SECURE IN THE STORM

MARK WHEELER

People everywhere are looking for security. We hear about financial security, job security, home security, even preventive medicine that provides health security. We all want to feel safe, secure, and stable. We all want to be free from fear.

The problem we face in fulfilling the desire for security is that we live in a world that is basically insecure. People band together that they consider safe, only to discover that they have been bilked on route. Others go to work feeling safe and secure, only to receive a "pink slip" and have their security instantly crumble. And still others visit their doctor for a routine check-up, and instead discover that they have a life-threatening disease, losing even the security of a healthy body.

Everyone desires to be safe and secure, free from problems and fears. But we run into trouble because the things that we turn to for security are themselves insecure. Money, health, possessions, people, and houses all are subject to change at a moment's notice.

So then, the challenge we really face is to find a source of security that does not change. The writer of Psalm 91 claimed that he had found such a source. He boldly declared that God was the source of his security.

Webster's Dictionary defines security as safety; certainty; freedom from worry; protection, shelter. In this psalm, God — as the psalmist's security — is described by those very words. The writer states,

"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!'" (Ps 91:2).

In this passage God is referred to as a shelter, a shadow, a refuge, and a fortress. These all are hiding places or places that provide protection. They are places where one might go to be out of sight of the enemy.

When you were young and afraid at night, did you ever crawl into bed and pull the covers up over your head? Did you believe that as long as you were covered, the bad things or the bad people could not see you. And because they could not see you, you knew that you were safe.

Security also involves protection. The four ways that God is described here all are pictures of protection. A shelter provides protection from the elements, while a shadow protects from heat and brightness. A refuge is a place that keeps us safe from our enemies, while a fortress keeps us safe from attack. God gives us that kind of security. He is our shelter, our hiding place. We can go to Him and know that we are safe. We can have confidence in His protection.

We can feel secure, too, because of who God is. The psalmist uses two names for God: the Most High and the Almighty. One speaks of God's greatness, while the other speaks of His power. One says that we should give Him awe, while the other says that He has awesome power. One talks of His superiority, the other talks of His strength.

Both of these names for God tell us that He is bigger and greater than any other being. When two children get especially angry with each other, what is one thing they might say? "My brother is bigger than your brother!" Or, "My dad can beat up your dad!" Like little children, when we get into trouble, we want help from someone who is bigger and stronger than we are. God is that person for us. When we catch a glimpse of who He is, of His greatness and power, our problems don't seem quite as big. Our trials and troubles pale in comparison to the greatness and power of God, and we can feel secure in the midst of our problems because we have a great and powerful God who is bigger than any problem.
Not only can we be secure because of God Who is, we also may have security because of what He does for us. The psalmist tells us that God protects and delivers us. He says, "For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trap, and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or of the destruction that wages war at noon." (91:3-6)

In these verses he tells us what type of protection God gives us, what He protects us from, and when He protects us. We see that God gives us two kinds of protection. The first is warmth or comfort. He covers us with His wings. We can seek refuge under His wings. This is a picture of comfort and security. A hen uses her wings to sweep the baby chicks closer to herself. Under those wings the chicks are safe and warm. It is a soft covering, a hiding place. God not only soothes us like a mother hen, He also defends us like a soldier. His faithfulness becomes our armor. His character and promises serve as our wall of defense to ward off the arrows and spears of the enemy. We are protected both by strength and by comfort.

God protects us from a variety of troubles. He delivers us from the snare of the trap and from the deadly pestilence. A "snare" speaks of a deliberate attempt to harm, while "pestilence" speaks of circumstances which are beyond one's control. A physical attack would be an attempt to cause pain. An earthquake or a disease would be something over which one has no control. One is intentional pain while the other is unintentional pain. The point is that God protects us from both.

God does not stop with providing protection from physical pain. He also protects from emotional pain. He says that we need not be afraid of the terror by night. Each of us has our own worries and fears. They may revolve around money, around a job, around our health. We may be worried about providing for our family, about keeping our children safe, about dying. It may be a nagging worry, or it may be a terror that keeps us awake nights. Whatever that fear is, God promises to deliver us. If we are dwelling in God, we have no reason to worry about any of these.

God provides this type of protection and security all day long. He'll protect us by night, by day, in darkness, and in bright sunlight. We can be secure because God promises to deliver us.

God's protection also involves His angelic messengers. He instructs His angels to watch over His people. "For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cub, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample down." (91:12-13)

According to this passage, God's messengers not only protect us, they also enable us to be victorious. And they allow us to trample upon our deadly enemies.

It is not to say that we will never have problems or that we will never encounter pain. If we were never attacked, we would not require a defense. If we were never in trouble, we would not have need of a hiding place. But God does promise that He will be with us in trouble. When these things happen, God will give us the comfort and strength that we need to endure these problems.

Before we can enjoy this security, however, there is something we must do. The psalmist tells us that this security is for the one who "dwells in the shelter of the Most High," the one who "shakes in the shadow of the Almighty." (61:1-2)

To enjoy the security that God provides, we must first dwell in His shelter and abide in His shadow. Both of these terms have the idea of permanence, of being at home, of taking up residence in God's presence. I could not enjoy the security provided by the Anaheim Police Department until I had taken up residence in the City of Anaheim. In the same way, we cannot enjoy God's security until we abide in Him, until we take up residence in His house.

What does it mean to dwell or abide in Him? The psalmist gives us a clue when he mentions that God says, "Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him." (81:14-15)

To dwell in or abide in God means that we are to love Him, to know His name, and to call upon Him. The way that we love God is by doing what He tells us to do, by keeping His commandments, and by asking our affairs into His care. The way that we know His name is by spending time with Him reading His Word learning who He is and what He has done. It means knowing Him personally.

Calling upon Him is another word for praying, bringing our requests to Him, and giving Him our burdens recognizing that we cannot make it alone and asking Him to help us.

When we do these things, when we obey His commandments, when we spend time in His Word and in prayer, then we will be dwelling in His shelter and abiding in His shade. When we do that, then we can enjoy the security that God provides.

Many years ago Frederick Nolan was fleeing from his enemies during the North African persecution. Hounded by his pursuers over hill and valley with no place to hide, he fell exhausted into a wadi (a dry riverbed) and was cutoff from all help. He felt that he would never make it. After hours of lying there and thinking he would never get up again, he began to pray. Having escaped, Nolan emerged from his hiding place and proclaimed, "Where God is, a spider's web is like a wall. Where God is not, a wall is like a spider's web."

God is our wall of defense. He is the one who delivers us from those who want to hurt us. He is the one who gives us the comfort and strength we need to endure the trials and troubles that enter our lives.

God becomes our source of security when we dwell in His shelter and abide in His shade. When we do, we can echo the psalmist and say, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."