

STAY AWAY FROM THE EDGE!

TEXT: Psalm 91:1-10

THESIS: To show that the believer is only safe as He dwells under the shadow of the Almighty and as far from sin as possible.

INTRO.: A. In the church I pastored for 31 years you needed a license to hold hands! You needed to be female to have long hair & “long” was defined arbitrarily by me. In our school no student could have any facial hair – but I had no chapter and verse for this restriction. I believe it is wrong for boys and girls to be alone in a car, but I can’t prove it from God’s Word. For our leaders we had strong restrictions which prohibited smoking, drinking, dancing, gambling, poker playing, motion picture attendance, doing drugs, etc. Not only do I believe these things, but practiced church discipline in the church for violators when these things became public...even when that made me unpopular and made me and the deacons the targets of criticism and caused some folks to leave our church. WHY?

B. Read Ps. 91:1. In the O.T. when the Israelites would stop and pitch their tents, the Tabernacle was always in the center. Over the Tabernacle was a cloud which overshadowed the center of the camp. Moses dwelt in the center of the camp near the Tab. As the leader, Moses had to be the least vulnerable to an attack. Moses was protected by

line after line of tents and thousands of Israelites. (v.7) Also the cloud was for his and Israel's protection (Ps. 105;39) AND Moses was to dwell in the most protected spot of all **"under the shadow of the Almighty"** – NOT ON THE **EDGE** OF THE CAMP exposed to danger, but **within** the camp far away from the enemy and disaster.

ILLUS.: Dwelling outside the camp were the outlaws, homos, prostitutes, lepers, etc. God didn't want His man to live near the edge, but FAR from that which would defile or degrade or that which was unclean!

I. GOD'S MAN MUST DWELL IN THE MIDST OF THE CAMP:

A. He Must Live Close To the Presence of the Lord

B. He Must Set the Spiritual Tone for Those Who Follow Him:

1. He must **STAY AWAY FROM THE EDGE!**

ILLUS.: When I get out on the edge of the platform, it makes some folks nervous. They may fear that I will stumble and fall off the edge! That's why God doesn't want us to live near the edge of sin!

2. There is safety and security near the center!

- a. Don't play on the precipice of tragedy.
- b. Don't just stay on the line of the division.

ILLUS.: You ask "Why are you against tattoos?" First, the Bible says not to mark our bodies. Second, because it smacks of the world! **Flirting** is living near the edge. **Looking at suggestive things** is living near the edge. **Touching the opposite sex unnecessarily** is living near the edge. **STAY AWAY FROM THE EDGE!** Check the photos of Christian men and women and how they dressed 30 years ago and compare how they dress today. **STAY AWAY FROM THE EDGE!**

II. GOD'S PEOPLE MUST DWELL IN THE MIDST OF THE CAMP:

- A. We Are Told Not To Be Conformed To This World! Rom. 12:2
- B. We Are Told Not To Love This World! 1 Jn. 2:15
- C. We Are To Follow Christ's Teaching! (Sermon on the Mt.)
 1. He taught we should go beyond the letter of the Law to the intent and spirit of the Law!
 2. He taught that evil thoughts against a person were tantamount to murder!
 3. He taught that looking with lust was like adultery!

ILLUS.: If you don't want to arrive in the city called adultery, don't live on the road called lust! Note that He said "***you have committed adultery WITH HER.***" That means that a woman who dresses wrong & entices men is also guilty!! If you wear tight or revealing clothing ladies, you will entice men and will commit adultery **WITH THEM!**

4. He taught that divorce was wrong!
5. He taught that using the Lord's Name in vain was blasphemy! **"OMG!"**
6. He taught that we are to love our enemies, not seek revenge!
 - a. Today "Popular Christianity" wants to look like the world.

ILLUS.: Turn off the sound on "Christian TV" and you can't tell the difference between that and a secular talk show. They dwell on the EDGE OF THE CAMP – not near the center.

- b. Today "Popular Christianity" wants to sound like the world.

ILLUS.: Pat Boone, Johnny Cash, Bill Gaither, Sandy Patti, Amy Grant, Cece Winans, et. al. claim to be Christian, but dwell on the EDGE OF THE CAMP. They dress, act, sing, perform and probably smell like the world. Most CCM artists and music are in this EDGE category.

Even the world knows better: **"DON'T TAILGATE!" "DON'T PARK W/IN 25' OF AN INTERSECTION!** Why? To avoid accidents. **IF SIN IS WRONG, THE ROAD TO SIN IS WRONG!**

If the sin is wrong the circumstances that lead to it is wrong. If being a drunk is wrong then social drinking is wrong. But, you say, "Billy Graham says social drinking is OK." But calling a rattlesnake and earthworm doesn't make it less dangerous – no matter who says so!

- c. We cannot live close to the edge or when we stumble we will stumble into sin
- d. Unless we have ample distance between us and the edge, we will fall easily.

ILLUS.: Consider fornication. There are 5 steps to fornication: holding hands, embracing, kissing, petting, then fornication. Isn't it better to live 5 steps away than 1 or 2? No one wants to NOR CAN just stop at touching. The hand has an arm on it and the arm a shoulder on it and the shoulder...it starts with the hand. **STAY AWAY FROM THE EDGE!**

- e. What was wrong in Billy Sunday's day is wrong today!
- f. What was wrong in Jesus' day is wrong today!

ILLUS.: You say "I don't like your preaching! The way you preach I can't bring my friends here." Don't blame me for the crowd you run with. Your problem is you want to run the preacher or want to run one of the deacons (or his wife) so you can run to him to run the preacher.

D. We Must Beware Natural Deterioration:

- 1. We are not naturally good – we must work at it.

2. We automatically degenerate if we don't constantly keep our guard up.
3. This church will eventually go soft on sin! *It is inevitable.* But the process of deterioration will take longer if we STAY AS FAR FROM THE EDGE as we can now!

E. We Must Be Careful of the Wrong Crowd:

ILLUS.: Jehoshaphat ran with the wrong crowd and destroyed a kingdom and King Ahab...and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Lot didn't go down to Sodom to become a homo or commit incest w/his daughters. His first step was looking, then pitching his tent in that direction, then moving his family there & finally becoming a Sodomite in his thinking! (IF LOT WERE LIVING TODAY HE WOULD HAVE AIDS!)

F. We Must Remember the "Little Foxes" Spoil the Grapes:

1. Little sins lead to larger ones.
2. Inclinations determine direction.
 - a. Impure speech leads to blasphemy.
 - b. Euphemisms lead to profanity.
 - c. Flipping coins for cokes or betting on a ball game or playing the lottery leads to gambling in AC.

ILLUS.: Some parents will rue the day they sent their kids to a public school or let their kids play video games, movies, etc. The world has become too wicked to let your kids play in the Little League! KEEP THEM AWAY FROM THE EDGE!

3. Exposure leads to immunity to conviction.

- a. The wrong TV programs set you up for deeper sin.
- b. Listening to bad language WHEN YOU CAN CONTROL IT lessens your sensitivity to it and grieves the Holy Spirit.

4. Criticism of high standards leads to moral laxity:

- a. Stay away from those who ridicule biblical principles or standards.
- b. Stay away from those who laugh at old fashioned holiness.

CONCL.: Why not dwell in the “secret place of the Most High” and “abide under the shadow of the Almighty”? Get into the center of the camp so when the enemy breaks through the ranks, you will still be safe and a long way from danger. When you stumble you will not fall into the enemy’s camp. **STAY AWAY FROM THE EDGE!**