

Psalm 91 – New International Version (UK)

- ¹Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- ²I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.'
- ³Surely he will save you
from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
- ⁴He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- ⁵You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
⁶nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
- ⁷A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
- ⁸You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.
- ⁹If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge,'
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
¹⁰no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
- ¹¹For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
¹²they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
- ¹³You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
- ¹⁴'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
- ¹⁵He will call on me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honour him.
- ¹⁶With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.'

Psalm 91 – Authorised King James version

¹He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

²I will say of the Lord, *He is* my refuge and my fortress:
my God; in him will I trust.

³Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
and from the noisome pestilence.

⁴He shall cover thee with his feathers,
and under his wings shalt thou trust:
his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

⁵Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;
nor for the arrow *that* flieth by day;

⁶*nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness;
nor for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.

⁷A thousand shall fall at thy side,
and ten thousand at thy right hand;
but it shall not come nigh thee.

⁸Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold
and see the reward of the wicked.

⁹Because thou hast made the Lord, *which is* my refuge,
even the most High, thy habitation;

¹⁰there shall no evil befall thee,
neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

¹¹For he shall give his angels charge over thee,
to keep thee in all thy ways.

¹²They shall bear thee up in *their* hands,
lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

¹³Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:
the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

¹⁴Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him:
I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

¹⁵He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:
I *will be* with him in trouble;
I will deliver him, and honour him.

¹⁶With long life will I satisfy him,
and shew him my salvation.

Good morning. Today we're going to look at a Psalm of David which affirms the blessings God promises to those who love Him. These blessings apply as much to us as they did to David, but they are not unconditional. Like so much in the Bible, we the people created in the image of God have to do something in obedience to God's Word and God will then do various things for us in obedience of His Word.

Do we all believe that when God says something, it can be relied upon as truth? When we read Bible promises does a little voice in our head, or a thought in the back of our mind creep in and question "Does God really mean this?" "Does God really say this?" "Does God really promise this?"

Researching this psalm has revealed some issues with translations. Accuracy is most important as we need to know what God is saying to us in his word without it being adjusted in some way which alters what he is saying.

The older version of the NIV says, "*He who dwells in the shelter of the most high will rest in the shadow of the Almighty*" rather than newer versions which says, "*Whoever dwells... etc*". The King James says, "*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty*". When the Hebrew says "he" here, it means he or she. There is no need to change the masculine pronoun to gender neutral inclusive "whoever". The sense from the wording is that he or she chooses to dwell in the secret place of the most high.... an active decision has been made. When the scholars choose to use inclusive language, saying "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High" the sense that comes across to me – and I may be questioned on this - is that it sounds like someone finds himself or herself in a place without having sought it rather than having chosen to be there. This is where language can soften or strengthen meaning. Faithfulness to the original text is key to understanding the Word of God, which is why interlinear Bibles are so useful. They show the Hebrew or Greek, the grammar (nouns, verbs with tenses, adjectives etc) and translation word for word.

We all want our Bibles to reveal truly what God is saying and sadly more recent translations have strayed from the text to be allegedly more accessible. For example, the Passion Bible "translation" is the work of one man, Brian Simmons, who claims to have a direct line to the Holy Spirit so when he alters things, he claims they need to be altered by God. No honest Christian scholar agrees with his changes to the text. The Message written by Eugene Peterson of course is not the Bible and should never be seen as authoritative. It is his "clarification" of what he thinks God is saying, rather than what God says.

In this psalm, God has a promise for all of us here: stay close to Me and you will be protected. We should be able to seek the presence of God not just now and again, but all the time, living in His presence so that we truly know He is our refuge and fortress and fully trustworthy in every circumstance. Martin Luther wrote that this refers to "one

who really dwells and does not merely appear to dwell and does not just imagine that he dwells in God.” Do we really understand that with Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we are abiding or resting in the shadow of the Almighty? Daily we should thank God for His protection. You will be protected from the snares and wiles of the world. You will be protected from noisome or perilous pestilence... the Hebrew interlinear Bible doesn’t say *deadly pestilence*, (which is what the NIV says) rather the *perilous pestilence* which means dangerous rather than deadly.

(Delete on the day as too much detail!) So why has the NIV said this? The answer is that the version of the Septuagint which Jerome translated from Greek to Latin “For he will deliver you from the snare of the hunters and from the snares of death”, while the Hebrew text (and in fact other versions of the Septuagint) he translated into Latin says “For he will deliver you from the snare of the hunters and from the harsh (or tumultuous) word”. Jerome knew that the texts the Jews had in Hebrew, to which he had access, and which no longer exist, differed from the Greek Septuagint, especially in the Psalms. The Latin Bible I have has them side by side and they are pretty much all slightly different. The myth that in the second century BC, 70 scholars were locked up in Alexandria Egypt to translate the Torah (5 books of Moses) into Greek and they all came up with the same answer may have been true enough because all Jewish boys had to remember these texts by heart, and today they are still tested on this at their Bar mitsvah. However, the rest of the Bible was also translated into Greek for King Ptolemy II’s library and how accurate that was seems to be subject to some doubt because of differences, especially in the psalms. Jerome’s Latin translation from Hebrew was initially declared heretical because it varied from the Septuagint, but in later life he was seen as being right to translate from Hebrew rather than Greek. What can we trust? The Greek Orthodox church still uses the Septuagint as did the Apostles. Our Old Testament comes from tenth century AD Masoretic texts agreed by Jewish Scholars over the previous few hundred years as authoritative. These texts are in the Vatican. They say “perilous or noisome pestilence”

You’ve probably had enough of textual differences so let’s see what the rest of this psalm says to us today.

One of the prayers for healing in our book of Scriptures to pray for various matters, because the Word of God has power, is in fact “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence” from the King James version. We trust this because it lines up with other Scriptures that God heals. Praying the Word of God is always good as the prayer will agree with what God reveals as truth.

Verses 4 to 10 – let’s read them together so that we all speak out the promises God has made.

⁴ *He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*

⁵ *You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
⁷ A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
⁸ You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.

⁹ If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge,'
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
¹⁰ no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.*

As we proclaim this together, do we believe its truth? Do we truly understand how wonderful this promise for each one of us is? The times are now uncertain, but that has been the case for centuries. The Word of God endures, the Lord God endures, the people of God endure, all under the protection of God.

1 Peter 2:9-10 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

We are a royal priesthood of believers, God's special possession and we are in a building that stands on the Word of God. So when we all say that the Lord is our refuge the promise is that no harm will overtake us. We have confessed our sins and been forgiven, because God is merciful. We have an eternal destiny in Christ Jesus, whose name be praised forever.

As this is a psalm of David, what is said applied to him, regardless of the disasters and close shaves with death in his life. David was anointed by Samuel, he went out against all odds to fight Goliath, he was hunted by Saul, he fought battles with neighbouring tribes and his own people, he fell from grace because of lust for Bathsheba, his grandson Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar, his son Absalom deposed him and died escaping David's men. In his old age David's fourth son Adonijah tried to seize the throne from Solomon declared as David's heir and he was given mercy by David. After David's death Solomon had him executed, along with Joab David's best, but not always loyal general. Lastly, he had a census done against the Law of Moses with many dying as a result. But David died of old age unlike so many kings after him who died in battles. David was a man after God's own heart yet we see his actions were often out of line with

what he proclaimed in the psalms. He was a sinner just like we are, but he knew God would save him, just as we know God has saved us.

We all have our trials and tribulations we have to face and some of us still face them today. With hindsight we see that past disappointments, illnesses, bereavements were unpleasant but aren't we those who can overcome difficulties and still praise God?

Here we are: worshipping God, praising Him, thanking Him and standing firm. We can count our blessings and even if we are old, there is still work to do building the kingdom of God in this land. We can always pray and spend time in the Word of God and spend time in the presence of God whether on our own or with others, so we can encourage one another as we look forward to the day Jesus returns – Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The rest of the psalm has more promises. Verses 11&12 were used by the devil to tempt Jesus *For he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways; ¹²they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.*

Is this true in our lives? Do we trust God to protect us always? The answer is yes because we have the assurance of eternal life with Jesus because we are forgiven and because we believe the promises of God.

Verses 14 to the end at verse 16 changes the narrative. God now makes a promise fulfilled in David's lifetime that he will be honoured for his faith and rewarded with a long life and salvation. Given that so many of us here have made it past the three score years and ten, some past three score years and ten, and have been faithful all those years, we too are rewarded with salvation.

Galatians 6:7-10 *⁷Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

1 Corinthians 15:56-58 ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

⁵⁸ *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

Jesus is with us now. Ephesians 6:10-18

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. **I'll say before going on to the rest of the passage, that putting on the full armour of God daily helps and you'll remember the Scripture just like you remember the Lord's prayer so no need to read it out.** ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. **This is the bit to remember daily.** ¹³ Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, **you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.** ¹⁴ **Stand firm** then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

¹⁸ *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

Psalm 91 is one the psalms to comfort us when we face difficulties, and whatever befalls us, He loves us and will protect us. As we choose to think and act toward God in ways that express and build love, we will want to spend time with God, listen to God, read what He has written to us, speak to God, think of God in unoccupied moments, adore and praise God, speak of God to others and gladly give towards the work of His kingdom. Love is a choice we make. Let's make this week a time to fix our eyes on Jesus and be mindful of Him as often as we can.

Amen