**Module 24: Psalm 91**

***Abiding in the Shadow of the Almighty***

***91:***[***1***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A1&ver=niv) ***Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.***[***2***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A2&ver=niv) ***I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*** [***3***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A3&ver=niv) ***Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.*** [***4***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A4&ver=niv) ***He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*** [***5***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A5&ver=niv) ***You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,*** [***6***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A6&ver=niv) ***nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.*** [***7***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A7&ver=niv) ***A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.*** [***8***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A8&ver=niv) ***You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.***

[***9***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A9&ver=niv) ***If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling,*** [***10***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A10&ver=niv) ***no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.*** [***11***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A11&ver=niv) ***For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;*** [***12***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A12&ver=niv) ***they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.*** [***13***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A13&ver=niv) ***You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.*** [***14***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A14&ver=niv) ***"Because he*** ***loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.*** [***15***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A15&ver=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.*** [***16***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Psalm+91%3A16&ver=niv) ***With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."***

**God’s Peace in the Midst of Danger**

A Study of [Psalm 91](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091)

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The Psalms were used by the Israelites in public worship. For the most part they were hymns and anthems sung by the congregation. The Psalms were also used privately in personal devotions. God’s providence is prominent throughout the book of Psalms. Beyond all the disappointments and problems that we face, we can know that God is here—caring for us and working out His loving purposes.

The 91st Psalm is a general psalm of trust, and is especially meaningful to all those who are exposed to danger and hardship. The words of the psalm are a source of comfort and security and protection—in times of sore need and deep distress. As we enter the Twenty-first Century there are many uncertainties. The central message of [Psalm 91](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091) is the certainty that God delivers in the time of trouble, and so we need not fear.

**1. A Statement of God’s Protection (**[**Psalm 91:1**](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091.1)**-2)**

Verse 1 begins with the words, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” The “secret place” refers to a place of refuge in the presence of God, where we can share our needs and thoughts and feelings and doubts and anxieties. The “secret place” can be a closet, a quiet room, a workshop, or an open field—essentially a place of prayer and meditation.

The word “dwelleth” means “to abide” or “to remain.” It is about the same as the thought expressed in [John 15:7](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/John%2015.7), “If ye abide in me and my words abide in you”—then there are certain promises. The blessings promised in [Psalm 91](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091) are not for all persons, but for those who dwell (who abide) and live in close fellowship with God. The world doesn’t know, or see, or even care to enjoy such secret communion with God—but the person who dwells in close communion with God “shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Those words imply closeness and nearness—for we must walk close to a companion if we expect his shadow to fall on us.

Think of it! When we abide in Christ, and His Word abides in us, the shadow of God is constantly over us! No wonder the Psalmist could say, “He is my refuge and my fortress” in verse 2. God alone is our place of safety, and we are to trust in Him.

Notice that in the first two verses of [Psalm 91](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091), the Holy Spirit mentions four names for God:

* “The Most High” (Elyon)—the One who owns everything.
* “The Almighty” (Shaddai)—the God who supplies our needs.
* “The Lord” (Jehovah)—the eternal, unchangeable One.
* “My God” (Elohim)—the creator God who is in control.

These are four magnificent titles for the true and living God. When taken together, these names stress the power, the compassion, and the sovereign control of God. It was verse 2 of the 91st Psalm that inspired Martin Luther to write the hymn about God’s majesty and power: “A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; our helper He in the midst of flood, when many ills are prevailing.”

**2. Confidence in God’s Deliverance (**[**Psalm 91:3**](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091.3)**-13)**

Verse 3 of [Psalm 91](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091) begins with the words, “Surely he shall deliver thee.” And verse 4 begins, “He shall cover thee.” Verse 5 says “(Therefore) thou shalt not be afraid.” These words express confidence in God’s deliverance.

The Psalmist uses a number of word pictures to describe how God delivers us. In verse 3, “the snare of the fowler” was a device in ancient times used by a hunter to catch birds and animals. It was an almost invisible net used by bird hunters. We are sometimes as foolish as poor little birds, and are apt to be lured to our destruction by the enemy of our souls—but if we remain near to God (if we abide in the shadow of the Almighty), He will see that the deceiver does not trap us.

Verse 3 also speaks of “a noise some pestilence”—a deadly epidemic (a plague)—perhaps one that was raging at the time this psalm was being written.

Verse 4 uses the image of shelter under the wings of a mother bird: “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.” A missionary in Africa was telling how a forest fire swept through the bush not far from the mission station. After the fire had moved on to the river, he says, “I walked down one of the trails, and noticed the charred remains of a mother hen—sitting on what looked like a nest.” He says, “I carelessly kicked the heap with my foot, and to my astonishment, out from under that blackened carcass ran some baby chicks.” The mother hen had given her life for the brood. They found refuge from the flames by staying under her feathers.

The 91st Psalm (in verses 3-4) assures us that if we abide in Christ, we will be kept safe from hidden dangers and from deadly diseases—and therefore “thou shalt not be afraid.” (There are some hard questions that can be asked about this promise, and we will take a look at the concept again later in this article.)

Verses 5-10 in [Psalm 91](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091) picture believers as people trapped in a besieged city, but who are eventually delivered from the assaults of the enemy.

Verse 5 talks about terror at night and arrows flying by day.

Verses 6-7 describe destruction all around, and people being killed on every side.

Verse 8 says the wicked shall be cut down, but verse 10 says the righteous shall be spared.

Verse 13 says that even wild beasts (the serpent and the lion) shall not harm us.

What shall we say about all this?

Some of God’s people **are subject** to disease (even at an early age). Some of God’s people **do fall** before cruel enemies (persecution of Christians abounds on earth). Believers sometimes die in plane crashes, and suffer snake bites, and are wiped out by a variety of plagues. The promise of this psalm must not be picked out and applied carelessly, apart from other Bible teachings on the same subject. For example, verse 10, “There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.” That promise is like the New Testament promise, “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it” ([John 14:14](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/John%2014.14)). (Surely not just any selfish, unworthy prayer will be answered.) The [Psalm 91:10](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091.10) promise is like the Old Testament promise, “He healeth all thy diseases” ([Psalm 103:3](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%20103.3)). (Surely not absolutely every disease has been healed.) We **will experience** suffering and sickness and evil in this fallen world, but we need not be afraid—for several reasons:

One of the reasons we need not fear is given in the latter part of verse 4. “His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.” The word “truth” speaks of reliability, fidelity, and that which is real. People often look for truth in the wrong places—in academic learning, in exotic religions, or in mystical experiences. For Christians, the Bible is God’s deposit of truth. Remember how Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth, (for) thy word is truth” ([John 17:17](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/John%2017.17)). The Psalmist in essence says, “God’s faithful promises (His word) shall be your armor and protection (your shield and buckler)” (verse 4). God’s Word is dependable, and responding favorably to its message provides remarkable protection for God’s people.

Another reason we are not to be afraid is found in verses 11-12. “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” God’s tender concern for His people is such that He provides a celestial bodyguard to be with us along the rocky path of life. The Bible doesn’t necessarily state that each believer has one particular angel who watches over him, but the idea of guardian angels is clearly Scriptural. We will never know until we get to Heaven how much we owe these mighty servants who attend us on our journey through life. We only know that they are here, and they are performing their ministries of protection on our behalf. And even more—the Bible teaches that the angels of God, with tender hands, will transport our souls into the eternal world at the end of the journey. Jesus describes the death of the godly poor man in [Luke 16:22](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Luke%2016.22), and says that “he was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” And verse 12 of the 91st Psalm may include the same concept: “They shall bear thee up in their hands.”

And that leads to another reason why those who abide under the shadow of the Almighty are not to be afraid. There are physical dangers, and there are satanic perils, but out of them all our God will deliver us. “Surely he shall deliver thee” (verse 3). For those who walk with God; for those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High; for those who abide under the shadow of the Almighty—God will deliver us. Whether it means an extension of life on earth, or a transition into the eternal world, is not altogether clear—but [Romans 14:8](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom%2014.8) says that “whether we live, or die, we are the Lord’s.”

Crushing calamities here in this life can only shorten our journey, and hasten us on to our eternal home. What seems like ill to the world is not ill (but good in mysterious form) to the child of God. Losses and sickness only make us long all the more for our home in Heaven. Death is gain for those who abide in the shadow of the most High.

A noted preacher from the past once commented on [Psalm 91:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091.9-12) by saying, “Don’t be so nervous, my dear sister, the next time there’s a little storm (or even a great storm); don’t be afraid, my dear friend, when sickness comes into your house. Remember the promise of [Psalm 91:9](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091.9)-10, `Because thou hast made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.’ But suppose it should seem right to the Lord to let the plague come to you, and suppose you should die of it—remember, you will all the sooner be in Heaven. Wherefore comfort one another that all is well with those who abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

Famine may starve; wars may cause bloodshed; earthquakes may crumble buildings; the next century may witness the wrath of God—but the person who is sheltered beneath the Wings of the Most High God can abide in perfect peace. Like the woman in South America who was calm in the midst of a mighty earthquake said, when questioned how she could remain so composed in light of the recent quake, “I’m just grateful I serve a God who is so big that He can shake the earth.”

William Cushing wrote the words:

“Under His wings, I am safely abiding,  
Tho the night deepens and the tempests are wild;  
Still I can trust Him—I know He will keep me;  
He has redeemed me, and I am His child.”

**3. A Summary of God’s Promises (**[**Psalm 91:14**](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091.14)**-16)**

Verse 14 of the 91st Psalm begins with the words, “Because he hath set his love upon me”—and then continues by naming one promise after another.

We are to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. The promise of safety and deliverance is made to those who have made God the object of their supreme affection. The promises are to those “who have set their love upon me.”

Eight times the words “I will” are used (or implied) in the last three verses of [Psalm 91](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091). God says, “Because you love me. . . I will deliver you; I will set you on high; I will answer you; I will be with you in trouble; etc.” These blessings (and still more) are promised to those who have come to love and trust the most High God.

One of the promises in verse 15 is, “I will be with him in trouble.” Job says our days on earth are few, and they are full of trouble ([Job 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Job%2014.1)), but Jesus says that those who believe in God are not to be troubled ([John 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/John%2014.1)). When children are sick, we go out of our way to watch over them. We do what we can to relieve their pain; we try and soften their sufferings; we assure them that we are close by. Just so, the most High God promises to be with us in times of affliction. What if we do have more afflictions than others have? Then we have more of God’s company, and the assurance of His special care! God does not allow us to endure sufferings, and leave us there all alone. “Because he has set his love upon me (verse 14), therefore. . . I will be with him in trouble (verse 15).”

Another promise is stated in verse 16. God says, “I will satisfy him with long life”—literally “length of days.” It is not a promise that those “who set their love upon God” shall live to be 80 or 90 years old, but a promise that we shall be satisfied with the length of days which we are given. Those who abide under the shadow of the Almighty—whether they die young or old—will be quite satisfied with life, and will be content to leave it. They would not request more of life even if they could.

It is natural to desire long life. Long life is usually regarded as a blessing. And the promise of verse 16 is, “I will give (the one who dwells in the secret place of the most High), length of days, until he is satisfied with life.”

A time will come when the child of God is satisfied with living:

* he will have no strong desire to live longer.
* his advanced years, or the infirmities of the body, will cause him to want to go and to be with his Lord.
* the bright hope of Heaven will make him feel that he has had enough of life here, and that it is better to depart into another world.

The final words of the 91st Psalm say, “I will show him my salvation.” That is—beyond death—we will see the full meaning of God’s saving love. Here in this life we only understand in part, but the Apostle Paul says that “in the ages to come, he (will) show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus” ([Ephesians 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Eph%202.7)).

The promises are these: “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore I will deliver him;

* I will set him on high;
* I will answer him;
* I will be with him in trouble;
* I will satisfy him with length of days;
* I will show him my salvation.”

One of the most fascinating things about the 91st Psalm is that Satan knew it, and memorized it, and no doubt hated it—but used it by distorting it at the time of the Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness. [Matthew 4](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%204) tells how the devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple and challenged Him to jump down and to excite the crowds. Satan quoted verses 11 and 12 of the 91st Psalm (see [Matthew 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%204.6)). Jesus said, “We are not to tempt the Lord our God.”

In the 91st Psalm God is pictured as a protecting Shadow, a strong Shield, a concerned mother Bird. He has angels as servants to accomplish His purposes. Complete immunity from harm is not our experience here in this life, but God’s arms will shield us here on earth, and carry us safely into the presence of the Father at the end of the journey. The promise is for those who “abide in the shadow of the Almighty” (verse 1), and for those who make God’s truth their “shield and buckler” (verse 4).

If you want Christ as your Lord and if you want to come under the protection of these promises:

1) **Acknowledge your condition before God.** [Romans 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom%207.18) says “For I know that in me . . . dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” And [Isaiah 53:6](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Isa%2053.6) reminds every human being that we have all gone astray.

2) **Hear the invitation from Jesus Christ.** [Matthew 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%2011.28) says, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

3) **Anchor your life in Jesus Christ.** [Romans 10:9](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom%2010.9) exhorts us to confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and to believe in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead, and we shall be saved.

4) **Enjoy new life in Christ.** [Second Corinthians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/2%20Cor%205.17) reminds us that those who are “in Christ” have become new creatures. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

5) **Continue to daily follow Christ.** [John 8:31](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/John%208.31) says, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” [Revelation 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rev%202.10) contains the great promise to those who are faithful unto death: Jesus says, “I will give thee a crown of life.”

[Psalm 91](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps%2091) is a Psalm of trust, and as we face the unknown future, we are to claim its promises. We can do that only if we have become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

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