

Living Under The Shadow Of The Almighty

Psalm 91

Introduction: 1) It is the one psalm used and quoted by Satan when he tempted the Lord Jesus, Israel's Messiah, in the wilderness (Matthew 4:6). This should tip us off that perhaps there is more to Psalm 91 than only a psalm of wisdom or deliverance for the child of God. I believe the devil knew this psalm was about the Christ!

2) Richard Belcher in his wonderful work, *The Messiah and the Psalms* notes that some people believe this psalm promises too much, especially in vs. 3-13. And yet he helps us gain a "grand redemptive storyline perspective" when he points out:

- 1) Psalm 91 uses titles of God that go back to the times of the patriarchs ("Most High" in Genesis 14:18-20 and "Almighty" in Genesis 17:1; 28:3).
- 2) There is a clear connection with Psalm 90 (the psalm of Moses) and Psalm 91 (the prayer of 90:13-17 is answered in 91:16!).
- 3) The rare Hebrew word for dwelling (*maon*) is found both in 90:1 and 91:9.
- 4) The Psalm loudly echoes the language of the Mosaic Covenant in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28.

<i>Mosaic covenant</i>	<i>Psalm 91</i>
Not afraid (Lev. 26:6)	verse 5
Chase thousand/ten thousand (Lev. 26:7-8)	verse 7
God's dwelling (Lev. 26:11)	verse 9
Beasts removed or let loose (Lev. 26:6, 22)	verse 13
Pestilence (Lev. 26:5; Deut. 28:21)	verse 3
Boils, diseases of Egypt (Deut. 28:34, 59)	verse 10

- 5) Thus Psalm 91 is more communal than individual, and its promises are for "the servant of the Lord" who fully and completely "trust in the Lord" (v.2). That servant may be a people. That servant may be a person. Now the

Christological key is turned. Only Christ perfectly responds in full faith and complete confidence in the Almighty. It is Christ who trampled underfoot the serpent (v.13) at the Cross (Romans 16:20) and thereby made it possible for Psalm 91 to be real for us.

Belcher says, “Christ’s faithfulness ensures that we will experience the fullness of the covenant blessings in Psalm 91” (p.61). Now in Christ I enjoy the promises of this psalm as a foretaste of that which I will enjoy in full and complete measure in His kingdom.

Transition: Therefore, what is life like, in Christ, as we live under the shadow of the Almighty? How should we respond to such a wonderful God?

I. Trust the Lord to be your Savior

91:1-2

- Psalm 91 is anonymous, but timeless in its comfort and encouragement for all who trust in God (v.2).
- The names of God and the verbs of action paint a beautiful picture for the one who trust in the Lord for deliverance and salvation (v.16).

1) Abide under His shadow

91:1

- The psalmist addresses the one who dwells in the secret place (*NIV, NASV*, “shelter”) of the Most High (*Elyon*).
- To dwell means to remain, inhabit or take up residence. The word is *yāshab* and it occurs over 1,100 times in the Old Testament. Here is the wise man or woman who makes their home in the shelter, the protection of *Elyon* (v.9) the one true and exalted God over all the earth.
- Dwelling in his shelter, we abide under the shadow of the one now identified as “the Almighty” (*sadday*). Over all and all powerful, He cast His omnipotent

shadow of protection over those who make Him their shelter. Here we find rest and refreshment for our souls.

2) Trust in His security

91:2

- Here we see the personal name of our divine Savior, “Lord” (*Yahweh*) and His general designation “God”, also made intimate by the personal pronoun “my”, thus in Hebrew, *elohay*.
- We can and should declare of the Lord, “He (and no other) is my refuge and my fortress.” A refuge: a place to run. A fortress: a place to stay. I run to Him and stay there. Why? Because “He (and no other) is my God, in Him (and no other) I will trust.”
- He is the Most High, the Almighty, the Lord, my God. He is my shelter, my shadow, my refuge, my fortress. What an awesome Savior is the Lord I trust.
- Kidner says it like this:

[“It is an eloquent opening, enriched not only by the four metaphors for security but by the four divine names. *Most High* is a title which cuts every threat down to size; *Almighty* (Shaddai) is the name which sustained the homeless patriarchs (Ex. 6:3). By the further appellation, *The Lord* (Yahweh), Moses was assured that ‘I am’ and ‘I am with you’ (Ex. 3:14, 12, NEB); while even the general term ‘God’ is made intimate by the possessive, as *my God*.”] (p. 332).

II. Trust the Lord to provide your safety

91:3-13

Having established who the Lord is, the psalmist now addresses what the Lord does. In 11 magnificent verses filled with powerful imagery, we are informed concerning the multifaceted nature of the safety that our Lord provides for His children. The personal pronoun “you” is prominent, occurring 19 times. It is also singular. The promises of these verses are deeply personal. They were for Jesus. They are for each of us.

1) **Let him keep you from fear**

91:3-6

The child of God who has trusted Christ for his eternal salvation, can also trust the Lord for temporal deliverance as well. Confident in God's fatherly providential care, he can say "no fear."

v. 3

What: The Lord shall deliver (cf v. 14, 15) you.

From: 1) The snare of the fowler (the bird catcher).

2) The perilous pestilence (*NIV*, "deadly pestilence").

The traps of the evil one and the poison of the evil one he will deliver me from.

v. 4

How: 1) He will cover you with His feathers (a zoomorphism).

2) Under His wings you shall take refuge (a zoomorphism).

3) His truth shall be your shield and buckler (*NASV* "bulwark").

Against the attacks of the demonic and evil men, He covers me with His protection, shelters me with His presence, and guards me with His truth.

vs. 5-6

Result: 1) You shall not be afraid of the terror by night (times of darkness).

2) You shall not be afraid of the arrow that flies by day (attacks in broad daylight).

3) You shall not be afraid of the pestilence (v.3) that walks in darkness.

4) You shall not be afraid of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

- Note how 1 & 3 go together and how 2 & 4 go together.

- Note how the Lord protects night or day.
- Note how the Lord protects from disease or war.
 - There is no limit in time or scope to His protection. Big or small, natural or supernatural He is on our side. We have no reason to fear. Troubles and trials may come, but He will deliver.

Transition: Let Him keep you from fear.

2) **Let Him keep you from falling**

91:7-8

- Developing further the imagery of war and battle, the psalmist points out the evil, the wicked, they will fall and be punished, but not so the one who trust in the Lord.
- Using once again Hebrew parallelism, we are informed that the ratio may be 1 out of 1000, or 1 out of 10,000; it does not matter. God will take care of His own and “defeat” (implied) we not come near. It may appear, as at Calvary, that evil has won and good has lost. Such a perspective fails to see with the eyes of faith and to remember “the rest of the story” is yet to come. Then we will see with our own eyes the reward (NIV, “punishment”; NASV, “recompense”) of the wicked. We shall be saved and they shall be judged. He will keep us from falling now and forever. Jude 24-25 says it so beautifully,

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

3) **Let Him keep you from failure**

91:9-13

- Vs. 9 picks up on the theme of vs. 1-2, with the repetition of “Lord” and “Most High”, refuge and dwelling place.
- Vs. 10
What: No evil shall befall you.

Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling.
- Vs. 11
How: For He (the Lord) shall give His angels charge over you.
Why: To keep you in all your ways (per v. 9!) There is supernatural angelic watchcare for God’s children.
- Vs. 12
What: In their hands they shall bear (lift) you up.
Why: Lest you dash (strike) your foot against a stone.
- Vs. 13
What: You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra.

The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot (cf. Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20).
- We trust the Lord we do not test Him (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).
- Our ways will be the right ways when we make the Lord our refuge and our dwelling place.

Under His Wings
Text: William O. Cushing

Under His wings I am safely abiding, Tho the night
deepens and tempests are wild; Still I can trust Him, I
know He will keep me, he has redeemed me and I am His child.

Under His Wings, what a refuge in sorrow! How the heart
yearningly turns to His rest! Often when earth has no
balm for my healing, There I find comfort and there I am blest.

Under His wings, O what precious enjoyment! There will I
hide till life's trials are o'er; Sheltered, protected, no
evil can harm me, Resting in Jesus I'm safe evermore.

Under His wings, under His wings, Who from His love can sever?
Under His wings my soul shall abide, Safely abide forever.

III. Trust the Lord to give you satisfaction

91:14-16

These final 3 verses are something of a divine oracle, prophetic pronouncement or declaration. The Lord is now the one speaking. Because we love Him, dwell in His shelter, abide under His shadow, make Him our refuge, and trust Him as our fortress, 6 glorious blessings are showered on us by the Lord resulting in spiritual satisfaction now and forever. Two are found in each verse.

1) The Lord will deliver you.

91:14

We love Him. His response: I will deliver (*NIV*, rescue) him.

We respond to His goodness in our lives and He does even more.

2) The Lord will exalt you.

91:14

I will set him on high (exalt). Why? He has known (*NIV*, "acknowledged") my name. To acknowledge His name is to honor Him. We honor Him and amazingly, He honors us.

3) The Lord will answer you.

91:15

We call on Him in prayer because He is our God in whom we trust (v. 2), the one who delivers us (vs. 3, 14, 15) from any and every conceivable danger. His response: I will answer him. We are helpless but He is our helper. We have questions and He is our answer. We hurt, He heals. We sorrow, He comforts.

We cry out, He hears and answers; not always in the way we want, but always with what is best.

4) The Lord will be with you.

91:15

This final phrase of v. 15 is a precious promise indeed.

- Trouble comes: He will be with us. I will never go through tough times alone.
- Trouble comes: 1) He will deliver us and 2) He will honor us. To be with me is enough. To deliver me is more than I could ask. To honor me is too much to comprehend. Romans 8:38-39 reminds us so well,

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

5) The Lord will bless you.

91:16

The ending of Ps. 90:13-17 finds its complement and answer in Psalm 91:16. In 90:14 Moses writes, “Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.” Now we read, “With long life (lit. “with length of days”) I will satisfy him.” This length of days shall be extended into eternal days as the Good Shepherd who is our refuge and fortress brings us to “dwell” in His house forever (Ps. 23:6). Life that is longer and life that is fuller is the promise of the covenant-keeping God to His covenant people.

6) The Lord will save you.

91:16

- Jonah 2:9 reminds us that “salvation is of the Lord.” The psalmist informs us that God will show us His salvation, amplifying what it means to be delivered from trouble and satisfied by the Lord.
- “I am satisfied with Jesus. He has done so much for me. He has suffered to redeem me. He has died to set me free. I am satisfied. I am satisfied. I am satisfied with Jesus. But the question comes to me as I think of Calvary. Is my Master satisfied with me?”

Conclusion

Henry Lyte, in the middle of the 19th century, wrote a hymn based on Psalm 91. I do not know the tune, but that which accompanies “Amazing Grace” works quite nicely.

There is a safe and secret place
Beneath the wings divine
Reserved for all the heirs of grace,
O! Be that refuge mine!

The least, the feeblest there may
Hide
Uninjured and unawed;
While thousands fall on every side,
They rest secure in God.

The angels watch them on their way,
And aid with friendly arm;
And Satan, roaring for his prey,
May hate, but cannot harm.

They feed in pastures large and fair,
Of love and Truth divine;
O child of God, O glory's heir,
How rich a lot is thine!

A hand almighty to defend,
An ear for every call,
An honoured life, a peaceful end,
And Jesus crowns it all!
Henry Francis Lyte, 1793-1847

