

Lessons From a Chicken

✖ When you picture a magnificent flying bird, it is usually not a chicken that comes to mind. I've never seen a chicken portrayed in flight-many eagles, but no chickens. We quote the Scripture from Isaiah 40:31 that talks about being borne up on the wings of eagles or with wings like eagles. There is a difference, however, between being on His wings and being under His wings.

This promise in Psalm 91 is not elaborating on the flying wing but on the sheltering wing. One indicates strength and accomplishment, while the other denotes protection and familiarity. When you imagine the warmth of a nest and the security of being under the wings of the nurturing love of a mother hen with chicks, it paints a vivid picture of the sheltering wing of God's protection that the psalmist refers to in this passage.

Is everyone protected under the wings? Notice that it says, "He will cover you with His pinions [feathers], and under His wings you may seek refuge" (NASB). Again, it's up to us to make that decision! We can seek refuge under His wings if we choose to.

The Lord gave me a vivid picture of what it means to seek refuge under His wings. My husband, Jack, and I live out in the country. One spring our old mother hen hatched a brood of baby chickens. One afternoon when they were scattered all over the yard, I suddenly saw the shadow of a hawk overhead. Then I noticed something that taught me a lesson I will never forget. That mother hen did not run to those little chicks and jump on top of them to try to cover them with her wings. No!

Instead, she squatted down, spread out her wings and began to cluck. And those little chickens, from every direction, came running to her to get under those outstretched wings. Then the

hen pulled her wings down tight, tucking every little chick safely under her. To get to those babies, the hawk would have to go through the mother.

When I think of those baby chicks running to their mother, I realize it is under His wings that we may seek refuge-but we have to run to Him. "He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge." That one little word may is a strong word! It is up to us! All that mother hen did was cluck and expand her wings to tell her chicks where to come.

Scripture shows the maternal hovering side to His protection. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling," (Matt. 23:37).

Notice the contrast between God's willingness and our unwillingness: His wanting and our not willing to ... His would against our would not. What an amazing analogy to show us that He offers protection that we don't accept!

It is interesting that Jesus uses the correlation of maternal love to demonstrate His attachment to us. There is certain fierceness to motherly love we cannot overlook. God is deeply committed to us-yet at the same time, we can reject His outstretched arms if we so choose. It is available, but not automatic.

God does not run here and there, trying to cover us. He said: "I have made protection possible. You run to Me!" And when we do run to Him in faith, the enemy then has to go through God to get to us! What a comforting thought.

Let me give you an illustration. There was a man who hijacked a car. The woman who was driving the car had been studying Psalm 91 at church, but in the trauma of the moment, she only remembered there was something about being under the protection of His wings, so she began to holler, "Feathers, feathers." The assailant was so stunned by her reaction that

he stopped in his tracks, turned on his heels, and fled for his life.

But as I said, this protection is not automatic. So how do we put this promise to work? Since we can't physically run to God, how do we do it? This psalm gives us a great analogy to the animal kingdom, but how can we put this promise into practice in our life? Just like this woman, we run to God with our mouths; we run to God with our hearts; we run to God with our faith-like those little chicks go running back to those feathers.