

The LORD is my refuge (Psalm 91)

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August 2, 2026

Dominant Thought: God gives rest to those who dwell with Him.

Objectives:

I want my listeners to understand the images of God's protection in [Psalm 91](#).

I want my listeners to feel confident in God's care.

I want my listeners to choose practices to dwell with God this week.

Focus Question: How does God give rest to those who dwell with Him?

It was September 2002. We were approaching the one-year anniversary of September 11, 2001. We had gathered for a community worship service to remember that dreadful day. The Scripture for the sermon that night? [Psalm 91.1](#). The chapter and verses spell it out: 9-1-1. In many ways, [Psalm 91](#) is the 9-1-1 verse of the Bible to go to when you are in an emergency.

It's one of my favorite psalms. Sometimes called the soldier's Psalm, it's a Psalm of protection. It's unique in that it doesn't really call out for help. It's simply a statement of how God cares for His people. It's also unique in that Satan, the tempter, quotes some of this Psalm to entice Jesus in the desert.

[Psalm 91:1](#) "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty." I wrote the following note with [Psalm 91.1](#) from my class with Dr. J. K. Jones, "To abide means to spend the night, lodge, rest that we can only find in a relationship with God."

God gives rest to those who dwell with Him.

In [Psalm 91](#), we see three ways God gives rest to those who dwell with Him.

The LORD gives rest with a Trustworthy Fortress ([Psalm 91.2,4,9](#)).

When I think of a trustworthy fortress, I think of the story by J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers*. In that story, the bad guys called Orks and Uruk-hai are flooding middle earth. The men and women of Rohan make haste to the fortress of Helm's Deep. It has always proved for them a safe place in times of trouble. In the movie, Théoden, king of Rohan says, "They will break upon this fortress like water on rock." They hold out long enough for Gandalf and the reinforcements to arrive at dawn on the third day. I wonder if Tolkien is wanting us to think of another rescue that happened at sunrise on the third day when Jesus walked out of the grave.

The LORD gives rest with Protective Wings ([Psalm 91.4](#)).

We can think of the wings of a mother bird over her young. It's caring and protective. We have some chickens in our backyard. We have two chickens that have been together since they came home from Farm and Home this Spring. It was common even months later for one chicken to care for the smaller one. They are roughly the same age, but different breeds and sizes. Coming under the wings of God's protection is a common theme in Scripture.

[Psalm 36:7](#) "How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings."

[Psalm 61:4](#) "Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings! Selah"

[Psalm 63:7](#) "for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy."

Ruth, the widow, reaches out to Boaz for help. Boaz responds in [Ruth 2:12](#), "The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"

The LORD gives rest with a Faithful Shield ([Psalm 91.4-8](#)).

God's faithfulness is a shield of protection. In some versions, shield is an add along with the word called a bulwark or a buckler. We understand shield. A bulwark is a defensive wall of a castle or fortress. A ship can have a bulwark—an outer wall for protection. A buckler is a small

round shield used by a soldier. So, in any account, God is a big shield and a small shield of protection. He is a fortress with a big wall around to protect against invaders. You get the idea. God is strong.

God's faithfulness and truth are our shield. The Apostle Paul picks up on this image of faithfulness as a shield when he describes the armor of God against the evil one. [Ephesians 6:16](#), "In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;"

In the second half of [Psalm 91](#), we discover two reasons God cares for His people.

Reason #1: Dwelling with the LORD ([Psalm 91.1, 9-13](#)).

We must be on our guard against the evil one because Satan quoted this Scripture when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. [Matthew 4:6-7](#), "and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'""

Satan misapplied this Scripture. Jesus set the record straight with quoting Scripture accurately. One of the ways to dwell with God is to stay in His Word. When we get into God's word, God's word gets into us, and we will recognize the deception of the evil one.

Reason #2: Holding fast in love ([Psalm 91.14-16](#)).

God protects those who dwell with Him, but He also gives rest to those who are holding fast in love. A key verse for this Psalm is [Psalm 91.15](#), "I will be with him in trouble." With all the images of protection, healing, deliverance, and care, trouble still comes. God is present in the trouble. He is present because we acknowledge His name.

"Because He knows my name." One of the worship songs we sang last week at Nationwide Youth Roundup is called, "Jesus, be the name." Here's a sample of the lyrics:

I could sing Your Name for all my life
And still find more to love each time
Jesus be the Name ever on my lips
It's sweeter every time that I call on it...

Jesus, Your Name is like the morning light
The One the darkness can't deny
The Resurrection and the Life, Jesus

Jesus, Your Name can save, Your Name can heal
Your Name can make the storm be still
You never fail, You never will, Jesus

Jesus, the Bread of Life, broken for us
The wounded and the worthy One
The first and last and soon to come, Jesus

Jesus, the King who overwhelmed the grave
The Lord who will forever reign
The Name above all other names, Jesus

This week, I challenge you to find some specific ways to dwell with God. To abide, means to spend the night, to rest with God.

1. Reflect on one of these images: fortress, wings, shield. Do you need these reminders this week?
2. Recount ways God has cared and protected you in the past. May they serve as reminders of God's faithfulness.
3. Reach out to someone who needs to hear the message of [Psalm 91](#) this week. Are they enduring a health challenge, in a difficult relationship, in need of wisdom and guidance? Share this message with them.