

Your Refuge Amid Today's Turmoil

Editor's Note: This is part two of a two-part article. Find part one at [this link](#).

Psalm 91 invites us to take refuge in God alone, the ultimate place of safety. In part 1, we covered verses 1-4. Now, we continue with the rest of the psalm. Enjoy! (Unless otherwise noted, the NIV is used below.)

Verses 5-6: “You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.”

The Hebrew word *pakhad* can refer to a “fear” or to the thing feared (as in something fearful), translated here as “terror.” Dwelling in that holy hiding place, we do not fear anything night or day, not nighttime terrors, which seem especially frightful, or the daytime arrows—yes, demons and people are out to get us! We don’t even fear the pestilence (Hebrew *dever*, which was used in 3) or the plague (Hebrew *qetev*), which some even take as the name of a demon, as it comes stalking during the middle of the day. Yet still, we have no fear, despite flying arrows, menacing plagues and all kinds of terrors at night. No fear!

Verses 7-8: “A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.”



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This underscores the reality of the promises. People are dying—by the thousands all around us, as in a terrible time of war or epidemic—yet death does not touch us. To the contrary,

we will only see God's judgment wipe out the wicked (which describes those who are dying all around us).

To be clear, these verses are not saying that if one person dies during a plague and the other does not, you can conclude that the one who lived was righteous and the one who died was wicked. The book of Job urges us not to think that way. But these verses are saying two things. First, if you love the Lord and walk with Him, when He pours out judgment on the wicked, it will not touch you. Second, even if others are dying in plagues and battles, in that hiding place, you will be secure.

Verses 9-10 (ESV): "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."

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Now the psalmist speaks directly, addressing each of us personally—that is, addressing those of us who have taken shelter in the Lord. He describes Yahweh here again as the Most High, speaking of Him in the first person as "my refuge," just as he did in v. 2. And he describes us as those who have made Him our dwelling place (Hebrew *ma'ohn*), a word found in Psalm 90 as well, where Moses wrote, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations" (Ps. 90:1, NIV).

To say it again: this is where we live—or, better yet, *He* is where we live. So, if someone asked you, "Where do you live?" you could answer, "I live in the Most High!" Consequently, no evil will befall us (the Hebrew *ra'ah* speaks of evil or disaster) and no plague—here, the word *nega'*, which speaks of something that afflicts or strikes us—will come near our tent, implying our family as well.

Verses 11-12: "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their

hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

This supernatural protection comes about as a result of God sending His angels to guard us wherever we go, lifting us up so we don't even smash our foot against a rock. What amazing care! As it is written in Psalm 34:7, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.” Nothing can get past the angel of the Lord.

Verse 13: “You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.”

This verse anticipates the authority we have as believers in the New Testament, underlying these words of Jesus in Luke 10:19: “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.” Here, even in a pre-cross, pre-resurrection context, the believer who lives in Yahweh can trample these foes underfoot, described here in vivid physical terms and likened to dangerous lions and deadly snakes.

The Hebrew *peten*, translated here as “cobra,” can speak more broadly of a venomous snake, while Hebrew *shakhal*, rendered “great lion” in the NIV, might refer to the young lion. As for the word translated “serpent,” Hebrew *tannin*, in other verses, it speaks of a crocodile, a sea monster or a dragon. Whatever it is, it is under our feet!

Verse 14: “Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.”

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Now the Lord Himself speaks, sharing His heart and His perspective. And what matters most to Him? That we love Him! But this is not the normal Hebrew word for love. Instead, it is *khashaq*, which speaks of a loving attachment to someone, as

expressed well in the ESV: “Because he holds fast to me in love.” Yes! Others render with “clings to me” (NJB) or “has his heart set on me” (CSB) or “has devoted his love to Me” (TLV).

Because of that, Yahweh promises to rescue us, a recurring theme in this psalm, and because we know (or acknowledge) His name, He will protect us, by setting us on high, where we are out of danger. And what does it mean to “acknowledge His name”? In the words of Charles Spurgeon,

The man has known the attributes of God so as to trust in him, and then by experience has arrived at a yet deeper knowledge, this shall be regarded by the Lord as a pledge of his grace, and he will set the owner of it above danger or fear, where he shall dwell in peace and joy.

Verse 15 (NIV): “He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.”

Take a moment to grasp what God—the Almighty Creator and King—is saying here. Because of the intimacy we enjoy with Him, because we know and honor Him, He, in turn, will honor us. Yes, *God* will honor *us*! When we call to Him, He will be near, hearing us and answering us. And when we go through times of trouble—Hebrew *tsarah*, which the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation, renders with *thlipsis*, tribulation—He will be right there with us to help and deliver.

And yes, the Lord says He will honor us, using the exact same word in Hebrew (*kabbed*) that is used in the Ten Commandments, where we are called to honor our father and mother. To say it once more (since it is so amazing beyond human comprehension), when we live in Him and devote our love to Him, He will honor us.

Verse 16: “With long life I will satisfy him and show him my

salvation."

The Hebrew reads just as the English, giving a promise of long life, which is found throughout the Old Testament in conjunction with obedience (see, for example, Ex. 23:25-26, Prov. 3:1-2). Yet here, uniquely, God says He will *satisfy* us with that life, meaning it will be a blessed life, a life enriched by Him. And He will show us His salvation (Hebrew *y'shuah*), a word used quite holistically in the Hebrew Scriptures, speaking of both physical and spiritual deliverance. God will make it real in our lives!

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(Adapted and excerpted from Michael L. Brown, "When the World Stops: Words of Hope, Faith, and Wisdom in the Midst of Crisis.")

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