Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Do you have an item that you purchased after watching an infomercial? I am sure you know the ads I am talking about? They promise *so* much! One of the best ones I saw was a kind of electronic platform thing that promised to wobble the fat off. You could be sitting in a lazy-boy, watching TV, but if you put your feet on the wobbler and turned it on, the kilos would magically disappear! But there are similar unbelievable claims for tools and ladders and air-fryers and sports-equipment and pillows and exercise equipment. And my guess is that all of us have at least one of these things tucked away somewhere in the house. We brought it, convinced that they would do the wonderful things claimed on the ad, but it turned out that the promises were exaggerated, and said item now lives in a dark corner of a cupboard.

Well, many people have accused Psalm 91 of being ‘the TV ad’ of the Psalms. It is a very beautiful Psalm, but it appears to make outrageous promises – no terror, no pestilence, no destruction, no fear, constant victory over enemies, no evil, no plague, constant angelic protection, and long life. So, is Psalm 91 ‘the TV ad’ of the Psalms? Are these unrealistic promises? How should we understand this Psalm?

Well, we are continuing our mini-series of Psalms that point to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, *indirectly*. And the first group of these Psalms are Psalms of Orientation – declarations of truth about God, ourselves, and life. And so far, we have looked at a hymn and a wisdom Psalm. But the third and last category of orientation Psalm is the Psalm of Confidence. And while these psalms acknowledge the difficulties of life, the dominant theme is the believer’s confidence in God. Surely the most well-known example is Psalm 23: “*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me*.” But Psalm 91 is also a Psalm of Confidence. Its theme is **God’s Promise of Ultimate Victory for Believers**. And what we are going to see is that this promise is true *because of Jesus*; He is why the promises in this Psalm are not outrageous or unrealistic. But to see how this is so, we will have to do what we have done with all the Psalms in this series, which is to start with the Psalm in its Old Testament context. And then we will move on to see how it’s promises have their fulfilment in Christ. So, Psalm 91 and the **Covenant** and then Psalm 91 and the **Covenant** ***Keeper*** will be our two major headings.

1. So, let’s begin with Psalm 91 and **the Covenant**.
   1. And here we want to see why covenant helps us understand Psalm 91. And we could say a lot more here but by covenant we mean the relationship between God and His people. You see, after the Fall, God spoke about a descendant of Eve who would crush the serpent's head, meaning the Lord Jesus. And God would live in relationship with and give eternal life to all who believe in Jesus. And in Old Testament times, those in this covenant relationship were those who trusted in God’s promises of a *coming* Messiah, but after Jesus came, those in this covenant are those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who died and rose again for the forgiveness of sins. And this covenant is the covenant of **grace** – we don’t deserve it as sinners, but we can live in relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.
   2. Now, throughout Old Testament history, God revealed more and more about the covenant of grace.
      1. **In the days of** **Moses and Israel**, He did this with the laws and ceremonies of Exodus through Deuteronomy. And ultimately, these pointed forward to and had their fulfilment in Jesus. But a basic message of the law was, obey my laws and life will be good, disobey my laws and life will be bad.
      2. And if we fast forward to **the days of King David**, more was revealed about God’s covenant and His Messiah. For that is where we learn that Messiah would be a Son of David and that He will be the eternal ruler of God’s people.
   3. And all this sets the scene for Psalm 91. Let me show you why:
      1. Turn back, for a moment, to **Psalm 89**:
         1. **Verse 3** mentions God’s covenant with David.
         2. And **verses 5-37** celebrate God’s promise that a mighty Son of David will rule God’s people in an eternal kingdom of peace and prosperity.
         3. But then you get to **verse 38**. And that is where the complaint or lament of the Psalm begins. And it becomes clear that the son of David who was king at that time had been defeated and Jerusalem had been destroyed.
         4. And so, if you look at **verse 39**, it appeared to the Psalmist that the Lord had renounced the covenant. And boys and girls, to renounce is to turn away from, to change your mind about. And so, the Psalmist was asking, how can this be, Lord? Have you forgotten your promise?
            1. Have you ever had someone not keep a promise that they made to you? It’s awful, isn’t it. It really hurts. Well, how much more would it hurt if God did not keep His promises? And that is where Psalm 89 ends: Lord, have you forgotten your covenant promise?
      2. Now, if you look above Psalm 90, it says **Book Four**. So, book Three of the Psalms ended with the question: Lord, have you renounced your covenant? And Psalms 90&91 are the beginning of Book Four’s answer to that question!
         1. You will see in the title of Psalm 90 that it is **a Prayer of Moses**. And many Bible scholars believe that Psalm 91 is probably also a Psalm of Moses. Both Psalms talk about God as our “*dwelling place*,” which is a very Moses’ term, and Psalm 91 calls God “*the Most High*” and “*the Almighty*,” which are names for God that come from way back in Genesis. And so, it is as though the person who arranged the Psalms thought that the best way to answer the question of Psalm 89 was to go all the way back to Moses.
         2. And here is why: In **Psalm 90**, **Moses reminds Israel that God is the everlasting God**. Look at verse 2: “*From everlasting to everlasting you are God*.” So, Moses wanted God’s covenant people to shift their focus away from themselves and their troubles to their glorious and eternal God!
            1. When parents are comforting their children, they will say something like, don’t worry, I have got you. I won’t let you fall. I will protect you. Its ok! They want their children to stop looking at their bleeding knee and to trust in powerful Dad!
            2. And that is kind of what Moses does here in Psalm 90 – remember who God is – your everlasting, powerful, faithful, covenant God!
      3. So, Psalm 89 asks: Lord; have you renounced your covenant? And the answer of Psalm 90 is No, because God is the everlasting, powerful, faithful, covenant God.
      4. And then Psalm 91 **repeats God’s covenant promises**. Maybe sometime this week, have a read through Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28. Those are the two passages where God lays out the blessings that follow covenant obedience and the curses that follow covenant disobedience.
         1. And verses 3-13 of Psalm 91 are a summary of covenant blessings:
            1. Verses 1&9 – God will dwell among you
            2. Verse 3a – He will protect you from your enemies
            3. Verses 3b&6 – no diseases shall afflict you
            4. Verse 5 – you will not be afraid
            5. Verse 7 – you will defeat thousands and ten thousands
            6. Verse 10 – no plagues will come upon you
            7. Verse 13 – wild beasts will not trouble you

And all these promises are directly referred to in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. And they are restated here in Psalm 91.

* 1. But notice also **how the Psalm is laid out**:
     1. **Verse 1** describes a man who lives in covenant with God – “*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High*.”
     2. And then this covenant man speaks in **verses 2-13**: In verse 2 we have his profession of faith, if you like: “*I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress.’*” And then he tells us what God will do for His covenant people: “*He will deliver you … He will cover you … you will not fear … no evil shall be allowed to befall you … He will command His angels concerning you … you will tread on the lion and the adder*.”
     3. But **verses 14-16** are God speaking to the covenant man: “*Because He holds fast to me in love, I will deliver Him; I will protect Him … I will be with Him in trouble…With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.*”
     4. So, Psalm 91 is telling us that God has not renounced His covenant. He has not forgotten His promise to bless His people if they obey Him. He has not forgotten His promise to establish a son of David as the eternal King of His people.
  2. And therefore, having seen how Psalms 89-91 are linked, there should be one **big question** in our minds. And the question is this: What does all this tell us about the situation described in Psalm 89? If Jerusalem and the temple had been destroyed and the people taken into exile, after years of plague and famine and defeat, was it a time of covenant obedience or covenant disobedience? It was a time of covenant disobedience. And if Israel’s king had been defeated, was he the promised eternal ruler of God’s covenant people? No, He was not. So, the problem was not that God had renounced His covenant but that the people were not keeping covenant with God.

1. And this is why we need to turn our attention in the second part of the sermon to Psalm 91 and **the Covenant *Keeper***.
   1. You see, a key purpose of the Covenant Law was to teach God’s Old Testament people that they could not keep the law. And if you know the Old Testament, you will know that it is, by and large, a record of Israel’s disobedience. What they needed, instead, was someone who would keep the law for them and remove their covenant curse or guilt.
      1. And we see this laid out, very plainly, in **Isaiah 40-66**. The message there is that Israel, as the servant of God, had failed in the mission God gave her and that a different servant was needed. And this servant would be rejected by men and pierced for our transgressions and buried in a rich man’s grave, and then raised and glorified. Where Israel failed, He would succeed. Where Israel responded with a lack of trust and disobedience, He would respond with trust and obedience. So, Isaiah’s basic message was: People of Israel, long for the promised Messiah!
   2. And this is also the key message of Psalm 91. Let’s see how this is so:
      1. Earlier we read **the account of Jesus being tempted by the devil**. And I don’t know if you caught it, but the devil used verses 11-12 of Psalm 91 in his second temptation. He said to Jesus: “*If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'*” So, the devil was saying to Jesus, **prove** that you are the Son of God by throwing yourself down. That will force God to act to deliver you and prove to everyone that you are His Son. But Jesus saw this temptation for what it was: to do this would be to ***test*** God, when His calling as the covenant keeper was to ***trust*** God.
         1. Think of all those times in the Old Testament when the people of Israel did not trust God – when they grumbled or complained or disobeyed or took matters into their own hands. But not Jesus. He chose to trust God. And God always delivered Him.
      2. And this is the way that Jesus responded to every situation in His life. **Hebrews 5:7-9** says, “*In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*.”
      3. And it is very important that we understand this. You see, we often focus on Jesus’ work on the cross as how He accomplished our salvation. But in **Matthew 5:48**, Jesus said, “*You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*.” So, it is not enough that our sin and guilt is taken away; we also need to be perfectly obedient. But you and I know that we are far from perfect; in fact, we are law-breakers. But that is the wonder of salvation in Jesus! Jesus lived a perfectly obedient life. He *always* trusted God and obeyed the covenant law. **2 Corinthians 5:21** says, “*For our sake [the Father] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God*.” So, when we believe that Christ died for the forgiveness of our sins, He takes our guilt away and we receive His perfectly obedient life. And so, when God measures us according to the covenant, He sees perfection! And it is all because of Jesus! And it is all here in shadow form in Psalm 91.
   3. But there is another way that Psalm 91 points us to the person and work of Christ. Earlier I drew your attention to **how the Psalm is laid out**.
      1. It describes a man who lives in covenant with God, and then this covenant man speaks about trusting in God and His covenant promises, and then God says I will deliver and protect and honour this covenant man.
      2. So, think about this Psalm as **a song or prayer of Jesus**. He truly trusted in God. And as He faced rejection and injustice and eventually the cross, He did so with confidence in God and His promises. And in verses 14-16, His Father spoke to Him and promised to bring Him through the cross and the grave, and to honour Him. So, this Psalm, this promise of victory, has its fulfilment in Jesus. Before anything else, it is a Psalm of Jesus; He is the covenant keeper who has inherited all the promised blessings.
      3. And if you understand this, then by faith in Jesus, you too will inherit all God’s the promised blessings.
         1. **Ephesians 1:11-14** says, “*In [Christ] we have obtained an inheritance*.” And if you are thinking, how can that be? I am not free of disease or poverty or defeat? I am not free of fear? I don’t have perfect peace and victory and protection? Well, Ephesians 1 begins by praising God for having given us every ***spiritual*** blessing in Christ – forgiveness, redemption, wisdom, knowledge, etc; we have all these spiritual things, now.
         2. But Ephesians 1 continues: “*In [Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it*.” So, we will enjoy the fulness of the physical blessings described in Psalm 91 **when we are with Christ in heaven**. That is when there will be no more fear or disease or defeat. That is when we will enjoy ultimate victory.
   4. Brothers and sisters, we spend so much time pursuing comfort and ease here on earth, don’t we. And sadly, some have made a religion out of this; it is called the prosperity gospel – the belief that if we obey God, He will give us the good life! But that is not what Scripture teaches. We cannot wave Psalm 91 in God’s face and say, You promised us the good life! He did not. He promised to send us His Son to do what we could not do. Psalm 91 is a call to believe in Jesus as our covenant keeper! And by faith in Him, we receive every spiritual blessing now and we will receive every physical blessing in heaven.
      1. Have you done this? Do you trust in Jesus Christ for salvation? Have you given up trying to earn your salvation, because you cannot, and trusted in the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus?
      2. And \_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_, as you teach \_\_\_\_ about the meaning of his baptism, don’t tell him that it is a promise that he will enjoy the good life. It is not! Tell him that it is a call to believe in Jesus, every day, to trust in God, every day, to confess his sins and repent, every day. And if \_\_\_\_ repents and believes, he will inherit every spiritual and physical blessing that his baptism signifies.
      3. And soon we will celebrate the Lord’s Supper. And who is the Supper about? The Lord Jesus! “*Do this in remembrance of me*.” So, as we eat and drink, we are acknowledging our guilt and imperfection, and we are trusting in His perfect obedience and finished work on the cross.
      4. And because Jesus told us to celebrate the Supper *until He comes*, we may be certain that one day He will come again to take us to Himself and the ultimate victory described here in Psalm 91.

So, the next time someone calls Psalm 91 the TV ad of the Psalms, you can say, Not true! It is the promise of ultimate victory IN CHRIST! Amen.