ADRIENNE

Vigilance. This word lodged into my heart in 2023. It's a strong word, and I feel the necessity of it as a follower of Jesus in this day and hour. While surveying my life, the Spirit has been faithful to expose areas where I'm dull and sleepy. In response, I started scouring the Bible. Not surprisingly, I found the idea "to be on guard, to be watchful" everywhere. Vigilance is consistent throughout the Word of God.

There has never been a time in the history of God's people where the call to be vigilant with his Word, with community, and with following is absent. My hope for this year's quarterly is to explore ways to keep watch and be faithful to what God has spoken. I am no expert on end-time teachings, and I know there are many theories, but I am saying that the need to watch and pray in this hour of the church and the kingdom of God is pressing.

Time is short. Not in a doom and gloom kind of way—we have no reason to fear in Christ—but in a press-in-to-know-Jesus way. That's the knowledge we need. Keeping watch is both guarding and beholding. We keep darkness out and let the light in. Amen!

What to Expect in *Vigilance*

There will be four issues of *Vigilance* released this year. Each issue will contain articles, teachings, prophetic content, and a Bible study. I hope to have guest contributors in future issues. For this first quarter, there is new and revised material from me as I'm trying to get my bearings for a periodical publication. These articles are aimed at watching and waiting. Although written at different times, there are recurring themes, each with differing depths. Lastly, I chose Psalm 91 for the Bible Study because I believe the only place to keep watch is in the shadow of the Almighty. I pray we see the connection and importance.

To HIM who is able!

Adrienne



ARE YOU STILL SLEEPING?

MARCH 2023

The verses set in the Garden of Gethsemane are known for prayer, sorrow, betrayal, heated reactions, and the beginning of the crucifixion of Jesus. In the middle of it, Jesus demonstrates what 'being ready' looks like. He continues to teach his disciples why staying awake is necessary even while in the depths of distress. Friends, we need to understand why Jesus kept returning from prayer and asking his disciples, *are you still sleeping?*

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.

And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him.

And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." Mark 14:32-42

Are you still sleeping? The most troubling part about this question, besides that I would have been right there with Peter, James, and John, is that it was the third time Jesus had to ask. Jesus had been teaching his disciples through parables about being ready and staying alert leading up to this moment in the garden.

You never know when the thief will come, you never know when the master of the house will come, and you never know when the bridegroom will come. Be ready. Stay Awake. Have oil in your lamp.

I see three things in Jesus' words from Mark 14 that will help us be vigilant and guard against being spiritually dull, heavy-eyed, and unprepared.

1. *Not what I will, but what you will.*

In his sorrow, Jesus was looking at his Father, declaring his strength, and surrendering to his ways. This is a prayer that fascinated and devoted followers will pray. When we are spiritually dull, we stop surrendering to God's will and move in our way and understanding. Stay Awake.

2. *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.*

Spiritual readiness, the oil in our lamps, keeps us keen and discerning when temptation comes. When we are alert, we resist it and cling to the Word of God. When we are heavy-eyed, we entertain tempting thoughts. I heard it said recently, "We will never have authority over the things that entertain us." To resist and flee from temptation, we have to be wide-eyed in wonder with Jesus. Stay awake.

3. *Are you still sleeping? It is enough. My betrayer is at hand.*

Continued sleepiness will lead us to forsake the Word. It won't happen overnight. Dullness creeps in and takes over until we deny what we know to be true, like Judas. Past experiences will help us remember. But to be ready is to constantly buy oil from Jesus, not relying on yesterday's supply. Stay Awake.

“
In the Garden of
Gethsemane, Jesus
demonstrated that we
can keep watch even in
troubling times.
”

When our souls are sorrowful and distressed, it is easy to physically and spiritually become sleepy and try to pull the covers over our hearts as we hit the snooze button. Avoiding trouble isn't the solution or realistic as we watch for Jesus' return. We've been forewarned that there will be trouble. We have to be ready for it and able to stand firm in the midst of it. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus demonstrated that we can keep watch even in troubling times.

Psalm 121 describes God as neither slumbering nor sleeping. He is our help, and he is our keeper, and his eyelids never get heavy while watching over us. As we are being transformed into his image, we will find ourselves watching and waiting like him. *More than the watchmen wait for dawn*, as the Psalmist writes (Psalm 130:6). Why is this needed? So that we can be like him when temptation comes. Jesus' life is evidence of a heart committed to the Father above everything else. *Not what I will, but what you will*. That's vigilance!

I want to encourage us to ask the Holy Spirit, "Am I still sleeping?" And then be faithful to follow up with any area he exposes. Father, strengthen our faith! We want to be found ready.

MY NAME IS SURRENDER

2022

I guess I could be known for many things
and many things could be said of me
but I'll be clear; I only care
to be known as surrendered

My name is Surrender
it used to be Stubborn
but you have changed the way I move

I'm most courageous when I yield
at your feet instead of others
it may seem weak and maybe feeble
but all I feel is strong and able

I guess I could be known by lots of people
and lots of people could know of me
but I'll be honest; I don't care
as long as I am known by you

My name is Yours
it used to be Self
but you have changed the way I see

I'm most brave drawn near to you
charting turns and suddenlies
it may be risky, even scary
but I am anchored in your deep

PRESUMPTION

JANUARY 2024

As I study vigilance, the most unsettling notion so far has been presumption and how it develops from an autopilot mentality. Discipleship is a daily choice to keep following Jesus, yet I find automatic patterns trying to attach themselves to my walk with God. Automatic withdrawals, bill pay, and refills may be a good, efficient idea, and autopilot may be great for flying planes, but when it comes to relationships, especially with God, it's sleepy.

An autopilot mentality in discipleship is based on the assumption that we can ease through life without taking up our cross. Presumption puts that thought into action. Yes, there is protection and favor as we dwell in God (See *A Study of Psalm 91*), but dwelling in God is the condition. Presuming God's protection without abiding is a sin, and its idol is self, and it leads to a world of unnecessary trouble.

Let's look at 1 Samuel 15:23. It's a powerful verse that cuts to the heart of the matter.

*Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,
and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.*

The two thoughts join together make a complete thought for the context of King Saul's trouble. He ignored a command from God, he got tired of waiting, and took matters into his own hands. Let's be clear. We don't want any part of that kind of trouble. Samuel's correction to Saul addresses his rebellion *and* the idolatry behind it.

I want to take a closer look at the second part of the verse. I think it will help us understand why we question the accuracy of scripture and God's spoken word to us when we face disappointment, delays, and trials. In doing so, we will also identify the path to an autopilot mindset.

Whenever I'm tempted or have thoughts that question the Bible or a word

from God, there is always an idol or the making of one close by. 100% of the time. I am learning to take those tempting thoughts captive and quickly find the idol so it can be smashed and I can obey (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).

HOW PRESUMPTION IS AN IDOL

Assuming is the idea that we already know or that we know better.

Presumption is acting on assumptions. Merriam-Webster tells us that to presume is to overstep and take liberties, and it is an action dictated by probability. In Hebrew, the word means "to press, as in press for one's way," and it means "arrogance."

Combine those definitions with the biblical idea of an idol, anything we rely on instead of trusting in God, and it is easy to see that presumption makes an idol out of what we know (or think we know) as we push for our way. Yikes!

From the get-go, we can see that presumption is not an attitude we want to operate in. Humility gets low, and will relinquish our will to the Father. Jesus demonstrated humility and vigilance by praying. (See *Are You Still Sleeping?*) Specifically, he prayed, *not my will, but yours be done*. Pride always exalts and pursues self. It is the opposite of the spirit of Christ, and it is a stupor waiting to imprison us.

The autopilot approach to discipleship assumes we already know and coasts on that knowledge instead of pressing on to know the Lord. It's not biblical. Nowhere in scripture do we see followers of God on autopilot. Being disciples of Christ is a diligent follow to learn from him. In the pursuit, we are being transformed in a miraculous, glorious way. But, make no mistake, preparing to be the bride of Christ is a costly pursuit to know Jesus and become like him.

Assumption and presumption do not want to learn. They do not want to follow, they do not want to wait, and they do not want to watch. They are satisfied with what they already know and act accordingly. If I'm reading 1 Samuel 15 correctly, that is rebellion against God's way, and it carves an idol out of self.

...preparing to be the bride of Christ
is a costly pursuit to know Jesus and
become like him. ””

We are not self-sufficient. That title belongs to God—El Shaddai. We are needy people. Like a deer pants for water, we should pursue God. How often do deer pursue water? It's the sum of their existence. To be a people, a bride watching and waiting for Jesus' return, we will be awake, alert, buying oil for our lamps. Our rest comes as we abide and trust in God's every word.

HOW IDOLS LEAD TO DISTRUST

Idols exist because we are relying on something/someone other than God, and they lead us to distrust God, his word, his kingdom, and even his church. I find it peculiar that even though idols are dead, they are never satisfied. They will keep carving more and more space in our hearts, demanding more and more high places if we don't smash them.

Let's use the example of exalting safety and comfort, among other things, above trusting God with troubles we come up against. I know I've been guilty of this in the past. Faith declares the promise of God over our families and then continues to lean on him. When trouble or trials come, we look to him for salvation—for *the help of his presence* (Psalm 42:11, NASB). But if an idol is in place instead of faith in God, when troubles come, we will accuse God of not being faithful.

Satan doesn't miss a beat. He seeks to devour, and idols give him an open door for accusations. He will use anything—hardships, changes (good or bad), trauma, people, accidents, etc., to point to the Bible and accuse it of being wrong, to point to God and accuse him of withholding, and to point to the church and accuse it of being foolish. The way to shut Satan's mouth is to get out of the stupor of autopilot, to rid ourselves of presumption, and whet our appetite for God and his Word.

Friends, let's ask the Holy Spirit to search us, and expose the idols in place, and reveal every presumption that has a root in our hearts, soul, mind, and strength.

Here are a few practical ways to guard against presumption.

- **Stay diligent.** Feed on the Word of God daily. Cut off idols. Give them no space.
- **Befriend the Holy Spirit.** Spirit life is not a one-time connection or seasonal to-do list. It's every day— we get to commune with the Holy Spirit every day.
- **Beware of Accusations.** If you hear accusatory thoughts in your mind, cut them off and seek the Lord's thoughts.
- **Counter it.** When the Holy Spirit highlights a presumption, ask for more help. How do I align with the Word of God? Take it captive and replace it with the truth of God's word.

ENTERTAINED BY THE ENEMY

FALL 2021

I had been praying one morning at my church. Afterward, I was washing my hands in the restroom when the alarm on my watch sounded. It caught my attention for two reasons. First, I didn't set the alarm. It's an old-school digital watch, and I couldn't program the alarm if I wanted to. Secondly, the time the alarm went off was 9:11am. I felt the Lord speak in the moment, "911! There is an urgent need to cleanse the things you (the Church) are watching."

Following this encounter with my watch, I had four dreams about eyes and purity. I want to zoom in on one of the dreams now, but you can read the series titled *Our Eyes* on the blog*.

In a dream I titled *Entertained by the Enemy*, I saw multitudes of people being held prisoner so they would not see a great attempt to end their lives. Captivated by the games being played and hosted by the captors/enemy, the multitudes neither knew they were held captive nor that their lives were in danger.

Our eyes play a critical role in being vigilant. From the moment we wake up in the morning until we fall asleep at night (excluding the midday nap!), our eyes are open and working. An influx of information and content enters our bodies through what we see, including eye candy. Entertainment can be a stupor for us. We cannot remain vigilant to the kingdom of heaven if we are being entertained by other things.

Jesus tells us, his disciples, to watch and pray so we don't enter into temptation (Mark 14:32-42). Guarding keeps darkness out, but it also makes room for better things. Listen to what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount. *The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness* (Matthew 6:21-22). We are made to be full of light.

That's a powerful verse in itself. But it's sandwiched between verses about picking treasures wisely because no one can serve two masters. Jesus

emphasized how important our eyes are. Our whole bodies—heart, soul, mind, and strength—are affected by what comes through our eyes. That's the emergency at hand.

911! What are we letting into our bodies? Whatever we let in determines the trajectory of our hearts. If we have multiple treasures, our devotion to God and to the kingdom of heaven is in jeopardy.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, beware of the messages coming through media and entertainment outlets. Watch for falsehoods. We know there will be false prophecies, prophets, and deceptions as Jesus' return approaches. Be wise when watching TV and choosing Movies, be alert when scrolling through social media, and be cautious with reading material. Packaging may appear harmless, even necessary, but often, ravenous wolves wait underneath. Befriend the Holy Spirit! Have eyes to see and ears to hear how he is leading. False prophecies and prophets are not limited to church walls. Every media outlet will have wolves in sheep's clothing. There is no need to fear! Let's keep our eyes on Jesus, hide his Word in our hearts, and surround ourselves with the family of God. Watch and pray, friends.

The chasm between the kingdom of heaven and the world is only growing farther apart. We can try to live in the in-between, in the best of both worlds or the grey. But the island we are trying to create between both kingdoms is an apparition, at best. It's more like captivity. Either way, there is no substance to such an existence.

Will you take a minute and survey the content that comes through your eyes on a daily basis? Is it healthy? Is it benefiting your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Is it light or darkness? Thank you, Holy Spirit for helping us!

*www.brave-sparrow.com

“
The eye is the
lamp of the body

Matthew 6:21

”

4 WAYS TO KEEP WATCH

JULY 2023

In these days leading up to Jesus' return, I believe four things are essential to keeping watch: Remembering, Following, Discernment, and Belief. These aren't the only ways to stay awake and be on guard, but they are a good place to start and are seen throughout the Bible.

1. Remembering

In Mark 13, Jesus is talking to his disciples about the signs of the end of the age. There is going to be trouble. At the end of the descriptions, Jesus says to his disciples, to us, *Be on Guard; I have told you all things beforehand*. What an incredible assurance! We have been told what we need to know about the days ahead of us as we watch for Jesus to return. So, the first key to watching is remembering.

By remembering what has been told to us beforehand, we have no reason to fear. We are equipped with wisdom, instruction, and comfort for the days we are living in. Calling these to mind also keeps us from making bad decisions. Psalm 106 recounts times when Israel forgot God's work and made their own plan. Listen to what the writer says, *They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox eating grass* (vs 20). In Psalm 20, however, King David shows us a different way. *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright* (vs 7-8). That is a shining example of vigilance.

How do we call to mind the things Jesus has spoken to us? It's impossible to remember something we've never heard. It begins with hearing. *Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God* (Romans 10:17). Let's look at three ways we can hear the Word of God: Read the Bible, Befriend the Holy Spirit, and Community with the body of Christ. The first two are essential elements in the secret place or the time we are spending in God's presence. I won't belabor this point, but if we are not making time to spend with God—meditating on his Word and actively listening for his voice—we are only half awake, at best. Invest in the secret place.

Community with the body is the third way to hear the Word of God, and it is a glorious design by God that shouldn't be ignored. Let's look more closely at each one.

- Read the Bible

Reading the Bible is more than a Christian duty. It's the Word of God. It's living and active and discerns spirit from soul (Hebrews 4:12). We have been forewarned that the days surrounding Jesus' return are filled with deceptions and the love of self, among other things (2 Timothy 3:1-4, Matthew 24). God's Word needs to be stored in our hearts. It reminds us of who God is, what he has done, what he is doing, and who we are in him. We should hunger for it and pray to be hungry if we aren't. Pride will tell us we don't need it, but pride is rejected by God. The Word of God is unfading, unwavering truth, and washing in it gets us ready and keeps us ready for Jesus. God's Word not only lights the way, it gives understanding (Psalm 119:105,130), and it is completely pure. *Your word is refined to complete purity, and your servant loves it* (Psalm 119:140). We can't keep watch without the Word of God.

- Befriend the Holy Spirit

The Spirit is God. He has always existed. After Jesus' ascension, the Holy Spirit's ministry has been further revealed. Often used in the Old Testament as a description of God's presence, in the New Testament the Spirit also leads, helps, comforts us, gives us gifts, and bears fruit in us. Paul writes that we can't call Jesus Lord without the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). It's more than speaking in tongues, although that's pretty great! He leads us to truth, he reminds us what Jesus—the Word—has spoken. If we are keeping watch, he opens our eyes with revelation and wisdom (Ephesians 3:17). In the secret place, simply ask him for help and get acquainted with how he moves and speaks and reveals matters. It's truly wonderful. Befriend the Holy Spirit.

- Community

We are made for both community with God and with the body of Christ. Investing in the secret place is a must because it's where we commune with the Spirit through the Word, prayer, and listening.

But communing with the body of Christ is also crucial. There are countless scriptures about the importance of the church coming together in unity. The point today is testimonies. Telling and hearing the testimonies of God's faithfulness through our brothers and sisters is another way to remember who God is and what he has spoken. Remembering what God has done for us keeps us looking to him. It keeps us dependent on him. Revelation says we overcome by our testimonies and the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11). One of our greatest honors is sharing Jesus with others, not just evangelistically but also sharing day-to-day life as the family of God.

To keep watch, we have to remember. Making room for these things—the Word of God, Spirit life, and community with the body—aids in being vigilant.

2. Following

A second way to keep watch is to follow. When Jesus called his disciples, they left everything behind and followed him. There is no better time to survey what keeps us from following Jesus than now. We have to hold earthly treasures loosely and grab hold of the kingdom of heaven wholeheartedly. Everything else is fading. Everything.

Following God wasn't a new concept when Jesus came to earth. It's the narrative of the whole Bible. God speaks, and we either listen and obey or move in our own way. When we choose our way instead of his, it is a sign of two things: Presuming we know better and a lack of trust in God. Being ready for Jesus' return leaves no room for presumption, which is sin and idolatry (see *Presumption*), and it leaves no room for distrust. Let me say it another way. Following God means we have measures of trust for his Word and the resolve not to be torn from it. Trusting God is essential to keeping watch. Otherwise, we will look for and find something else to rely on.

 Being ready for Jesus' return leaves
no room for presumption

That leads us to earthly treasures. Let's look at what Jesus says.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Matthew 6:19-24

From Jesus' words, we can see these things about earthly treasures.

- Earthly treasures are not trustworthy because they can be taken, stolen, and destroyed.
- The treasure we seek (where we set our gaze) affects our whole body and life.
- Treasures demand devotion. They will take over our hearts.

Treasures affect vigilance because treasures rule our hearts. Keeping watch for the Lord's return requires him to be our treasure—our only treasure. Earthly loves lure our eyes off of Jesus and watching for him. They have to be held loosely so when we hear the Lord say, "Follow me," we are willing to leave everything behind and go where he leads.

Keeping watch allows the Holy Spirit to search and expose every earthly treasure that stands in the way of us following Jesus—every deficiency of trust. Then, we can remove the dross and ask for more measures of faith and trust and love.

4 WAYS TO KEEP WATCH

1 Remembering

Be on Guard; I have told you all things beforehand. Mark 13

2 Following

And leaving everything behind, they followed him. Luke 5:11

3 Discernment

Solid food is for the mature believers who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice. Hebrews 5:14

4 Belief

I believe, help my unbelief! Mark 9:14-29

3. Discernment

Discernment is the third way to keep watch. In general, the biblical use of discernment is an understanding and is for testing. We are given the power to discern by God, but we are also instructed to train them with constant practice. That is part of becoming a mature believer. I know I keep referring to the secret place in this article, but it's ground zero for following Jesus and keeping watch. Training our powers to discern starts as we commune with God (Psalm 119:34).

One Old Testament definition of discernment is "a specific understanding." This is the progression from information to understanding, also referred to as theory and application. As an analogy, let's use music. I can teach you everything I know about music in five minutes, and you will have a decent foundation for music theory. But to play a musical instrument—to have a specific understanding—one has to take the theory and put it into practice, to apply it. Learning to play any instrument takes lots of practice, and the more you do it, the more you understand it.

Discernment isn't just information. It is understanding. We could stop there. But Hosea 14:9 takes us from understanding to knowledge. *Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right.*

Information leads to discernment, and discernment leads to knowledge. To *know* the Lord, to *know* his ways, is our highest calling. That gets us to the New Testament use of the word.

A familiar passage about discernment is Romans 12:2. *Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* In this passage, Paul emphasizes the need to renew our minds so we can be transformed out of worldly mindsets. In doing so, we are activating our powers to discern the will of God. **Keeping watch in this day and hour of the kingdom of God requires renewed minds so we can discern.**

What Paul is saying in Romans 12 can be connected to what the author of Hebrews is saying in chapter 5. It's a warning of apostasy and a rebuke to immature believers who should be mature or at least maturing but are still in the basics of God. Immaturity in Christ won't develop past information, and it won't transform.

Solid food is for the mature believers who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice. Hebrews 5:14

Friends, this is real. Vigilant living looks like maturity in Christ. It's when we constantly renew our minds, practice discernment, and apply kingdom principles in our lives. It will result in continual growth and fruit-bearing. May we never stop maturing.

How does this happen? It's the decision to get before God every day and learn from him, behold him until we look like him. That is a very practical step. We learn his voice by spending time with him. We learn what the Spirit's nudges feel like by spending time with him. He will leak into everyday life. The next thing we know, we will hear his voice in conversations with friends. We will recognize open opportunities to share the gospel. We will know when someone needs comfort. Making big decisions will seem effortless. That's discernment. That is pressing in to *know* the Lord, and it's a key to keeping watch.

Psalm 119:34

Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

4. Belief

The final way to keep watch is belief. We will not watch for something that we don't believe is happening or that is coming. I would also argue that disbelief actually leads to gawking, mocking, and deconstructing. So as we ready ourselves to keep watch, belief in Jesus' return, the gospel message, the kingdom of God—all of it—has to be present and remain strengthened.

Let's break it down into two sections: Exposing Unbelief and Strengthening Belief.

- Exposing Unbelief — Apostasy is evidence of a lack of trust because of unbelief. Every time the Holy Spirit has revealed disobedience in my life, it can be traced back to something God has spoken that I don't believe. Unbelief is a downward spiral into living self-centered instead of Christ-centered. There are two grave results of unbelief: idols and hindering God's work.
 1. Unbelief results in making idols. Idols are a major breach of covenant with God. *Have no other Gods before...do not make images to worship.* God is jealous, and he is looking for a devoted people (Exodus 20:2-6). Not only that, but idol worship makes us dead. Psalm 115 says that *those who make idols become like them, and so do those who trust them.* Idols have the appearance of life but have no breath. They have a form of godliness but deny its power (Psalm 115:4-8, 2 Timothy 3:1-5).
 2. Unbelief hinders the work of God. The people in Jesus' hometown did not receive him. They were blinded by who they thought he was instead of seeing him for who he was, and it led to them not believing he was the Messiah. The Gospels record that Jesus marveled at and did not do many mighty works because of their unbelief (Matthew 13:53-58, Mark 6:6).

Their response is part of a long history of not seeing God. In Psalm 78, Asaph retells how the Lord provided and delivered his people and then says, *...despite his wonders, they did not believe* (vs 32). In Psalm 106, we see the progression from forgetfulness to disobedience, to mixture with other beliefs, to serving idols, to sacrificing to them, and eventually being enslaved to them, which the New Testament calls being dead in sin (vs 13, 20, 34-39, Romans 6:23).

I want Jesus to find us devoted to his kingdom. I want him to marvel at our belief, not our unbelief.

“
Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.
”

Let's now talk about strengthening our belief.

- Strengthening Belief — Here are two places in scripture about increased faith.
 1. While Jesus was ministering, a father pleaded with him to heal his son who was tortured by demons. *If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.* Jesus responds with a challenge. *“If you can! Anything is possible for those who believe”* The father immediately replies, *I believe, help my unbelief!* Mark 9:14-29

Friends, put that prayer on your lips! If we find ourselves in unbelief, we can simply ask for help. May the prayer of lives be for belief to continually increase in God and his Word. Amen!
 2. Some of the most encouraging parts of the Bible are when we see Jesus praying for us (John 17, Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 2:1). I want to hone in on Jesus' words to Peter in Luke 22.

Even though Peter emphatically vows his devotion, Jesus says to him, *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to*

have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. Jesus forewarns Peter that his devotion is about to be tested, and that he is going to make it, and to strengthen his brothers when he comes out of it.

Jesus praying for us isn't constrained to history. He continues to make intercession for us, *that our faith may not fail.* Wow! I hope that lights up your heart. When it seems impossible to believe, the conquering Lion, the name above every other name, the one holding everything together, is praying for you. That's a guaranteed answered prayer!

These four ways to keep watch are intricately connected. To negate one is to compromise the others and wear down vigilance. Unbelief keeps us sleepy and unable to watch and discern what is happening around us. But when we remember who God is and what he has spoken, we stir belief back to a burning force in us that not only keeps us watching but also keeps us following wherever the Lord leads.

PRAYER for the BRIDE OF CHRIST

Holy Spirit, we need you.

Keep filling us, charging us, and nudging us until we are wide awake. Expose every hindrance to watching and praying. Reveal every idol standing between us and Jesus so we can prepare a way for his coming.

You have our eyes, Jesus! You are our great reward. We delight in your every word. As we abide in you and behold you, transform us into your image. We surrender our will to the will of the Father, just as you taught us to. Strengthen what remains.

Unify us! That we would be one as you and the Father and the Spirit are one. Let your glory rest on us in these days so that we will be beacons of hope and life and love. Be glorified in your bride! Come, Lord, quickly!

Yours is the kingdom and power and glory forever and ever, Amen!

SECTION TWO

A STUDY OF
PSALM 91

ADRIENNE SCOTT



BRAVE
SPARROW

A STUDY OF PSALM 91

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INTRODUCTION

I pray this study leaves us with a greater understanding of who God is and who we are because of him. In the context of Psalm 91, he is a faithful deliverer, a dwelling place, and a defender. When we dwell with him, we are saved, known, and honored. But that's just the tip of the iceberg.

This study is in a four-week format. Each week is broken down into six daily focuses and a rest day. It may seem like a long time to stay in a 16-verse chapter, but hopefully we will get past the familiar and mine the riches within each verse. It's loaded! The structure is merely a suggestion and a way to organize my notes. Please, make the study work for you.

As always, my primary goal is to point us to Jesus. My secondary goal is to give tools and resources that to keep us studying the Bible.

To HIM who is able!
Adrienne

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Published by:
Brave Sparrow Publishing
Birmingham, Alabama 35219
www.brave-sparrow.com

WEEK ONE: Psalm 91:1-4

Begin by quickly reading the whole chapter below, ESV

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."
For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.
A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
You will only look with your eyes
and see the recompense of the wicked.
Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—
the Most High, who is my refuge—
no evil shall be allowed to befall you,
no plague come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the adder;
the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.
"Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him;
I will protect him, because he knows my name.
When he calls to me, I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation."*

DAY ONE

Two goals for today:

- Read vs 1-4 in the following translations*. Take your time. Ask the Holy Spirit to read it with you. He's a good helper!
- Make notes of any words or phrases that stand out to you.

English Standard Version (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*

Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

*1 You who live in the shelter of 'Elyon,
who spend your nights in the shadow of Shaddai,
2 who say to Adonai, "My refuge! My fortress!
My God, in whom I trust!"
3 he will rescue you from the trap of the hunter
and from the plague of calamities;
4 he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his truth is a shield and protection.*

The Living Bible (TLB)

1 *We live within the shadow of the Almighty, sheltered by the God who is above all gods.*

2 *This I declare, that he alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I am trusting him.* 3 *For he rescues you from every trap and protects you from the fatal plague.* 4 *He will shield you with his wings! They will shelter you. His faithful promises are your armor.*

New International Version (NIV)

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.

NOTES:

*Different translations of the Bible were created for a variety of reasons. My selections are mostly word-for-word or concept translations with a few interpretive ones.

DAY TWO

In the first four verses, two different movements are occurring. First, the descriptions of what we are doing and what is happening to us. Secondly, there are descriptions of God and what he is doing for us.

Us

- We are dwelling in the shelter of the Most High.
- We are abiding as a result of dwelling—not just visiting, but living from there.
- We are declaring to God, “You are my refuge and fortress.”
- We are trusting. Trust involves both declaring and doing.

God

- He is delivering us from the fowler’s snare/traps.
- He is delivering us from the deadly pestilence.
- He is covering us with his wings. Remember, this is the Almighty. He doesn't have little bird wings. They are capable of covering every part of us.
- He is defending us with his faithfulness that acts like a shield.

We can infer that if God is acting in these ways, then he is that person. For example, if he is delivering us, that makes him our Deliverer. Likewise, he is our Refuge, Defender, and Shield. These attributes of God are part of his faithfulness. Can you see the descriptions of God in vs 1-4? What stands out to you the most?

NOTES:

DAY THREE

The psalmist's use of four different names of God in the introduction reveals a great amount about God's nature and who is sheltering us.

Most High - *Elyon* in Hebrew, meaning highest, supreme

Almighty - *Shaddai* in Hebrew, meaning almighty, all-sufficient one

LORD - *Jehovah* or *Adonia* in Hebrew, also *Yahweh*, meaning self-existing one, giver of existence, and everlasting

God - *Elohim* in Hebrew, meaning god, supreme, divine

In the Old Testament, Lord and God are base names often used as a prefix to a fuller name. For example, Jehovah Jireh = God our provider or El Shaddai = God is self-sufficient.

In the first verse, the author of Psalm 91 specifically uses Most High and Almighty, whereas, in the second verse, he uses base names of God. Altogether, there is no doubt that the psalmist is referring to the powerful, supreme God with whom no one compares. He is a good place to take shelter!

In the space provided, rewrite Psalm 91:1, replacing the names of God with their definition or description.

Ex. ...I will abide in the shadow of the all-sufficient one.

The point of this exercise is to break out of familiar reading. Make it personal by using your words or the descriptions that stand out to you the most.

NOTES:

DAY FOUR

The first two verses of Psalm 91 are dense with imagery and intriguing terms. We are going to dig deep into the layers of meaning. I'm providing you with definitions of the original language (Hebrew), but you can add English definitions and synonyms to dig even deeper.

Each term below is a different word in Hebrew. Even though they are similar in nature, the author did not repeat any word.

Verse 1-2

Dwell: To sit down, to stay, to settle. In some cases, to marry

Shelter: Secret, hiding place, fort

Abide: To camp out, to lodge. Some experts translate this word as "to spend the night"

Shadow: A shade. Figuratively: a defense

Say: To speak it out loud

Refuge: Shelter, absolute. Figuratively: hope

Fortress: Hold, fastness (fasten), a net, also peak of a mountain

Trust: To confide in, set one's hope or confidence on, secure

Take a minute to interchange and meditate on the meanings. For example, a shadow can be scary, but when

you think of shadow like a shade, it takes on a different meaning. The shadow of God's wing isn't menacing to those who are abiding. It's cool, refreshing, and protective.

NOTES:

Verse 3-4

Deadly Pestilence:

Deadly: desire, destruction, chasm. Also,
Ruin—calamity, iniquity, mischief, naughtiness,
perverse things

Pestilence: plagues, death, murrain

Pinions: Pinions are the part of a wing that enable flight.
Also, flight feathers

Faithfulness:

The Hebrew word is more often translated
as truth, meaning stability, certainty,
trustworthy

Shield: A tall shield that covers the whole body

Buckler: A small shield that usually fits on the arm

Take another minute to interchange or meditate on these meanings.

It may seem tedious to look this closely at words, and you certainly don't have to. But the saying 'lost in translation' exists for a reason. The Hebrew language is so rich. Almost every meaning has a separate word. The English language can be too concise by using the same word for multiple meanings. So it helps to understand what the writer was saying and why it may seem redundant to us.

NOTES:

DAY FIVE

Cross-referencing is a study tool that opens up a topic or word so we can see it throughout the Bible. It's one more way to find the rich layers within each verse and get a fuller perspective.

Below are four cross-referenced themes from vs 1-4. You can use the extra space to do more.

Refuge / Trust

Prov 3:5-6

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.*

Psalm 61:2-3

*Lead me to the rock that is higher than I,
for you have been my refuge,
a strong tower against the enemy.*

Wings

Psalm 36:7

*How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of
mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They
feast on the abundance of your house.*

Psalm 63:7

*For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your
wings I will sing for joy.*

Ruth 3:9

And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wing over your servant, for you are a redeemer. *Some translations say skirt or love.*

Faithfulness / Truth

Psalm 43:3

Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring to your holy hill and to your dwelling. (See also Psalm 108:4)

Revelation 22:6

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

Deliver

Psalm 140:7

O LORD, my Lord, the strength of my salvation (deliverance), you have covered my head in the day of battle.

Psalm 79:9

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!

Matthew 6:13

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

NOTES:

DAY SIX

Start by reviewing the past five days and any notes that you made. Today we are turning these verses in to prayers.

Praying scripture is one way to meditate and hide the Word of God in our hearts. There are many ways and models for turning scripture into prayer. The main idea is to be genuine. Studying the Word has a way of naturally putting a prayer in our mouths.

I've given a couple of examples to start us off. If you're having trouble, remember this anagram for different types of prayers. ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication (petition/asking).

Using your notes or memory, take a thought from vs 1-4 that impacted you and pray it back to God.

Examples.

- Jesus! Thank you for being a safe, sure shelter for me. You are covering everything. I choose to stay with you.
- God, forgive me for looking for life in other places. You are Almighty, the giver of life.
- Father, I want to trust you more. Increase my faith. Give me eyes to see how mighty you are.
- Your love and faithfulness are overwhelming, Lord. There is no one like you. I surrender to you.

NOTES & PRAYERS:

WEEK TWO: Psalm 91:5-8

The focus this week is vs 5-8. Start again by reading all of Psalm 91 (Page 4). Keeping the whole chapter in front of us is helpful to see how each section is connected.

DAY ONE

Two goals for today:

- Read vs 5-8 in the following translations. Take your time. Ask the Holy Spirit to read it with you. He's a good helper!
- Make notes of any words or phrases that stand out to you. Ask the Lord about them.

ESV

*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.*

CJB

*5 You will not fear the terrors of night
or the arrow that flies by day,*

*6 or the plague that roams in the dark,
or the scourge that wreaks havoc at noon.*

*7 A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand;
but it won't come near you.*

*8 Only keep your eyes open,
and you will see how the wicked are punished.*

The Living Bible

*5 Now you don't need to be afraid of the dark anymore,
nor fear the dangers of the day; 6 nor dread the
plagues of darkness, nor disasters in the morning.*

*7 Though a thousand fall at my side, though ten
thousand are dying around me, the evil will not touch
me. 8 I will see how the wicked are punished.*

The Message

Fear nothing—not wild wolves in the night,
not flying arrows in the day,

Not disease that prowls through the darkness,
not disaster that erupts at high noon.

Even though others succumb all around,
drop like flies right and left,
no harm will even graze you.

You'll stand untouched, watch it all from a distance,
watch the wicked turn into corpses.

Two Clarifications

1. When we read about wicked people or sinful people in the Old Testament, we need to remember that Jesus did a new thing on the cross. Our hearts should mirror his when it comes to individuals and people groups. We don't pray, wish, or think vindictive, vengeful curses over people. We bless people and pray they come to life in Jesus. We have one enemy. Verses like "watch the punishment of the wicked" under the new covenant refer to Satan and the kingdom of darkness. Remember, also, that he is already conquered. One day we will see clearly!
2. I wholeheartedly believe there is a provision of protection as we shelter under God's wing, that we can live in divine health, and there are times when we are supernaturally protected from pestilence, plagues, etc. Yet, we live in a world that is upside down inside out from what it was intended to be. Under the curse, decay and death are realities. The promise we have isn't solely an absence from them. It is also freedom from fear of them as we hide, abide, and stay in the shelter of God's wing. The life we are guaranteed is not this earthly life. This life is always fading. We are promised, under the covering of Jesus' blood, that regardless of what happens to our bodies on earth, we have a life—unfiltered life forever with God.

NOTES:

DAY TWO

In vs 5-8, there are two promises given to us under one condition.

The Condition

The promises in these verses are under the condition of abiding in God's protection. His protection comes as we shelter, remain, dwell, and tuck in close to him and his life. Outside of his covenant and his boundaries, we are open to fear and other plots of the enemy.

The Promises

The protection of God's shelter promises us that we have no reason to fear. Notice the strong language in these verses.

- *You will not fear* attacks by day or by night.
- *You will not fear* pestilence or destruction in darkness or light.

It doesn't matter what is happening around us, how grave things appear, how close wickedness may seem, we are hidden under the wing of the Almighty.

As we shelter in him, we are promised that we will only see wickedness punished. Have you ever closed your eyes because you were afraid of what you'll see? Under God's covering, we will not fear—we will *only* see the destruction of evil. So don't close your eyes! Watching light overcome darkness is not something we want to miss.

How do these verses encourage and challenge you to shelter in God and overcome fear?

NOTES:

DAY THREE

For days three and four, we will zoom in on a few terms. Let's begin with *fear* and *terror*.

Fear -

The Hebrew word *yare* means fear, terrible, dreadful, to frighten. A second definition means revere.

Terror -

Terror is a different word in Hebrew, *pahad*. It means fear, specifically things that cause terror.

Let's look again at the promises.

In essence, God is saying to us, *in my protection, within my boundaries, you will not fear (be frightened, dread) the things and circumstances that cause terror. Period. There is no longer any reason for that. I'm covering you.*

The psalmist specifically lists four things we no longer have a need to fear: Terror by night, arrows by day, pestilence in darkness, and destruction at noonday.

Take a minute and make a list of things that may be terrorizing you. What is it that you fear? What area of life does the enemy use to torment you?

Give those things to the Lord. Name them one-by-one. Following is a sample prayer.

(continued)

Jesus, I give you _____. I have no reason to fear _____ anymore because I am safely under your wing that covers everything.

You can take an extra step and put a big X or write VOID over your list.

NOTES:

DAY FOUR

Let's look at the idea of *recompense*.

I want you to get excited because the punishment of wickedness is part of our inheritance in Christ. We are no longer punishable under the blood (covering) of Jesus. His blood bought us back, redeemed us from sin and death. Paid in full.

This is as personal as it is corporate. It applies to the details of our lives and to the whole body of Christ. Enjoy this victory!

Recompense - An equivalent or return for something done, suffered, or given. To be returned in kind.

Penalty - The suffering annexed by law because of a crime or offense. Punishment.

There are two remarkable things to consider. First, the legal, judicial language in the psalm mirrors the transaction that occurs on the cross. In the throne room of heaven, the blood of Jesus legally buys us back from death while also punishing Satan. God is our judge and victor, and Satan is eternally defeated. The second consideration is that the recompense of the wicked is a spiritual law in action. We reap what we sow. Our enemy has sown destruction and will reap eternal destruction.

I've listed three ways Satan comes against us (individually and as the church). These are his punishable crimes. In the notes, make a list that's more personal. Be sure to end the list by

“stamping” it paid in full through the blood of Jesus our victor.
This is our inheritance.

Example of Satan’s offenses

1. Perjury — false accusation
2. Trespassing — we belong to Jesus
3. Disturbing the Peace — sin is enmity with God.

NOTES:

DAY FIVE

We are cross-referencing the terms fear and recompense, and also the topics of the blood of Jesus and Satan's defeat. Use the extra space to do more.

Fear

Psalm 23:4

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. See also Psalm 34:4-5

1 John 4:16-18

God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgement, because as he is so also are we in this world.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love cast out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

2 Timothy 1:6-7

I remind you to fan into the flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Recompense

Proverbs 10:16

*The wages of the righteous is life,
The income of the wicked, punishment.*

Psalm 37:34

*Wait for the Lord and keep His way,
And He will exalt you to inherit the land;
When the wicked are cut off, you will see it.*

Blood of Jesus

Ephesians 1:7

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Colossians 1:19-23

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven.

Satan Defeated

Romans 16:19-20

Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is

good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Revelation 12:9-11

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

NOTES:

DAY SIX

Start by reviewing the past five days and any notes that you made. We are turning these verses into prayers.

Review my note about praying scripture on Page 16. I've given a couple of examples to start us off. Here is the anagram again for different types of prayers. ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

Using your notes or memory, take a thought from vs 5-8 that impacted you and pray it back to God.

Examples.

- Jesus! Thank you for shedding your blood for us. It's the perfect covering. Thank you for buying us back from sin and death. I want to live in your life and in the freedom you provided for me.
- Forgive me, Lord, for living in fear. Perfect me in your love.
- I will not agree with the accuser over my life or the life of my family and friends. Help me, Holy Spirit, recognize the deception and crush it under my feet.
- I declare out loud, Jesus, I will not fear! I have no need to fear. I have a new song in my mouth. I have overcome by your blood!

NOTES & PRAYERS:

WEEK THREE: Psalm 91:9-13

The focus for this week is vs 9–13. Start by reading all of Psalm 91 (page 4). Keeping the whole chapter in front of us is helpful to see how each section is connected.

DAY ONE

Two goals for today:

- Read vs 9-13 in the following translations. Ask the Holy Spirit to read it with you.
- Make a note of any words or phrases that stand out to you. Ask the Lord about them.

ESV

*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.*

CJB

*9 For you have made Adonai, the Most High,
who is my refuge, your dwelling place.*

*10 No disaster will happen to you,
no calamity will come near your tent;*

11 for he will order his angels to care for you

and guard you wherever you go.

*12 They will carry you in their hands,
so that you won't trip on a stone.*

*13 You will tread down lions and snakes,
young lions and serpents you will trample underfoot.*

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

9 The Lord Most High is your fortress.

Run to him for safety,

*10 and no terrible disasters will strike you
or your home.*

*11 God will command his angels to protect you
wherever you go.*

*12 They will carry you in their arms,
and you won't hurt your feet on the stones.*

*13 You will overpower the strongest lions
and the most deadly snakes.*

NOTES:

DAY TWO

There are two sections in vs 9-13. One, the author reviews the first eight verses and then extends their reach. Two, the author introduces a new promise to God's protection.

The Review

Verses 9 and 10 review everything that has been written so far and re-emphasizes the promise of God's protection. Our dwelling place is the Most High God. As we shelter in him, no evil will come near us. The condition remains the same. The author also summarizes all the pestilences found in verses 3, 5, 6, and 7 by calling them evil or a plague.

He then takes the promises and extends them to our tent or our house.

Vs. 7 ...will not come near you.

Vs. 10 ...will not come near your tent.

This inclusion is another wonderful layer. As we abide in Jesus, his protection extends not only to us, but to our house, to our families, to our children, and to our concerns.

The Addition

In addition to God being our refuge, the author adds in vs 11-13 that God will send his angels to reinforce his shelter. There are three ways angels help us as we abide in Christ.

1. Care for us
2. Guard us
3. Carry us

We will look more at the ministry of angels on Day Three. For now, how is the extension of coverage and additional protection affecting you? Does it bring even more comfort and confidence?

NOTES:

DAY THREE

Let's take a closer look at the promise of angelic help.

Under the condition of abiding under God's covering, God commands his angel to help us in these three ways.

Angels Care for Us

I see this as angles that come with a message from the Lord, as with the foretelling of Jesus' birth (Luke 1 & 2). It is also demonstrated as the angels who ministered to Jesus at the end of 40 days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:11). And as with the angels who brought Elijah food (1 Kings 19:4-8).

Angels Guard Us

There are a few references of angels fighting in the heavenlies, like Daniel 9-12. We also know that it was an angel who shut the mouths of lions in Daniel 6. Angels are standing guard at the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). And David writes that the angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him (Psalm 34:7). In similar ways, we are promised this extra protection as we abide in Christ.

Angels Carry Us

When Lazarus the beggar died, Jesus says that angels carried him away (Matthew 16). In addition to being heavenly escorts, I believe other verses suggest angels carrying us as part of watching over us. There is also an intriguing mention of Psalm 91 at the end of Jesus' 40-day fast. Satan quotes it to him in the third temptation. Jesus makes it clear that God isn't to be tested.

The condition of God's protection is based on us dwelling in his presence, which is a declaration of trusting him, not testing him.

Hiding in God's shelter isn't a pass from trials. It's protection for us as we follow Jesus. In this life, we will have many troubles, but he has overcome the world (John 16:33). As we live, and demonstrate the kingdom, preach, testify, etc., we are in need of protection and aid—so we don't stumble and damage our feet. That is the promise we have as we abide.

NOTES:

DAY FOUR

It's interesting that the concept of feet appears two times in the vs 9-13 section. Our feet are important parts of our body. They carry us and are essential for movement. When our feet are compromised, it hurts and slows us down. As messengers of God, our feet (physically and spiritually) need protection and to remain whole.

Let's look at few other verses about feet.

Our feet are made to tread on and trample lions and snakes. It's easier to understand stepping on a snake than it is a lion. But the promise remains, we can trample big or little foes, small and large temptations, and we can take every thought captive to obey Christ. This goes along with Romans 16:19, as mentioned in Week 2. God crushes Satan underneath our feet.

Our feet are made for high places. David and Habakkuk both write about how God makes our feet like those of deer with strength for the high places (Habakkuk 3:17-19, Psalm 18:33) and as an image of confidence and security in treacherous places (2 Samuel 22:34).

Our feet are made to carry good news and publish peace. Isaiah prophesies this in chapter 52. As we bring good news and peace, we declare, "God reigns!"

There are more passages about the significance of feet in the Bible. It's an interesting study, especially considering their connection to peace.

NOTES:

DAY FIVE

Below are cross-referenced terms from vs 9-13. I've kept it to tent, plague, and feet, but there are plenty more. Use the extra space for terms that stand out to you.

Tents and Plague

Exodus 12

Then they shall take some of the blood [of the lamb] and put it on the two doorposts. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. (In context Exodus 12:1-33)

Hebrews 9:11-12, 22

Christ came as the high priest of the good things that are now here. He also went into a much better tent that wasn't made by humans and that doesn't belong to this world. Then Christ went once for all into the most holy place and freed us from sin forever. He did this by offering his own blood instead of the blood of goats and bulls...The Law says that almost everything must be sprinkled with blood, and no sins can be forgiven unless blood is offered.

Romans 8:34-39

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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?...

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 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.

House

Joshua 24:15

Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Psalm 122:1-2

*I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the Lord!"
Our feet have been standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem!*

Angels

Matthew 2:13 & 2:19-20

...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you...

...But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.

Acts 8:26

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south road that goes down from Jerusalem to God... (In Context, read 8:26-40 and see why the angel lead Philip.)

Feet

John 13:3-8

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."

Ephesians 6:11-15

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places...

...and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

NOTES:

DAY SIX

Start by reviewing the past five days and any notes that you made. Let's turn these verses into prayers.

For a refresher, see Page 16. Different types of prayers: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

Using your notes or memory, take a thought from vs 9-13 that impacted you and pray it back to God.

Examples.

- God, Most High, I recommit to abide in you. You are the perfect, complete covering. I call upon your name and run to you, my safe refuge.
- Jesus, cover my house, cover my family. You protect those who fear you and their offspring. Thank you!
- Thank you, Creator of heaven and earth, for sending angels to care for, guard, and carry me. Increase my awareness of their presence and activity.
- Jesus, you are the prince of peace. Cover my feet. Make them ready to move. I have good news to share. Show me the way.

NOTES & PRAYERS:

WEEK FOUR: Psalm 91:14-16

The focus this week is vs 14–16. Start by reading all of Psalm 91 one last time (Page 4).

DAY ONE

Two goals for today:

- Read vs 14-16 in the following translations. Ask the Holy Spirit to read it with you.
- Highlight or make a note of any words or phrases that stand out to you. Ask the Lord about them.

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.”*

CJB

14 *“Because he loves me, I will rescue him;
because he knows my name, I will protect him.*

15 *He will call on me, and I will answer him.
I will be with him when he is in trouble.
I will extricate him and bring him honor.*

16 *I will satisfy him with long life
and show him my salvation.”*

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

*14 "Because he has loved Me, I will save him;
I will set him securely on high,
because he has known My name.*

*15 He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.*

*16 I will satisfy him with a long life,
And show him My salvation."*

NOTES:

DAY TWO

In the final verses of Psalm 91, we see seven promises made. Before we look at them, let's consider a significant shift in the psalm.

Point of View

Until verse 14, we have been graciously guided by the author as he showed us what life can be like when we shelter in the Almighty. We can hear the personal experience in his words as he spurs us on.

Interestingly, the point of view shifts to the first person in this last section. The words are no longer from our guide's perspective. They are from the advantage of the Almighty.

The voice of God in these verses not only confirms what the author has been telling us, but also crowns it with salvation as he ties everything together.

Take a minute and read vs 14-16 again, but this time as if God the Father is speaking directly to you.

Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.

*When he calls to me, I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.*

*With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.*

What did the new perspective add for you?

NOTES:

DAY THREE

There are seven promises counted in vs 14-16. They each start with "I will..." Let's begin with the first five today. They are reiterations from earlier in the psalm.

- I will deliver him
- I will protect him
- I will answer him
- I will be with him
- I will rescue* and honor him

These promises also come with a condition. However, the conditions given by God's point of view are new concepts in the psalm. They are another glorious layer to this rich passage.

- *Because he holds fast to me in love*
From Hebrew, this phrase could be translated "because he sets his love or because he clings to me." Once again, we see that loving God and sheltering in him is a choice. And, the language here is a reflection of God's love for us. See Deuteronomy 7:7.
- *Because he knows my name*
At the beginning of the psalm, we worked through four names and descriptions of God. In this verse, we see God rejoicing in our understanding of who he is and choosing to call on him.

- *When he calls*

Not if, but when we call on God. I love this addition because it gives us the imagery of the Most High responding to our cries. He swoops in with all his might, we grab hold of him, and he lifts us from the ashes. Sometimes we run to him, and sometimes he comes for us. Regardless of which one, he is a safe refuge.

*Extra word meaning. The word used for "rescue" in vs 15 means to loose or pull apart. The examples given are pulling a foot away from a shoe and to untangle an object or person.

NOTES:

DAY FOUR

The last two promises given to us in Psalm 91 are about life.

I will satisfy him with long life and show him my salvation.

It's important to remember that it is Adonai, the self-existing giver of life, that promises to satisfy us with life. That's makes this a guaranteed transaction.

In one way, God's protection enhances our lives on earth. If you review Psalm 91, we can see all the ways God is preserving our lives right now: protection from plagues, pestilence, and disease, and he even sends his angels to guard and carry us. That's the inheritance we have as sons and daughters of God.

In a different way, God's protection through his son, Jesus, gives eternal life. We are new creations living in freedom now from sin, but it's only a taste of our eternal life. He is making all things new, and we get to be with him forever.

Lastly, although a long life in the Old Testament was a sign of God's favor, to be satisfied with salvation is a much deeper longing in each of us. We were created to be in community with God. Under the fall, communion was broken, but the desire never left us.

Humanity has tried all kinds of things to quench that desire. But only God can satisfy our innate longing for communion through his son, Jesus. He saves us! When we choose Jesus—choose to abide in God and take shelter in his provision—we are satisfied now and forevermore.

NOTES:

DAY FIVE

Below are a few cross-referenced terms from verse 14-16. Use the extra space to do more with terms that stand out to you.

Holds Fast to Me in Love / Stronghold

Isaiah 38:17

...but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.

(In context Isaiah 38)

Nahum 1:7

The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.

Psalms 27:1

*The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?*

*The LORD is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?*

Know My Name

Proverbs 18:10

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

Psalms 9:9-10

*The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.*

And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.

When He Calls to Me

Psalm 40:1-3

*I waited patiently for the LORD;
he inclined to me and heard my cry
He drew me up from the pit of destruction,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the LORD.*

Romans 10:12-13

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." (see also Joel 2:28-32)

NOTES:

Satisfy with Salvation

Isaiah 43:1-3

*But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.*

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.*

*For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*

Acts 4:11-12

This Jesus is the stone the builders rejected which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (See also Psalm 118:19-24)

John 4:13-15

Jesus said [to the woman at the well], "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

Matthew 5:6

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.*

NOTES:

DAY SIX

Start by reviewing the past five days and any notes that you made. Let's turn these verses and concepts into prayers one last time.

Prayer Anagram—ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

Using your notes or memory, take a thought from vs 14-16 that impacted you and pray it back to God.

Examples.

- Jesus, I set my love on you and you alone. Only you satisfy the deepest longings in my heart. Thank you for hearing my cry and meeting me.
- Thank you for life, LORD, and for new life. I am new creation in Jesus! Help me see that eternal life starts right here, right now, as I walk through my days.
- Increase my measure of trust, God. I want your name to be the first response of my heart—the first words from my mouth in every situation.
- I will testify of your deliverance in my life for all my days. You put a new song in my mouth so many will see and fear and put their trust in you. Amen!

NOTES & PRAYERS:

STUDY TOOLS

These are some resources I used for this study. They are easily accessible for you as well.

Translations Used

- English Standard Version (ESV)
- Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)
- The Living Bible (TLB)
- New International Version (NIV)
- The Message
- Contemporary English Version (CEV)
- New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Online/App Bible Resources

www.blueletteredbible.org

www.blibegateway.com

Google

Hebrew and Greek Resources

Mounces's Dictionary of New and Old Testament Words

www.blueletterbible.org

Cross Referencing Resources

Concordance in any Study Bible

Strong's Concordance

Bible Apps

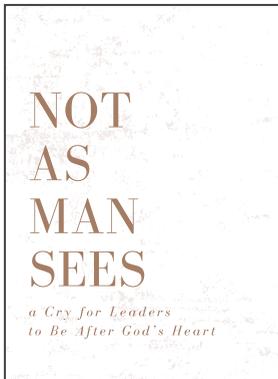
www.biblegateway.com



BRAVE SPARROW

Brave Sparrow exists to create resources that encourage and equip the body of Christ in discipleship, worship, and leadership so that Jesus will be known and the kingdom of heaven will be evident on the earth until *he* returns.

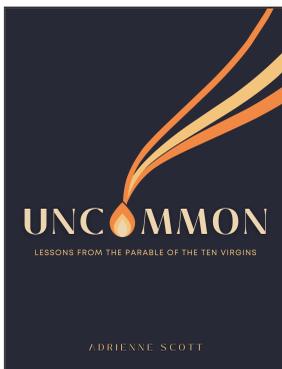
More Resources From www.brave-sparrow.com



Not As Man Sees: A Cry for Leaders to Be After God's Heart

by Adrienne Scott

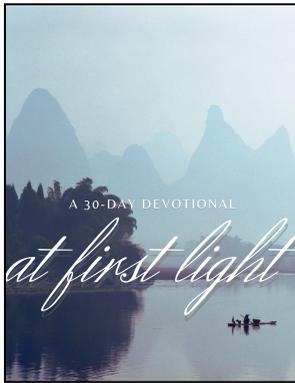
For the church to be light in deep darkness, we need to be after the heart of God. We need leaders who will fearlessly pursue God's heart and equip others to do the same. Not As Man Sees is a cry for leaders in the kingdom of God to revisit an ancient, unshakable, tried and true approach to leadership. This is the standard God seeks, The Lord seeks for a man after his own heart—For the Lord sees not as man sees, man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. 1 Samuel 13 & 16.



Uncommon: Lessons from the Parable of the Ten Virgins

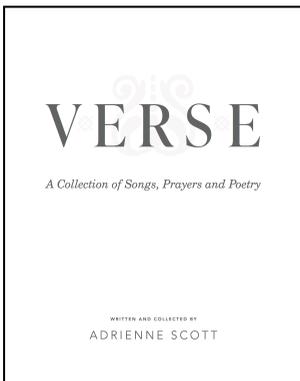
by Adrienne Scott

Uncommon is a study on getting ready and staying ready as disciples of Jesus as we wait for his return. In kingdom life, the oil that gives light to our lamps is an uncommon commodity in the world. It is to know Jesus. These lessons look closely at what distracts us from buying oil, how to buy oil, and how to help others buy oil.



At First Light: A 30-Day Devotional
by Adrienne Scott

30 Days of devotions anchored in the Word of God, inspired by his creation. *At First Light* includes themes of hope, endurance, and presence as each day encounters God's strength and faithfulness.



**Verse: A Collection of Songs,
Prayers, and Poetry**

Written and Collected by Adrienne Scott

This coffee table book is full of song lyrics, prayers, poetry, and stories I have written over twenty years. These pieces are like miles markers on a discipleship journey. Intertwined with the beauty and brokenness of life is the everlasting hope found in Jesus.



For more information about Adrienne Scott and Brave Sparrow Publishing, visit brave-sparrow.com