

How Psalm 91 Teaches Us to Pray Through Life's Trials

Look to God's Word when trials and impossibilities come your way. Whether we are facing a personal issue or a pandemic like COVID-19 really doesn't matter. Our response is to live, think and pray according to God's Word.

In the New King James Version, Psalm 91 is entitled "Safety of Abiding in the Presence of God." If we learn nothing else through this prayer, the title reveals the real purpose behind it. Safety is the fruit. But the goal is the discovery, realization of and delight in the manifested presence of God upon His people. Let's look at each verse and how it should affect our thoughts, prayers and, ultimately, our behavior.

The Secret Place

The very first verse gives us the key, not just for this psalm, but also for the victory it promises: "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1).

The secret place is a dwelling place. It is home, a place of habitation. This is where we find both rest and refueling to fulfill our purpose. Never is it entered to obtain favor with man or somehow to improve our image with others. It is secret. Never do we enter to let others know we are really devoted to Jesus. It is personal and private.

This secret place may be a room in the house. Or it could be a certain time of the day. The focus is alone time with God. And this alone time builds something in me that affects my entire life. It teaches me how not to grieve or quench the Holy Spirit, which is the presence of God in my life. But equally important is learning what I am supposed to do, which is to illustrate the life of Jesus.

Our Confession Matters

Psalm 91:2 says, “I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.’”

Verse 2 is the place where we take action. I often turn these words into something I direct to Him. “God, You are my refuge, my hiding place. I find refuge in You. You are my glorious fortress. And I trust in You entirely!” Our praise to Him is very important. But notice that in this psalm, the praise was not given directly to God. It was a confession or declaration said to other people. This psalm must be spoken to others.

The Promise of Deliverance

“Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence” (Ps. 91:3).

The “snare of the fowler” in Psalm 91:3 refers to a trap used to catch birds. Sometimes we experience the sting of being caught in a trap, and we need deliverance. “Perilous pestilence” refers to dangerous disease, including pandemics and plagues. Maybe the outbreak of COVID-19 has affected our lives. In response, He promises a swift and effective deliverance.

No matter where you are in relation to trials, difficulties or crises, He is there to set you free. He comes to deliver you from the traps of the enemy and from outbreaks of disease that sweep the globe.

Don’t misunderstand me: Life is not a simple Christian formula where we do steps one, two and three, and we always have our desired outcome. This life is a relational journey. These situations are always about our relationship with God.

You and I focus on the outcome of things—the miracle, the provision and the protection. God focuses on the input—the day-to-day interaction with Him where we learn how to do life.

This process is where we are shaped and conformed into the image of Jesus in every part of our life.

Hiding in Him

“He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler” (Ps. 91:4).

The picture is clear. Our place of greatest safety is near His heart, under His wings. In this place, we find the value of truth. Truth in this metaphor is a shield that protects us. A buckler is a small shield, no doubt used in hand-to-hand combat.

When we come to verses like this that describe hiding and seeking refuge, they might catch us by surprise. Suddenly the courageous look for shelter. Yet our strength to run into a battle is found in our intimacy with God in the secret place. Drawing near to His heart is what instills us with the courage to face the challenges set before us.

Not Afraid of the Dark

“You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday” (Ps. 91:5-6).

The biggest area of spiritual warfare is in the mind. By that, I don't mean it's in the imagination. It exists in our thought realm, fighting over which reality we will live from. Will it be from the mind of Christ or from the mind of all that is inferior?

Often we face different types of problems in the night than we do in the day. The enemy wants to rob us of sleep, as that is the time God gives us instruction. He designed sleep for our benefit, as it is there we find recovery and refreshing. When

that is taken away, our daytime lifestyle is affected.

Anxiety will rob you of the lifestyle of rest, which ultimately becomes the lifestyle of faith. Psalm 91:5 addresses this as the terror by night. If the enemy wins the battle over the night, he has brought about a lessening of your creative influence and clear thinking during the day. Your voice in some measure has been compromised.

Prepare yourself for victorious sleep. Keep away from things that cause you to be anxious at night. Schedule time to deal with those kinds of things. Don't ever go to bed mad. Anger works deep into our souls, affecting our inner being. Before getting into bed, shed the things which concern you, and confess your trust in God in all things. Put your concerns into His hands and rest in His promises.

Refusing Fear on All Sides

"A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked."

In Psalm 91:7-8, we have the chance to choose not to fear, regardless of what surrounds us. Seeing others fall is not a sign that we will. We are not bound by the failures and bad experiences of others. They are not indications of what is coming our way.

I consider Psalm 91:7-8 to be of paramount importance. I don't want to see anyone judged. My heart is to see the corrupt one repent. His mercy is designed for the worst of us. My prayers are constantly for the mercy of God to be demonstrated, even upon the ones most despised by culture and society. His mercy is that great. I also ask the Lord the following: If they absolutely will not repent, then please demonstrate Your judgment in such a way that the fear of God is restored to our world. But for me, it's a last resort.

The Results of Abiding

“Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone” (Ps. 91:9-12).

The picture in this passage is quite profound. It is basically saying if we abide in God, no evil or plague can enter that dwelling because God is the dwelling or house we live in. Nothing of the powers of darkness can enter His person. I remind you, we are His body on earth.

The angelic realm is more important in daily life than most realize. Here is a promise about their care over us. It is foolish to worship angels. It's equally foolish to ignore them. They came and ministered to Jesus when He needed it. They were used throughout Scripture to protect or help people carry out the purposes of God. We are their assignment. They are there to help us succeed in fulfilling our purpose.

Born for Advancement

“You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot” (Ps. 91:13).

This verse stands out because it's only the second time in this psalm we've been given an assignment. This one tells us what we're to do now that we're protected. This verse describes the purpose of our safety: to help others experience the same. We are given personal breakthrough and a lifetime of testimonies of God's greatness that position us to do the same for others. In this one verse, Psalm 91:13, the delivered become the deliverers.

Here we are, dwelling in God, hidden, not out of view, but out of the reach of the evil one. And then we, the sheltered ones,

are released to trample on the powers of darkness.

God's Response

Psalm 91:14-16 is God's response to those who have chosen to make His presence their dwelling place, enjoying the pleasure of being near His heart: "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation." It's an extraordinary reaction from a perfect heavenly Father, spoken to those whose sole focus is the delight of His heart.

This psalm is there to help us maintain the mind of Christ in the midst of crisis. We were designed to be a people of answers and breakthrough in the midst of calamities. {eoa}

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