

Psalm 91 • The Protection of the Lord

Introduction

There are so many words that we grow up with that carry with them the definition attached to them by the world. Words like “love”, “peace”, “joy”, “faith”, etc. all have worldly meanings that are often contradicted by their biblical definition. This Psalm provides the basis for understanding the biblical meaning of the protection of the Lord. Is it the same as what you envisioned when you first read the title of this Psalm?

¹He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High

Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

²I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress,

My God, in whom I trust!”

³For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper

And from the deadly pestilence.

⁴He will cover you with His pinions,

And under His wings you may seek refuge;

His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.

[Read v.1-4]

Q: What are all the examples used to teach something about the nature of God’s protection?

1. Shelter (v.1)
2. Shadow (v.1)
3. Refuge (v.2)
4. Fortress (v.2)
5. Pinions (v.4)
6. Wings (v.4)
7. Shield (v.4)
8. Bulwark (v.4)

Q: What is the common characteristic of each example?

A: They all provide cover for all the possible situations we might find need for different levels of protection, whether as a shield, wings, or shadow to cover us while on the move, or when we need absolute separation from the world such as fortress and bulwark, or something in between to wait out temporary conditions such as shelter, refuge, and pinions. But **ALL** of these things must each be sought after and **RUN** to in order to be used.

Q: What is the implied conditional statement established in v.1 that speaks of our participation in the process?

A: “He who dwells”. We’re choosing where to live, where to establish our home, in this case in Him. It’s implied that we’re not choosing to try and live on our own or away from His protection. It speaks of **OUR** having to make a choice.

Point: People in need of being rescued or protected have to first **want** the help and then must cooperate with those from whom they’re receiving help. Otherwise the rescue or protection efforts won’t be successful.

Q: What are the 3 God-qualities in v.3-4 that teach us about the character of God’s protection?

1. He delivers us from this world’s traps.
2. He provides cover when we seek Him.
3. He is faithful, never letting us down.

Application: Do we sometimes believe we can go anywhere, do anything, and we still be protected by God? What are some situations or scenarios that this might not be true? Would you characterize yourself as running towards God’s shelter or away?

⁵You will not be afraid of the terror by night,

Or of the arrow that flies by day;

⁶Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
Or of the destruction that lays waste at noon.

⁷A thousand may fall at your side
And ten thousand at your right hand,
But it shall not approach you.

⁸You will only look on with your eyes
And see the recompense of the wicked.

⁹For you have made the LORD, my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place.

¹⁰No evil will befall you,
Nor will any plague come near your tent.

¹¹For He will give His angels charge
concerning you,

To guard you in all your ways.

¹²They will bear you up in their hands,
That you do not strike your foot against a stone.

¹³You will tread upon the lion and cobra,
The young lion and the serpent you will
trample down.

[Read v.5-10]

Q: This is describing what it's like to be inside God's refuge, safely in His protection. What do all of these activities have in common?

A: They are all the results of sin, the judgments and consequences that come upon those that choose a worldly lifestyle. You might say they're the ultimate results of someone taking refuge in the world rather than God.

Q: Is dwelling in God's refuge a guarantee of protection against anything and everything bad?

A: No, there may be physical hardships, test and trials—all of which are designed to toughen us spiritually—but more importantly there is the protection that results from living a life that embraces God's righteousness while rejecting sin. The consequences of sin will not befall those who cling to the protection of His ways.

Application: Do you ever make note that the most important "peace" in life is being free of sin and sinful behavior? Do we assess "protection" as to whether we're getting what we want or living like we should?

[Read v.11-13]

Q: How would you summarize these verses as to what they teach about God's protection?

A: God provides additional resources for protection that we can't even see.

Q: How do these heavenly resources fit in with the previous passage?

A: They're both really discussing spiritual warfare, both in the visible realm and the invisible. The war between God and Satan is for our soul, not our life as it subsists on this earth, but rather whether we attain to the second life.

¹⁴“Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name.
¹⁵He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
¹⁶With a long life I will satisfy him
And let him see My salvation.”

[Read v.14-16]

Q: What changed in this last passage? How is the tone and perspective different?

A: The previous verses spoke in the 3rd person; here it is God personally speaking in the 1st person “I”.

Q: What are the 3 things referring to us which provide a definition for what it means to seek His shelter and protection?

1. “...he has loved Me...” (v.14)
2. “...he has known My name...” (v.14)
3. “He will call upon Me...” (v.15)

Application: Take a moment and share how these things identify actions we take to seek His shelter.

Q: What is His personal response to those who seek His protection?

1. “...I will deliver Him...” (v.14)
2. “...I will set him securely on high...” (v.14)
3. “...I will answer him...” (v.15)
4. “...I will be with him in trouble...” (v.15)
5. “...I will rescue him and honor him.” (v.15)
6. “With a long life I will satisfy him...” (v.16)
7. “...I will...let him see My salvation.” (v.16)

Q: How do these actions fit in with the discussion of v.5-10 above?

A: They're much more focused on winning the spiritual battle than the physical.

Application: What does it mean to you that the Psalmist began this as a testimony or teaching, but that it ended with God's personal commentary? Does this give you more courage to let go the things of this world for the things that lead to His protection?

Overall Application

- How does this teaching relate to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount:

If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

—Matthew 5:29-30

- Are you unprotected in some way at the moment? Is it because you have made a choice to participate in a recurring sin, or not made the effort to run to Him?
- Do you realize the blessing of living a life uncontrolled by sin, even if physical circumstances are less than ideal? Is your desire for eternal protection or temporary rest?

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