

Under The Shadow Of The Almighty  
Psalm 91

This Psalm has no title, and the author remains unknown. Because it shares some of the themes of Psalm 90, some think Moses was the author. Because it shares some of the themes of Psalm 27 and Psalm 31, some think the author was David. Some of its language, of strongholds and shields, reminds us of David, and other phrases echo the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, as did Psalm 90.

G. Campbell Morgan called Psalm 91 “one of the greatest possessions of the saints.” It has helped countless thousands live courageously through war, disease, persecution, sickness, surgery, hopelessness, and all kinds of trouble.

Charles Spurgeon said, “It is one of the most excellent works which has ever appeared. It is impossible to imagine anything more solid, more beautiful, more profound, or more ornamented writing.” Charles Spurgeon

Once you have gone through storms and peril and pestilence and destruction, you learn to appreciate what is being offered in Psalms 91. The theme of Psalm 91 is simply: The one who makes the Lord his refuge will find great protection from God. This is a promise to those who trust in God. It is a promise to THE ONE who dwells in the shelter of the Most High. A shelter only protects those who get under it. Verse 9 says, “*Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place.*” The promises of Psalm 91 all hinge on that condition.

The reality is...We WILL turn to someone or something to see us through the dangers of life. If we do not trust God, we will either meticulously seek to work out our own agenda for safety, or we will follow someone else’s agenda for safety.

*He who dwells (or the one who lives) in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, Him in whom I trust.” For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place— the Most High, who is my refuge — no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the serpent; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot. “Because he holds fast to me in love,” says the Lord, “I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”* Psalm 91:1-16

Matthew Henry said, “The message of Psalm 91 is that all who live a life of close communion with God are constantly safe under His protection and may therefore live in security and peace of mind at all times.”

### **1. God’s Promise Of Presence.**

What we learn all through the Bible is just because we don’t have to fear something doesn’t mean we won’t be afraid. No matter who we are, we all feel afraid at times. This why when God shows up to people like Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Mary, Joseph, and the Shepherds, the first words were “*Do not be afraid.*”

The writer reminds us early on that protection is not the same as exemption. A lot of people have an exemption theology. God never promised that, but He did promise protection. You may walk through some things, but you will be protected in them. Job is a great example. He has tremendous loss. He was not exempted, but he did have protection. The writer talks about 1,000 and 10,000 falling at our sides. If you do that, you’re pretty close to the battle. You’re not exempt from it, but you are protected in it. The assurance is the result of Who you are walking through difficulty with.

In Psalm 90:1, Moses spoke of God as the dwelling place of His people. The opening lines of Psalm 91 seem to take that idea further. Moses spoke of God as the dwelling-place, the habitation, the home of man. This singer seems to accept that great idea, and then to speak of the most central chamber of the dwelling place, referring to it as the Secret Place, and describing its complete security.

The first two verses of Psalm 91 use four wonderful titles or names for God:

- Most High: *Elyon*
- Almighty: *Shadday*
- The LORD: *Yahweh*
- My God: *Elohay*

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."* Psalm 91:1-3

"Dwells" in Psalm 91:1 is connected with a deeper, more intimate relationship with God. God has a secret place for His own (Psalm 27:5, 31:20), and it is a place to *live in*. Those who dwell there abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and know and experience His protection, comfort, and care. There are many followers of Jesus Christ who seem to know very little of "*the secret place of the Most High or what it is to abide under His shadow*." The writer is well-acquainted with the realities of life. It is true that the life of the spirit seems to come more easily for some than for others, but there is an aspect of the secret place of the Most High that is for everyone who puts his trust in Him.

"*The shadow of the Almighty*" is an expression which implies God's nearness.

Charles Spurgeon says, "We must walk very close to a companion, if we would have his shadow fall on us."

The image of shadows is very common in the scriptures to communicate protection.

- The shadow of the rock (Isaiah 32:2)
- The shadow of the tree (Song of Solomon 2:3)
- The shadow of His wings (Psalm 63:7)
- The shadow of His hand (Isaiah 49:2)

"*He is my refuge and my fortress*." The one who lives intimately with God knows the greatness of His protection. God Himself becomes like a mighty refuge and fortress for the believer.

Have you ever said definitely, "*O Lord, you are my refuge*"? Have you taken shelter in Him from the windy storm and tempest, from the arrow by day, and pestilence by night?

"*My God, in Him I will trust*." This close relationship with God and all the benefits that come from it are for those who know Yahweh as God, and who truly trust in Him. As a believer receives His protection, comfort, and care, he trusts God all the more, and increasingly knows Him as God.

The phrase "My God" is a common expression of saints all through the Bible.

- *My God* is the confession of a young desperate woman named Ruth. (Ruth 1:16)
- *My God* is the conclusion of Thomas after his doubt turned to belief. (John 20:28)
- *My God* is the declaration of Micaiah when he opposed King Ahab. (1 Kings 22:14)

- *My God* is the secret vow of Jacob after he wrestled with God and consecrated himself to God. (Genesis 32:28-30)
- *My God* is the desperate cry of Jesus to God in great anguish on the cross. (Matthew 27:46)
- *My God* is the celebration of Miriam for the victorious deliverance from Pharaoh and crossing the Red Sea. (Exodus 15:21)

Our protection comes from the ultimate authority and power in the universe. *“When we dwell in the shelter of the Most High; we abide in the shadow of the Almighty.”* We are safe because the One who protects us is the Most High, the Almighty.

We enter the protection of God by CHOOSING to place ourselves under His protection. We MAKE the Lord our refuge. Verse 2 demonstrates this action of our heart! *“I will say to the Lord, (You are) My refuge and my fortress, You are my God, in whom I trust.”* We are saying, “God, YOU are my place of safety!” When we talk to God like this, we will have amazing peace and amazing protection.

## 2. God’s Promises Of Protection.

*“Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.”* Psalm 91:3-4

*“He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”* A fowler is a person who hunts or traps birds. We have an enemy who hunts and seeks to trap us. God will save you from those who are after you to hurt you, trap you, to kill you. This is a promise of protection against all who would seek your downfall, including our enemy, the Devil.

- The fowler works in secret.
- The fowler changes his trap and methods.
- The fowler often entices with pleasure or profit.
- The fowler often uses a bad example, a decoy.

*“From the perilous pestilence.”*

God protects His people in times of plague and disease. The psalmist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, did not intend this as an absolute promise that every believer would be delivered from every snare or every pestilence. Instead, the idea is that the psalmist could point to many times when God did just that for His trusting people.

*“He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.”*

*“He shall cover you with His feathers”* is a metaphor where God is represented as a mother eagle protecting her little ones. God spreads his wings over you, and you are safe there. In Psalm 63:7 David said, *“In the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.”* Our emotions are a great indication of whether we are taking refuge in God or not. When we are living under His wings, we can sing and shout for joy!

David described this in Psalm 61:4, *“I will take refuge in the shelter of your wings.”*

In Matthew 23:37, Jesus would have saved and sheltered Jerusalem and its inhabitants, but the people were not willing. They would not come to him. They would not “dwell” in the shelter of the Most High. They cried out for His crucifixion instead.

*“His truth shall be your shield and buckler.”* This pictures God’s protection as it continues over our lives. His truth is represented as the smaller, often round shield and the larger, often rectangular shield, as the buckler. God’s care

combines the warm protectiveness of a parent bird with the hard, unyielding strength of armor. The Hebrew word “*buckler*” signifies something that is wrapped around a person for his or her protection.

### **3. God’s Promise Of Peace.**

*“You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.”* Psalm 91:5-6

Moses mentions the most frightening thing ever – “terror” and at the worst time – “night” but adds “*You shall not be afraid.*” But it’s easier to say than to do it. Fortunately for us, if God said it then we can do it by His power.

When you’re a kid, the dark created terror. You were always afraid of what would pop out of the darkness at night. When we become adults, we become afraid of what will pop out of our mind. Our fears and anxieties and our worries overwhelm us.

*“You shall not be afraid.”* Having God as a shelter and refuge gives strength and courage to the people of God. When God’s people are stuck deep in fear, it is an indication that they fall short of proper trust in God as our protector and comforter. Not to be afraid is, in itself, an unspeakable blessing, since for every suffering which we endure from real injury, we are tormented by a thousand griefs which arise from fear only.

We live in a world full of danger and disease. The arrows of accusation and attack are often aimed at us. We have both human and spiritual enemies, but Psalm 91 says the person who chooses God as his shelter will be protected by God from all evil. The promise is NOT the absence of danger, but of coming through all danger, safe in God.

In the midst of “last days” world problems, there is a great need for us to seriously examine who or what we really trust in. Who or what gives us confidence to go on? What gives us peace? Who or what makes us feel safe? Do we really trust God for these things?

David said in Psalm 4:8 *“I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”*

The psalmist represented all kinds of destruction that could come in all kinds of circumstances. It could come by night or by day, in darkness or at noonday. It could come as terror or by arrow, as a pestilence or as destruction. Whenever or however it comes, God is able to defend His people.

*“You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.”* God protects us, both day and night. Satan often attacks at night. Our own thoughts or dreams can sometimes terrorize us. God protects us at night.

*“A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked.”* Psalm 91:5-6

*“A thousand may fall at your side.”* The psalmist described how God’s protection could conquer any odds or probabilities. God’s protection and care could be so specifically focused that it can preserve one in ten thousand.

*“It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord; the most crushing calamities can only shorten his journey and hasten him to his reward. Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach is his honor, death is his gain. No evil in the strict sense of the word can happen to him, for everything is overruled for good.”* Charles Spurgeon

The odds may tell you that 9 out of 10 people in your situation will have a bad outcome. Psalm 91 says it doesn't matter. Even if the odds are ten thousand to one, God will still protect you.

*“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways....”* Psalm 91:11

One of the ways God will use to protect you is to command his angels to surround and to protect you, in ALL your ways! *“They will lift you up in their hands...so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”* Psalm 91:12

*“You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.”* The things most feared by most people are not to be feared by us! They are not going to get you, you are going to get them. Satan is not going to trample you under his feet – the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Paul said, *“I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* 2 Timothy 4:16-18 That's how we're supposed to talk and think!

The book “A Thousand Miles of Miracles,” is the story of China Inland Mission missionaries who escaped from China during the Boxer rebellion. As they traveled 1,000 miles through danger of torture and death, they read Psalm 91 over and over. They trusted its promises and experienced amazing deliverances. That's what the book is about – 1,000 miles of miracles!

If we choose God as our shelter, even in those instances in our lives where evil seems to have the upper hand, Satan's purposes are always overthrown and God's good plan for us is always advanced. Romans 8:28 *And we know God causes all things to work for the good of those who love him...*

If we choose God as our shelter, we know that nothing—no trouble, famine, danger, demons, nothing present or in the future, not even death—can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39.

The question for each of us is, “Will we live in fear or will we live in God?” If you want to know where you are living, listen to yourself talk. You can tell in a minute where you are living by what you are saying. This is why it is so important to *SAY to the Lord*, *“You are my refuge and my fortress.”*

#### **4. The Promise of His Providence**

*“Because he has set his love upon Me,” says the Lord, “therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation.”* Psalm 91:14-16

The reason the enemy comes against you is because he knows you are precious to God. He knows how special you are. Whatever he says to you is a lie.

Some of you have had terror in the night, and you have been given power to do and be what God wants you to do. You've taken darkness that was meant to destroy you, and you have done damage to the kingdom of darkness. You're chosen. You're loved. You're equipped.

You have to come to the right conclusions in the heat of your battle. You have to conclude that you are not your thoughts. Our enemy wants us to be defined by the thoughts that enter into our minds. He wants us to hold on to the thoughts and not dismiss them. Sometimes our thoughts come from warfare, and the spiritual battle over our soul. There is a spiritual realm of demons and angels and an enemy named Satan, but you have to know greater is Who is in you than he who is in the world. Sometimes it's just the world we grow up in. We live in a fallen world. The people in it and the way the world operates. From our earliest ages, were taught to fear and worry. The third reason we struggle with our thoughts is our flesh. We are born with an overactive amygdala in our brain. It's only the size of an almond, but we struggle to get it under control.

We have three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil; and the flesh is the part that chooses to worry. God's power and presence make our hearts a place where fear and anxiety and worry are not welcome. Fill your heart with praise.

Worry is like feeding the seagulls. If you feed them, they go away and come back with all their friends. It's important what we read, what we listen to, and what we watch and allow into our hearts. We receive the power of the promise

by participating in it. You have to walk in it. You have to apply it in your life and let His peace guard your heart. You have to let the peace drip into your life, every day, through his Holy Spirit.

*“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are stayed on him.”* Isaiah 26:3

“I have set before you life and death. Blessing and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children shall live.” Deuteronomy 30:19

Your thoughts can’t be erased, but they can be replaced. You replace them with truth.

To “*set one’s love upon God*” means to do it by choice. He does not wait for the feeling of love to come, but simply chooses to think and act toward God in ways that express and build love. This would include:

- Spending time with God
- Listening to God
- Reading what God has written to us
- Speaking to God
- Adoring God
- Speaking of God to others
- Giving to God and making glad sacrifices to Him and for Him

Our present culture often thinks of love as something that happens to people, not something chosen. The phrase “*because he has set his love on Me*” reminds us that a significant aspect of love is indeed a choice, and this describes, in part, the love we should give unto God.

*“Therefore I will deliver Him.”* The promises and principles stated previously in this psalm are repeated again, but this time from the perspective of God Himself. God will protect His beloved and set him on high – and do it because he has known My name, having a real relationship with God.

*“I will set him on high”* means I will place him *out of the reach* of all his enemies.

There are blessings that some believers miss out on, simply because they are always anxious and do not trust God as they should. Here the psalmist quotes God as saying that the blessings are for those who love God and acknowledge His name (verse 14), call upon Him (verse 15), and seek satisfaction in what He alone can provide.

*“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.”*

God promises to answer the prayer of the one who loves Him, the one who genuinely knows Him, and says, “I will be with him.” In the last lines of the psalm, God spoke personal and wonderful blessings over the one who loves and knows Him:

- The blessing of His presence: I will be with him in trouble.
- The blessing of His protection: I will deliver him.
- The blessing of His promotion: I will...honor him.
- The blessing of His prosperity: With long life I will satisfy him.
- The blessing of His preservation: And show him My salvation.

*“I will be with him in trouble.”*