

August 3, 2025

## Psalm 91

### Finding Protection in the Chaos of Life

I heard a financial secret that I want to let you all in on . . . Now don't come to me for great investment advice . . . but I have heard this secret . . . when the economy is crashing and people are losing jobs, houses and their things, there is a place you could put your money and see a great increase. When all other investments are collapsing this one is sure to go up in our world. No, it is not crypto, it is not gold or silver, not tech stocks . . . it's "sin stocks" or "vice funds" . When the hardships come on the economy, and people are out of work. . . unfortunately people often seek shelter in a glass of whiskey, a case of beer, cigarettes and marijuana, they also lose themselves at a gambling table.

If you're a follower of Christ, I would ask that you not invest in those things. This is not good biblical investment strategies . . .

But it is unfortunate that so many people turn to all the wrong things when struggles come their way?

In times of uncertainty, and we're living in some times of uncertainty, where do you turn?

Challenges, hardships, chaotic times . . . they come on everyone. The pressure of school and keeping up the marks, dealing with your employment – work can be difficult. Family issues, rebellious children, struggling spouse, health challenges from you or someone close, an older parent dying. What do you do, where do you turn when struggles come your way? Car accident and you're

hurt, sickness and it's terminal . . . where do you turn? Life crashing down . . .

We've been doing a series in the book of Psalms this summer - these 150 songs that the ancient believers would sing. Words that bring comfort, words with strong emotions, words that meet us at times where we are at . . . and today I would like for us to look at Psalm 91. If you're able to do so . . . let's stand and read this.

The question is asked . . . How do we get through the challenges and dangers in life?

### 1. Enter into His Protection (v1-2)

There is an active choice here to choose to dwell in the shelter of the Most High.

People chase so many other things to find shelter . . . their money, their power, their friends . . . the government, their social outlet, sex, other powerful people . . . another god, a superstition – a lucky charm, yoga, the latest self-help book. So many things to distract us in struggles . . . but do you seek after God?

Take a look at the different names God is called here . . . **Most High** – is there any other power higher? **Almighty** – Shaddai (as Abraham, Issac and Jacob were homeless and in tents, God sustained them– **the Lord** (Yahweh) – the I am who I am and is with you.

That word dwell . . . he who dwells in the shelter . . . it means to find rest in . . . spend the night. Dwell . . . sometimes we're looking for a quick fix, but we need to dwell . Find rest with God. What a comforting picture.

In verse 2, the Psalmist here has a personal relationship with God. . . I will say . . . this is where I find refuge, this is where I will choose to hide from the hardships of the world. This is where I find my fortress. . . the impenetrable place from the evils and dangers that lurk in the world. Is there a better place?

### **He protects you from the unseen dangers (v 3-8)**

He expands this to everyone . . .if **you** make the Lord your refuge and fortress and dwell with him . . .this will happen.

He gives a picture of a bird able to soar . . . there is someone who will set up a trap to catch them . . .someone who sets a good trap, the victim never sees it. Traps are hidden. You never see it coming.

And when a bird catcher catches a bird – that bird never sees it coming. Sometimes they do it to eat them. Sometimes he takes that bird and makes it a pet or controls it for his own benefit. Satan and his demons want to catch us and own us in bondage. As believers we're meant to soar.

The deadly pestilence . . .sickness and disease that destroys.

The curse that is on this earth . . . how often do we see it coming? At times your coworker has a cold and you get it . . .you blame her. Sometimes you get a cold out of nowhere. Covid . . .we didn't see it coming, never knew who had it. In history plagues, diseases just happen out of nowhere.

This past week we heard about the Earthquake in Russia it had the possibility of sending devastating tidal waves across the Pacific thousands of miles away. Our modern technology detected it . . . no one knew an earthquake was happening that day. We're

thankful we now have technology to warn of tidal waves, but not earthquakes.

At times we don't see this coming . . . how many things has God protected you from this week? Do you know . . . you probably never saw it.

In verse 4 we see a picture of a mother bird protecting her young; her wings and feathers bringing protection from the elements and from any threats. You will find comfort and security.

Then we have this image of war in the latter part of verse 4 . . . faithfulness will be your shield and buckler . . .

This image of all the arrows bouncing off of you . . . there is a big shield and a small shield protecting you from any threat. Nothing is coming around you because God is the shield and buckler.

The terror of the night in verse 5. . . we have so much light in the night now . . .in ancient times nights were pitch black. You couldn't turn on the lights to see what lurked around the corner. The wild animal, the wild packs of dogs, the enemy stalking in the darkness. Darkness . . . in those days brought even more terror. Most of us don't like to walk around in darkness. It's not wise to walk by yourself in certain parts of our town in the middle of night.

The arrow that flies and is aimed directly towards you during the day. Arrows don't get shot at night. If an arrow is shot at you, you don't see it coming until it is too late.

The pestilence . . .disease and decay around you. 24/7 the Lord is watching out for you.

In verse 7 there is no limit to his protection . . . he defeats 1,000's and 10,000's - you will look and see and you wonder . . .how did this happen?

As Joshua was giving a speech to the Israelites after they had taken over much of the Land . . . this is what he reminded them .

Joshua 23 :9-11 “For the Lord has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. <sup>11</sup> Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God.”

Or remember the story of Hezekiah . . . another miraculous story.

In 2 Kings 19:32-35 when all earthly hope was gone . . . the great Assyrians had surrounded Jerusalem and had destroyed so many other great cities in their path. The people sought refuge in the Lord their God – the prophet Isaiah said this.

<sup>32</sup> “Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. <sup>33</sup> By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the Lord. <sup>34</sup> For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.”<sup>35</sup> And that night the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

All earthly hope gone . . . But God . . . did a miraculous thing.

What big Impossible battle is in your life . . .what is threatening you? Are you seeking the Lord? Are you finding refuge in him?

A thousand . . .10,000 . . .

V8 . . . only see with your eyes the end result . . . God's victory!!  
God always wins in the end . . .

This passage goes on . . .There is repetition here but this time it is personalized . . . you need to do this. Continue doing this!

## **2. Continue to seek His Protection (v 9a)**

### **He protects through the dangers on the road of life (v 9b-13)**

Starts with your tent . . . allow him to have his dwelling place in your home. With your family. Seek God at home. Are the things in your home a dwelling place for the most High? What do you have on display . . .what do you watch, listen to do in the house?

In your relationship with your spouse do you seek the Lord? With your children, do you seek the Lord? Do you look to his wisdom in dealing with conflicts and trials? Are you allowing him to dwell in your home?

V11 – 13 as you leave your home and on life's journeys there are dangers along the way.

He will watch over you with Angels . . . his heavenly beings are watching you as you seek him. As you walk along the tough paths of life. . .

In ancient times people walked everywhere. Mostly on pathways that were difficult to walk on. Hiking boots, trail shoes were not invented. Sandals.

Last month, I was out west for a family reunion and I took a couple of days to go hiking with my nephew through the beautiful Rockies. Those trails had so many stones to strike my foot. There was a regular path with stones to strike with my foot, there were the washed-out portions where stones and ankle twisting dangers were evident, there were places filled with stones all over the place. I struck my foot against the stone a number of times on this trip – I had hiking shoes . . . thankfully nothing was injured. You can't help strike your foot. In ancient times the need for protection on paths was even greater than ours today as that was the only mode of transportation.

Tred upon the lion and serpent . . . along the trails – wild lions, snakes that bite were a constant threat. God would protect them along the way.

As we seek his protection . . . he will protect us on life's journeys.

Is this completely true? If we take literally this passage it almost implies, we will have superpowers if we take refuge in God.

There is a story told from world war 1 of a terrible awful war where hundreds of thousands of soldiers were mowed down on both sides by shooting on trenches. The story goes something like this. .

An American Brigade commander in WWI gave a little card with Psalm 91 on it to his men who were in the Brigade of the same number—91st Brigade. They agreed to recite Psalm 91 daily. The story goes that after they started praying this prayer they were involved in three of the bloodiest battles in WWI the Chateau Thierry, Belleau Wood, and the Argonne, yet suffered no death or injuries in combat despite other brigades suffering as much as 90% death or injuries. – Wow miraculous . . . unbelievable.

Does God protect his followers differently than everyone else in dangerous situations? Does he give even Soldiers who recite this passage divine protection? Should we use this passage as a lucky charm? Quoting it when great danger is around?

Well, this verse we're looking at is also quoted in the New Testament. Remember as Jesus was starting his ministry he was tested and tempted by Satan? In **Matthew 4** – Jesus was fasting 40 days and nights in the wilderness and at his weakest point Satan comes to him. Satan takes him to the top of the temple the highest point in Jerusalem and says . . . jump. Show everyone that you are God and can fly – I'm paraphrasing a bit. Have the angels catch you.

And Satan quotes this passage:

"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."

Satan quoted this passage quite well . . .

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Jesus quotes Moses in Deuteronomy 6:16 . . . When the people of God wanted another miracle after God did so much for them . . . don't put the Lord to the test. You don't need another

miracle. . . I don't need to jump. Don't purposely put yourself in harm's way.

Let's understand this passage . . . God isn't giving us superpowers. Psalm 91 gives the ancient reader everyday pictures of the dangers that lurk around them. God has a plan. God is sovereign. . . . when tough times come – and they will – find refuge in him.

It turns out that story about the 91<sup>st</sup> American brigade is not true. There wasn't a 91<sup>st</sup> American brigade and there is not a miraculous story about a brigade that used Psalm 91 like a lucky charm. Many soldiers who knew Psalm 91 died on the front lines in World War 1. When we put ourselves in harm's way . . . harm usually comes.

God is sovereign . . . at times he does miraculous things. We call miracles miracles because they are not normal. Shadrach Meshack and Abednego did not suffer in the fire because God did a miracle . . . many other believers over the centuries have died in fires for their beliefs. Daniel did not get eaten in the lion's den, God did a miracle. Paul, shipwrecked on the Island of Malta had no effects when bit by a poisonous snake . . . a miracle. Other believers have died from snake bites. Don't put yourself in harm's way. Don't be foolish. Don't believe the lie of Satan.

As I reflected a bit on my life this week, I thought about how have I seen the divine hand of God protecting me. As a 7 year old delivering papers on a country road, as I was walking, I

remember the strange couple driving by who really wanted to give me a ride, I said no, they insisted but they were unable to catch me. God protected me there. As a 18 year old, a head-on collision in the car I was in that my friend Scott driving he missed it at the last millisecond, God kept me from sure death. At 21, the plane I was on pulled up from the runway at the last minute because the landing gear was not fully deployed. A few years ago a deranged person stabbing random people, I missed him by a couple of minutes. God had other plans for me. I can go on knowing that God rescued me from major problems.

He sends his angels at times to protect us, to help us, to guide us along the challenging paths of life.

God is speaking now . . .

### **3. Stick with the Great Promises for Protection (v 14-16)**

Acknowledge – calling on him – turning to him – cleaving to him in love . . . in our good times and difficult times. Is there anyone more perfect to Love . . . our great protective God?

He is personalized . . . he knows my name . . . do you know God, does he know you?

V 15

A pastor named Brandon O'brien shared this story . .

His name was Tim, and he was the bane of my existence. I can't remember now any particular thing he did to irk me; I simply recall from the fourth grade on he gave me a general sense of panic. Tim was unpredictable—content one moment and angry the next—and I half feared and half loathed him.

I thought slugging him in the nose might solve the problem. My mom suggested praying for him. That's just like a mom, I thought. But she insisted, and each night before bed, she prayed, and encouraged me to pray, for Tim. I don't remember either of us asking God that I would like him more; it seems Mom always prayed for his peace. Over time, something remarkable happened. Tim seemed calmer more often. As he grew more peaceful, I grew less fearful of him. God answered our prayers.

That's what God does: he answers prayers. His eagerness to meet our needs is an important element of his character. I'm convinced my mother knew that full well. She recognized my crisis as one through which God could whisper a word to me about his character. She clung to God's promise to offer peace to his children, and she was confident that God would hear me when I called out to him.

May we all be so wise.

*Brandon O'Brien, "His Name Was Tim," taken from the PreachingToday Sermons newsletter (8-16-07)*

V 15 – May we call on him.

Heaven is full of answers to prayers for which no one ever bothered to ask.

*Billy Graham. Leadership, Vol. 16, no. 3.*

Call on Him! Stick with his promises!!

V 16 – We may have a long life here on earth – but more importantly it is about seeing his salvation – eternal life – that is long life.

We want God's presence to enter into eternal life

How do we get through the challenges and dangers in life?

It's not through what the world says . . . lose yourself in alcohol, drugs, gambling. There is not an end found in yoga, meditation or self-help books. No other gods can help.

I remember in Covid reading a post on facebook put on by someone who periodically came to my church, she said she was looking for some deeper meaning and wondered what books helped others. . . she mentioned gurus, Ophra's classic books, other self-help books. She was looking for something practical . . . my heart sank when I read this.

Enter into his protection . . . continue to seek his protection . . . stick with his great promises of protection.

What does that practically look like? How do you enter his presence?

Entering his presence starts with knowing Christ Jesus personally. Do you have a relationship with him? Have you accepted his cleansing and forgiveness by conquering the worst things that could ever come to you . . . sin and death?

Believer . . .

Do you take the time to fill your mind and dwell on his promises from his word? Do you memorize scripture? Do you meditate on scripture and the promises he has given? It's not an easy task. It takes discipline. To dwell on him we have to seek him in his word.

I love going for walks to get away from it all . . .but don't go for a walk just clear your mind and look at creation . . . yes, go for a walk and dwell on God's promises found in his word, pray to him and look at his creation. Dwell on who he is and what he does. . .

You can also let others who love God also speak into your life – brothers and sisters in Christ to encourage you to dwell in him – growth groups help us, godly friends we need. Let the music that fills your head be more honouring biblical music. Read good Christian books . . . we have a library.

He gave us his word so we can dwell on his promises . . . read his truth . . . dwell on his presence, dwell on his truth, dwell on his power.

Look to our great Saviour and dwell in his presence and he will continue to show you His salvation.

Psalms 91 a great Psalm of refuge and deliverance.

1 Peter 5:8-11