

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Session 18,

Trust Psalms – Psalms 91 and 139

20-min. Podcast Audio Overview

BiblicaleLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Welcome to our deep dive today. You've given us quite a challenge: this set of lectures by Dr. Bruce Waltke. Specifically, his take on Psalms 21 and 139.

I think we're going to unpack some pretty heavy concepts like trust, divine attributes, maybe even touch on some history. These are two of the most well-known Psalms. And Waltke's insights are pretty thought-provoking.

To say the least. Yeah, to say the least. Well, let's start with Psalm 91.

It's often called a song of invincibility. And you can definitely see why. I mean, it starts with, He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

It paints this incredible picture of protection and refuge. You've picked up on something crucial there: the idea of dwelling. Waltke points out this isn't just about reading or reciting the Psalm.

It's about actively choosing to live in that space of refuge, in the presence of God. So not just like, okay, I read Psalm 91, now I'm good. Right, exactly.

But it's like living it. It's about making that choice, that active commitment. Okay, so then who is this he we're talking about? That's where it gets interesting.

Waltke believes the Psalm speaks to a king, someone divinely protected and invincible, especially in battle. There are lines like, A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. Oh, wow.

This isn't just about surviving. It's about being completely untouched by the chaos around you. So almost like a superhero on a battlefield, dodging bullets left and right.

I wouldn't go that far. Okay. But Waltke does suggest this seemingly invincible king is a foreshadowing of Christ.

Think about it. Jesus was untouched by evil until he willingly chose to lay down his life. It makes you wonder: is Psalm 91 a glimpse into the nature of Christ's power, even before his ministry began? Okay, I see where you're going with that.

Yeah. And if you look at the temptation of Christ, even Satan used Psalm 91, trying to use God's promises against Jesus. Precisely.

Yeah. And to Walt Rook, this reinforces the Psalm's messianic connection. Right.

Even Satan recognized that it pointed to something or someone greater. Okay. But let's not forget the plague mentioned in the Psalm.

Right. Waltke's suggestion that this could be the bubonic plague is a bit jarring, isn't it? It does add a new layer to the text, doesn't it? Yeah. If we consider that the bubonic plague ravaged ancient battlefields.

Right. Imagine the impact of this invisible enemy decimating an army while the king, divinely protected, remains unscathed. It's a pretty stark image of divine intervention.

Yeah, definitely. But for someone listening who may not be as familiar with interpreting scripture. Sure.

What does that tell us about how we should read and understand the Psalms? It's a great question. Yeah. Walt Cook's approach reminds us that these texts weren't written in a vacuum.

They were born from real-world experiences. Right. Fears and hopes.

Right. So context matters. Absolutely.

The plague, battles. These were daily realities for the Psalmist. Right.

Understanding that historical context adds a whole new dimension to the text. For sure. And I think it strengthens that connection.

Okay. Between the ancient world and our own struggles today. Okay.

Speaking of a different kind of connection, let's move on to Psalm 139. Okay. It feels like we're shifting gears entirely.

Going from battlefield imagery. Right. To something much more introspective.

Yeah, absolutely. Psalm 139 dives deep into God's all-encompassing knowledge and presence. Okay.

It's like the Psalmist is bearing their soul. Right. Before God.

The very beginning sets that tone. Oh Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know, when I sit down, when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from afar.

It's both intimate and a little unnerving, isn't it? It's a paradox, for sure. Yeah. And Waltke breaks down the Psalm beautifully.

Okay. He highlights its structure. Four distinct stanzas.

Each exploring a different attribute of God. Omniscience. Omnipresence.

Omnificence. Wow, okay. And then concluding with this plea for justice and self-reflection.

Okay. It's carefully constructed. Yeah.

But the raw emotion of the Psalmist shines through. There's also that powerful image of God weaving the Psalmist in the womb. Yes.

It speaks to the complexity of creation. The very beginnings of life. And for Waltke, this image is particularly poignant.

He connects it to the sanctity of life. Right. Arguing that God's intricate involvement begins from the moment of conception.

Yeah. Underscores the inherent value of human life. It's interesting, though.

Yeah. Because for some, that very concept of God's complete knowledge. Right.

Can feel constricting. Yeah. Walt K even mentioned the Psalmist feeling hemmed in.

Right. It's that tension. He's like, yes, it's comforting to know God sees and knows everything.

But it also holds us accountable, doesn't it? Accountability is definitely part of it. Yeah. But I think it also speaks to the nature of trust.

Okay. In Psalm 91, we saw trust in the face of external danger. But here in Psalm 139, the challenge is trusting God with the deepest parts of ourselves.

The good, the bad, the ugly. So the inner versus the outer. Yeah.

That's a good way to put it. Which kind of brings us full circle, doesn't it? Right. Both Psalms are about trusting God, but from different angles.

Exactly. One is about protection from the outside world. Yeah.

While the other is about surrendering to God's knowledge of our inner world. And those two aspects of trust are inextricably linked, wouldn't you say? Absolutely. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Okay. We've covered a lot of ground already. Yeah, we have.

I think it's time for a pause. Right. Before we dive deeper into Walt Eads' interpretations.

Sounds good. We'll be back. Yeah.

Okay. So we're back. And I have to admit, this idea of surrendering to God's knowledge in Psalm 139 is really sticking with me.

Yeah. It's a powerful concept, isn't it? It is. And Walker doesn't shy away from the challenging aspects of it.

Right. He even shared a personal story. Yeah.

About using Psalm 139 when counseling women who are considering abortion. That's right. He talked about the image of God weaving us in the womb.

Right. Really impacted those conversations. Exactly.

It gets to the heart of the debate. Yeah. If God is so intimately involved in the very creation of life.

Right. At what point does that life become sacred? Walker seems to suggest this Psalm challenges us to recognize God's presence from the very beginning. Yeah.

Even in the womb. It's a thought-provoking perspective, especially in the context of such a complex issue.

And emotionally charged issue. Absolutely. I can see how using Psalm 139 could bring a new dimension to those conversations.

Maybe even help people see things in a different light. It can be a powerful tool. Yeah.

Yeah. He even brings up Psalm 51. Okay.

Where the Psalmist talks about being sinful from the moment of conception. Oh, wow. It's a very different way of thinking about personhood.

So not just a physical development. Right. But a spiritual dimension present from the very beginning.

Exactly. That connection between the physical and the spiritual. Okay.

That definitely adds a layer of complexity to the discussion. It does. But what about the people for whom these arguments don't resonate? The ones who may not subscribe to the same religious beliefs.

Sure. Or interpret scripture the same way. Well, I think that's where Walt Kaye's overall approach is so crucial.

He emphasizes a compassionate and nuanced approach rooted in a deep understanding of scripture, but also a respect for individual experiences and beliefs. So it sounds like he's advocating for a dialogue, not a debate. Precisely.

Okay. And for listeners who might be wrestling with this topic or any challenging issue, for that matter, I think that's a valuable takeaway. It's about listening more than we speak.

Seeking understanding rather than imposing our own views. It's a good reminder that sometimes the most difficult conversations require a lot of empathy and humility. Absolutely.

Okay. And I think these Psalms, both 91 and 139, offer a framework for approaching those conversations. We can find comfort in God's presence, acknowledge the complexity of creation, and recognize that we are all on a journey of self-discovery.

That brings us back to that idea of trust we were discussing earlier. In Psalm 91, it was about trusting God for protection from external dangers. In Psalm 139, it's about trusting God with our innermost selves.

Yes. But what does that kind of trust look like in the real world, in our daily lives? It's a great question. And I think it connects to something Waltke said about Psalm 91.

He pointed out that in verse 9, he prefers the translation because rather than if... You mean, instead of, if you make the Most High your dwelling place... Exactly. It would be because you make the Most High your dwelling place. Exactly.

It shifts the focus from a hypothetical choice to an established truth. So not about earning it. Right.

It's not about saying the right words to earn God's protection. Okay. But about living in that space of refuge.

Right. In that relationship with God. So actions speak louder than words.

Yeah. Even when it comes to faith. I think so.

It's about embodying that trust. Okay. Letting it inform our choices and shape our responses to the world around us.

It makes you wonder: are we sometimes too focused on the saying and not enough on the dwelling? Perhaps. And maybe that's where the real challenge lies. It's easy to talk about faith, but to truly live it, to let it permeate every aspect of our lives, that takes a deeper level of commitment.

And vulnerability. Yeah, no doubt. It's about acknowledging our limitations, our fears, and choosing to trust in something greater than ourselves.

Yeah. Even when we don't have all the answers. It's like taking a leap of faith, but not in a reckless way.

Right. It's more about surrendering to the mystery. To the unknown.

Yeah. Knowing that we are held. Right.

Even when we feel like we're falling. Beautifully put. And I think that's where these psalms, for all their complexity and theological depth.

Right. Offer a profound message of hope. Okay.

They remind us that even in a world that often feels chaotic and uncertain, we are not alone. Yeah. God's presence is constant.

His knowledge of us is complete. Yeah. And his love for us is unwavering.

It's almost like having this cosmic safety net. Mm-hmm. Knowing that no matter what we face.

Right. No matter how lost or broken we may feel. Yeah.

We have this source of strength and comfort to draw upon. And that's the beauty of it, isn't it? Yeah. These ancient texts.

Yeah. Written thousands of years ago, they still speak to the deepest longings of the human heart. Right.

They remind us that we are known, loved, and held. Right. Even in the midst of our struggles.

It's a powerful message. And one that I think we all need to hear. Especially in a world that often feels so divided and uncertain.

Yeah. But before we get too carried away. Okay.

I do want to circle back to Walt Case's interpretation of Psalm 91. You sure? As a foreshadowing of Christ. Mm-hmm.

It's a fascinating concept. Yeah. But I'm curious to hear more about how he connects that to the idea of invincibility.

That's a great point. Yeah. And it leads to some pretty profound implications.

Okay. For how we understand our own relationship with God. Cool.

If Christ, as the embodiment of God, was inherently invincible. Right. What does that mean for us? How does that shape our understanding of faith, of trust, of our own ability to overcome challenges? It's a big question.

It is. And I have a feeling Waltke's insights, yeah.

Might offer some surprising answers. I think so too. Right.

So we've been talking about Psalm 91 and this idea of the king's invincibility as a foreshadowing of Christ. What I'm struggling with is whether Christ was invincible. Right.

Why did he suffer and die on the cross? That's the crux of it, isn't it? It's a question that has puzzled theologians for centuries. Right. Walt Case suggests that Christ's suffering and death weren't a result of weakness or vulnerability.

Okay. But a deliberate act of love and sacrifice. So he chose to lay down his invincibility.

In a sense, yes. Remember in Psalm 91, the protection afforded to the king is absolute. Right.

But it's also contingent upon dwelling in the shelter of the Most High. Okay. Waltke argues that Christ, in taking on the sins of humanity.

Yeah. Stepped outside that shelter. Not out of necessity.

Right. But out of love. That's a pretty radical concept.

It is. You're saying Christ's sacrifice was an act of breaking free from that divine protection. Mm-hmm.

For our sake. It's a complex idea. Yeah.

And one that requires careful consideration. Right. But think about it.

Okay. If Christ remained invincible, untouched by suffering and death. Yeah.

Could he truly have redeemed humanity? Could he have fully bridged the gap between God and us? So you're saying the vulnerability. All right. The suffering was essential to the redemption.

It's a paradox for sure. Right. But Waltke seems to suggest that by embracing vulnerability.

Okay. By willingly entering into the depths of human suffering, Christ ultimately triumphed over death. Okay.

And opened the way for our own reconciliation with God. That's incredibly profound. It is.

But what does that mean for us? How does this understanding of Christ's sacrifice impact our own approach to life's challenges? It's a question worth pondering, isn't it? Yeah, it is. If Christ in his divinity chose to embrace vulnerability for our sake, does that call us to rethink our own relationship with suffering? Are you saying we should seek out suffering? Not necessarily, but perhaps it's about recognizing that suffering, pain, and vulnerability are. Yeah.

These are all part of the human experience. And rather than trying to avoid or deny them, maybe we can learn to approach them with courage. Okay.

With compassion. Yeah. Even with a sense of purpose.

It's a different way of looking at things. It is. Instead of seeing suffering as something to be feared or avoided.

Right. We can see it as an opportunity for growth, for transformation. Right.

Maybe even for connection. Precisely. Okay.

And I think both Psalms in their own way point us in that direction. Okay. Psalm 91 reminds us that even in the midst of chaos and danger, there is a refuge, a source of strength and protection.

And Psalm 139 assures us that no matter how dark or difficult our circumstances may become. Right. We are known, loved, and held by a God who understands us completely.

Absolutely. So it's not about escaping suffering. Right.

But about facing it with a sense of trust, knowing that we are not alone in the struggle. Beautifully put. Well, I have to say this deep dive has been a real eye-opener.

We've explored themes of trust, divine attributes, and the nature of Christ's sacrifice. Right. Even touched on some pretty heavy philosophical and theological concepts.

It's been a rich and rewarding conversation, to say the least. And I think the biggest takeaway for me is that these ancient texts. Yeah.

The Psalms, they're not just words on a page. Right. They offer a timeless source of wisdom, comfort, and guidance.

Absolutely. Relevant to our lives today. Yeah.

Just as much as they were thousands of years ago. Couldn't agree more. And on that note.

Okay. I think we'll wrap up this deep dive. All right.

Before we go, I want to leave our listeners with a final thought. Walt Mickey spoke about Psalm 91 as a foreshadowing of Christ and how Christ chose to step outside that divine protection. Right.

For the sake of humanity. For us. Yeah.

So the question for you is. Okay. How might this understanding of Christ's sacrifice inspire you to embrace your own vulnerability? And how might that vulnerability lead you to a deeper experience of faith? Of love? Of connection? Yeah.

In your own life? It's something to think about. It is. It's something to ponder as you continue to explore the world of the Psalms and the mysteries of faith.

For sure. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive. Until next time.