

Psalm 91  
Matins, Fri. of Sexagesima  
NYLT Conference  
Trinity, Frankfurt  
February 9, 2024

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

Psalm 91 is sometimes called “the soldier’s psalm” or “the warrior’s psalm,” which explains why you often see it right up there with the Armor of God in chaplains’ resources for the U.S. military. I’m currently ministering to a U.S. airman imprisoned at a facility in our area. He has parts of Psalm 91 tattooed on his arm after his grandmother referred to the passage before this soldier’s deployment. Psalm 91, the Soldier’s psalm, has long been a great comfort to members of the military as they encounter danger and face the enemy. But Psalm 91 is not just a good psalm for men in military service. It is a psalm for all good soldiers of Jesus Christ, for all Christians, who find themselves fighting against the powers of darkness everyday.

It’s often said when it comes to athletics or the military that “the best defense is a good offense.” The opposite is also true. The best offense is a good defense. The psalmist begins by describing the LORD as our shelter, our refuge, and our fortress. That is, the Most High God, the LORD of Sabaoth, the ruler of all angels, is our defense. We dwell in the shelter of the Most High, in the Holy Christian Church, the Body of Jesus Christ. And those who take refuge in such shelter also “abide in the shadow of the Almighty.” You must always live in the shadows, whether in the shadow of death or in the shadow of the one who died to overcome death. In the shadow of the Almighty, you need not fear death, Hell, the Devil, or all his followers. Trust in the LORD, for He is the only fortress that can protect you from the attacks of the enemy in this spiritual war.

As good soldiers of Jesus Christ, you can’t always take a defensive position though. You are also called upon to go fight in battle. The LORD will protect you, but don’t think it will be

easy or that there's no suffering involved. Even those who survive a battle come through with wounds and scars and sometimes even more severe emotional scars as witnesses to the most horrible of human suffering. There are dangers to life and limb on every side, yet the LORD "will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence." From punji sticks to IEDs, from enemy soldiers appearing in friendly uniform to diversionary tactics, combat provides a slew of creative tricks to be on guard against. The "snare of the fowler," is a trap set for small birds. The enemy is constantly setting traps to harm or kill you. When we fall into sin, we're usually reaching for something that at first seems appealing or pleasurable. That's how Satan, the enemy of God's people, seeks to entrap you. God warns you to look out for such traps and when you do succumb, He rescues you.

As a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings for protection, so does the LORD Jesus Christ gather us under the shadow of His arms, outstretched on the cross. He covers you with His pinions and under His wings you find refuge. His faithfulness is a shield and a buckler, one of those small shields a soldier would take into combat for defense during the offense. This is the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. The faith of Christ is given to you as a gift, that you might withstand all the attacks of the enemy.

With such armor, you need 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. The battle is constantly raging. There are mass casualties. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. All around in the church you see apostasy. You witness comrades falling for the enemy's traps or even surrendering to the powers of darkness. If the righteous is barely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner (1 Pet 4:18)? With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Trust in the LORD with all your

heart. Don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him as the commander, and He will make straight your paths. And even if you do fall, even if you die, yet will you live, because Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). Everyone who lives and believes in Him will never die. Do you believe this?

Your Redeemer lives! And on the Last Day, He will stand upon the earth. And after your skin has been thus destroyed, yet in your flesh you shall see God. He will return in the flesh. You will rise from the dead in the flesh. And you will gaze upon your Lord's face. Until that day, it will almost always look like a losing battle. Even as our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross seemed to lose the battle, yet we know that in the cross of Jesus we have victory. God works through opposites like that. It looks like the enemy, like the Devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, has the upper hand. But you will look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. On the Last Day, Satan and his armies will finally receive what they have coming. And you will receive the crown of life.

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, let you strike your foot against a stone.” As you know, this is one of the passages of Scripture the Devil took misused when He tried to tempt Jesus to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple. Jesus said to the Devil: “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” When the Devil left, angels came and were ministering to Jesus. They followed their LORD into battle and attended to Him when that battle was over. The angels are warriors in God's army. They are sent to protect you, to defend you against the Evil one, and to serve you as they serve our LORD. The holy angels will protect you wherever the LORD leads you. And

when it's time for you to enter into glory, the angels will carry you to Abraham's bosom to await the Resurrection of all flesh (Luke 16:22).

The psalmist continues: "You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot." The Devil is a roaring lion, prowling around seeking whom he will devour. Resist him with the Word of God, firm in the faith God gives you, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world, and that the same kind of suffering was experienced by our LORD (1 Pet 5:8–9). But you will tread upon the lion. In Jesus Christ, the true Lion of the tribe of Judah, you will overcome the roaring lion. The young lion and the serpent you will crush underfoot. The dragon and his angels fought against Michael and his angels, but 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 (Rev 12). There, upon the earth, our LORD Jesus Christ crushed the head of the serpent on the cross. In that moment Jesus Himself received a mortal wound, a strike on the heel. But the LORD was victorious in battle. In Him, you too, crush the enemy, that great serpent, underfoot (Rom 16:20).

Psalm 91 closes with God speaking directly about Jesus and about you in Jesus. The LORD says: "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." Dear Christian, as you fight in this spiritual war, I encourage you to read the soldier's psalm, Psalm 91, often. It's one of the psalms historically assigned for the service of Compline, which gives daily opportunity to pray it. Read it every day of this conference and then when you return to whatever you're fighting on. The battle rages, but as soldiers under Jesus Christ you have the victory. In the name of Jesus, Amen. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.