

## Psalm 91

After the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm probably no Psalm is turned to more often than the 91<sup>st</sup>. It is a great Psalm of comfort and encouragement that takes on even deeper meaning as we go through life.

One unique feature of this Psalm is that Satan quoted, or actually misquoted verses 11 as part of his temptation of Jesus. Satan used this Psalm in an attempt to trip Jesus up. Often Satan uses the same lie in an attempt to bring doubts to our minds about the truth of Scripture and the goodness of God.

Psalm 91 is not given an author but it is easy to see that if it was not written by Moses, as Psalm 90 was, it was written by someone who was thoroughly familiar with the life of Moses and all that God did for His people under Moses. Almost every reference in this Psalm can be traced initially to a promise or a provision made by God to Moses. The symbols of those things that we are protected against had specific meaning to the people under Moses, although they are applicable to all generations. Many phrases are taken directly from Deuteronomy.

The Psalm itself is a great one of promise. It assures us of God's care and protection in every danger or challenge of life. It can be outlined with verses 1 and 2 being the promise and condition for receiving that promise. Verses 3-13 give examples of the provisions available from God. Verses 14-16 are God Himself reiterating those promises.

Several important things about this Psalm must be understood if one is to understand the nature of the blessings being offered here. **First** of all, this is not a promise to everyone but rather it is a specific promise to those who meet the qualification of verse 1. These are promises to those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide or rest in the shadow of the Almighty. The same truth is stated in both verses 9 and 14. This is an important truth repeated often throughout the Bible. Spiritual benefits belong to those who trust in God.

Verse 1 tells us that spiritual blessings come to those who dwell continually in or literally sit down in the presence of God. The concept is that of remaining, tarrying, having one's abode with God. Read Colossians 3:2, 3 The promise of verse 1, amplified in the rest of the Psalm, is dependent upon the response of verse 2 that causes us to say in all honesty, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God; in Him will I trust." Note carefully the personal nature of the confession. "I" will say, He is "my", "I" trust. Faith that dwells in the presence of God is not second hand but personal. It begins with a personal commitment to God via the acceptance of what Jesus provided for us on the Cross. Then as we begin to seek to live for him and discover personally his loving care for us we are drawn closer to Him.

A **Second** truth seen in Verse 1 is that spiritual blessings come to those who dwell continually in or literally sit down in the presence of God. We must be in a place where we can grow but the strength of this promise is not in the believer but in God. It rests not in how good we are but in the nature of God. The message of the Psalm is that there is rest in God because of who God is. God is at the heart of this whole Psalm. The names of God given in this Psalm show clearly it is

all God. In verse 1 God is described as Elyon or Most High and El Shaddai or Almighty. Those two are names used to describe the God who can provide for all of the needs of His people. In verse 2 He is described as “Lord” which is “Jehovah” and “God” which is “Elohim. Jehovah is the personal covenant God and Elohim is the creator God who rules His creation. All men belong to Him by virtue of creation but His covenant people are His by virtue of recreation. Later God declares that He will bless us “because he has known my name.” This is the “I am that I am.” revealed to Moses. The God who is making all of the promises of this Psalm is the eternal, living, unchanging, all-powerful creator, and covenant God. In addition to the formal names God is described as a shelter and shadow, and as a bird who protects its young under its wing, and as a warrior who defends within His fortress.

Note a **third** thing about this Psalm. It is not a Psalm that promises that we will never face danger, never have difficulty, never suffer, never get sick, etc. On the surface it appears that God is there to protect you from all of your enemies and will never allow you to stumble let alone fall and hurt yourself, etc. But that is not the message. A parallel passage to this Psalm is Romans 8:28-39 that says nothing can ever separate us from the love of God and then specifically lists the situations we might find ourselves in that could lead us to wonder about His love and care. Paul talks of trouble, hardship, persecution, etc. with a list that looks very similar to this Psalm. We may very well face some or even all of them but this Psalm tells us what Paul later declares, in it all God is with us and will love and care for us beyond measure. Note particularly verse 15 where we read He will be with us in our troubles. He cannot be with us in it if we are not in trouble.

It is easy when hard times come to assume that God has lied. Many reject God because something terrible happened and they assumed God either could or should have done something about it and now they are angry with God for what they perceive as breaking His promise to them. Ugly things are ultimately Satan’s fault. He was the one who convinced Adam and Eve to sin. That brought on the curse we all now live with. The promise is that God will be with us in trouble and because of who He is and His power we are on the winning side. The imagery of the opening verses of the Psalm are those of a bird who shelters her young under her feathers and a father who draws his children unto himself in protection and love. The Psalm then describes God as one who protects with references to a fortress and refuge. God is the one to whom we can go and find safety and security in an insecure and unstable world.

Satan cannot destroy us or harm us so he seeks to discourage us and cause us to fear so we will focus our attention on something other than God’s goodness to us. Verse 5 declares that when we are focused upon Him then we do not fear. This is not making man invincible but seeing the Most High God as in control. It is not escaping difficulty but facing it victoriously. In God we don’t need to fear anything. The phrases in verses 3-13 are a collection of all inclusive images that tell us nothing man made, nothing that nature throws at us, nothing that comes by day or by night, nothing that Satan tries to do etc. can ever cause us fear when we face it with the Lord. Alone this world is pretty scary. There are so many unknowns as far as health, resources, loved ones etc. are concerned but God is the same yesterday, today and forever and therefore the

constant who drives away fear. Psalm 23 presents a practical application when it says, even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we will fear no evil for God is with us. It does not say we will escape death but that in the very midst of facing it we have the assurance of God's presence with us and therefore of His victory. This Psalm says the same truth should be applied to every area of life. This is the key message of the entire Psalm. God will be with those who trust in Him; those who desire to dwell with Him, those who know His Name and by that Scripture means know Him. God will give them His presence during difficulty and ultimate victory. Those outside of Him will face His judgment and while they will fall by the thousands in that judgment we will not be touched.

Becoming a Christian does not exempt us from trials and difficulties but rather gives us one who will walk with us through such. It does not guarantee we will not sorrow but assures us of one who will wipe away our tears. This Psalm, perhaps better than most assures us of His presence and therefore His strength, His peace, His joy, His calmness, His victory in every circumstance of life, even, or perhaps especially in the difficult ones.

His blessing and provision is all available to those who dwell in Him, who trust in Him, who are convinced that they are on the winning side and that nothing will ever happen to them that has not passed the loving eyes of a heavenly Father and will not bring glory to Him and blessing to us if faced in Him.