

This I Declare

Series: I Will Praise You In This Storm

Psalm 91

September 5, 2021

Welcome again to worship. Today is our final Sunday in our series “I Will Praise You In This Storm,” our look at some of the psalms that give us voice when we are in the midst of a storm in our life.

I invite you to turn to page 6 in your bulletin or if you are online, have your spiritual journal ready and turn to Psalm 91.

You know, during our series, we have looked at some incredible psalms.

Psalm 46: *God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.*¹

Psalm 105: *Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.*²

Psalm 103: *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*³

Psalm 6: *Return, O LORD, and rescue me. Save me because of your unfailing love.*⁴

Well, today’s Psalm 91 is another one.

It is one of the finest Psalms in the whole collection.

This is a favorite psalm of many because of its reassurance of protection and deliverance from trouble. Spurgeon said, “There is not a more cheering Psalm.” The psalm is a great encouragement of faith in God.⁵

Someone else has said: “It is one of the most excellent works of this kind which has ever appeared. It is impossible to imagine anything more solid, more beautiful, more profound, or more ornamented. Could the Latin or any modern languages express thoroughly all the beauties and elegancies as well of the words as of the sentences, it would not be difficult to persuade the reader that we have no poem, either in Greek or Latin, comparable to this Hebrew ode.”⁶

The Targum, which were explanations of the Hebrew Scriptures for the benefit of those Jews who had partially or completely ceased to understand Hebrew, intimates that Psalm 91 was a dialogue between David, Solomon, and God.

David speaks first in verse 1:

*Those who go to God Most High for safety will be protected by the Almighty.*⁷

Then Solomon replies in verse 2:

*I will say to the LORD, “You are my place of safety and protection. You are my God and I trust you.”*⁸

¹ Psalm 46:1 (NLT2)

² Psalm 105:1 (NIV)

³ Psalm 103:1 (NRSV)

⁴ Psalm 6:4 (NLT2)

⁵ Analytical Bible Expositor – Psalms 91

⁶ Adam Clarke’s Commentary, Psalm 91

⁷ Psalm 91:1 (NCV)

⁸ Psalm 91:2 (NCV)

Then David speaks again in verses 3-13, with God speaking in the final 3 verses. If this is true or not, there is no way to tell, but it is possible. Solomon was thought to have been 20 years old when he became King of Israel, and it is evident that he was a faithful follower of the Lord at least in the beginning of his life.

The final interesting fact about Psalm 91 is that it was used by the devil.

Look at verses 11-12:

He has put his angels in charge of you to watch over you wherever you go. They will catch you in their hands so that you will not hit your foot on a rock.⁹

Anyone remember that verse? The devil used it to tempt Jesus in the wilderness during those 40 days and nights. Matthew 4:

Then the devil led Jesus to the holy city of Jerusalem and put him on a high place of the Temple. The devil said, "If you are the Son of God, jump down, because it is written in the Scriptures: 'He has put his angels in charge of you. They will catch you in their hands so that you will not hit your foot on a rock.'"¹⁰

The parallel passage is in Luke 4:10-11.

Now, what I find hilarious is that the devil tries to use the Bible, the Word of God, on Jesus, the Word become flesh.

Folks, the devil is powerful, and he is smart, but compared to Jesus and the one who follows Him, he is not so smart and can be vanquished. Do not feel as if you have no chance against Satan.

I see 5 lessons in Psalm 91.

First, God protects the godly.

Verses 1-2:

Those who go to God Most High for safety will be protected by the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "You are my place of safety and protection. You are my God and I trust you."¹¹

The Hebrew word for the Almighty is El Shaddai. El Shaddai is one of the names of the God of Israel. El means "God" and Shaddai means "all powerful". El Shaddai is conventionally translated into English as God Almighty.

Other translations of verse 1 say something of living or dwelling in the shelter of the Most High. This may be a reference to the Holy of holies. The person who entered legitimately there would be covered with the cloud of God's glory – the protection of the all-sufficient God. This was the privilege of the high priest only under the law, but under the new covenant, all believers in Christ have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; and those who thus enter are safe from every evil.¹²

So, God protects the godly.

Second, God defends and preserves.

Verses 3-10:

God will save you from hidden traps and from deadly diseases. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you can hide. His truth will be your shield and protection. You will not fear any danger by night or an arrow during the day. You will not be afraid of diseases that come in the dark or sickness that strikes at noon. At your side

⁹ Psalm 91:11-12 (NCV)

¹⁰ Matthew 4:5-6 (NCV)

¹¹ Psalm 91:1-2 (NCV)

¹² Adam Clarke's Commentary, Psalm 91:1

*one thousand people may die, or even ten thousand right beside you, but you will not be hurt. You will only watch and see the wicked punished. The LORD is your protection; you have made God Most High your place of safety. Nothing bad will happen to you; no disaster will come to your home.*¹³

These verses personally address each one who sings this, listing the benefits that come to those who trust in the Lord.

- The hidden traps seem to be a metaphor for the schemes of those who hate the godly.¹⁴
- The diseases of verses 3 and 6 are diseases that God sends on his enemies or his unfaithful people.¹⁵ Remember the plagues against the Egyptians?
- The danger and arrow, together with a thousand may fall, envision God's people under attack.

Now, if the psalm were describing every situation of danger, it would clearly be untrue: faithful people have fallen prey to these and other perils. That's why we have verse 8:

*You will only watch and see the wicked punished.*¹⁶

There are cases in which these events (plague, battle) are sent as God's judgment on the wicked (whether Gentile or Israelite); in such cases, the faithful can be sure of God's protection.

But you say, "Gary, my loved one has cancer. Are they evil or ungodly? And if not, why isn't God protecting them?"

I understand that question, but let me remind you of something Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4, which was one of the chapters we read in our devotions last week or the week before:

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*¹⁷

Our ultimate hope when we are experiencing terrible illness, persecution, or pain is the realization that this life is not all there is—there is life after death! Knowing that we will live forever with God in a place without sin and suffering can help us live above the pain that we face in this life.

Third, we have guardian angels.

Now, I normally don't like to use colloquial phrases, but that's what verses 11-12 say:

*He has put his angels in charge of you to watch over you wherever you go. They will catch you in their hands so that you will not hit your foot on a rock.*¹⁸

A couple of months ago, I had another one of my vivid dreams. And when I woke up, I went to my laptop and typed out a page of notes for a book idea on the spiritual

¹³ Psalm 91:3-10 (NCV)

¹⁴ See Psalm 119:110; 140:1-5

¹⁵ Compare Exodus 5:3; 9:15; Leviticus 26:25; Deuteronomy 32:24

¹⁶ Psalm 91:8 (NCV)

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)

¹⁸ Psalm 91:11-12 (NCV)

warfare that is going on beyond our capability to see, and how God sends His angels to protect us. When that one will come out, I don't know. The first book of a new series is coming out in a month or so called "The Messengers." I will write two or three in that series, then maybe tackle the angel and demons book.

But that's off the point. The point is that God's angels are not just messengers: they are warriors for the Lord. The psalmist says:

*They will catch you in their hands so that you will not hit your foot on a rock.*¹⁹

Having been to the Holy Land a couple times, I can tell you: you can't fall down without hitting a rock. Someone once said if you took all the rocks in the world and put them into one place, you would have Israel, and I can believe it. The point is this: with danger all around, God sends His angels to catch you.

Fourth, the godly will overcome.

Verse 13 talks about overcoming the adversaries of the world.

*You will walk on lions and cobras; you will step on strong lions and snakes.*²⁰

The lions and cobras are possibly images of people bent on harming the faithful.

Psalm 58:3–4 reads:

*Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies. Their venom is like the venom of a snake, like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears.*²¹

These could also be demonic agents that inspire the harm against the godly.

Now, what would you do if you saw a lion or a cobra? Me, I'm getting out of there.

But that's not what the Psalmist writes. He says the godly will stomp on such fearful beasts. The godly are not afraid of the world's terrors.

Finally, the Lord answers our cries.

The psalm closes by laying out what the ideal of trust looks like. Listen to these beautiful words of verses 14-16:

*The LORD says, "Whoever loves me, I will save. I will protect those who know me. They will call to me, and I will answer them. I will be with them in trouble; I will rescue them and honor them. I will give them a long, full life, and they will see how I can save."*²²

I read about a Christian police officer who found himself in a very difficult situation one night with a group of thugs. The men were coming toward him with pipes and knives and meant to do a lot of damage to him. Suddenly they just turned and ran. Later, the men were arrested on another matter and the police officer was curious to know why the men had run. They told him it was because of the five big men who stepped out of his car and started moving toward them.

The police officer was on patrol on his own that night, he realized that he had been protected by angels! it encouraged his faith so much he became a Pastor.

When we are in a storm of life, we will praise the Lord, for He will protect us.

¹⁹ Psalm 91:12 (NCV)

²⁰ Psalm 91:13 (NCV)

²¹ Psalm 58:3-4 (NIV)

²² Psalm 91:14-16 (NCV)