

## **Psalm 91: Does God Protect Us From All Harm?**

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Psalms 91-100 are often described as priestly psalms. It is thought that the author of these Psalms were priests in the service of the temple. They seem to reflect aspects of the worship of God from that perspective. In the time of Christ, it is believed that some of these Psalms were used as a "liturgy" each day for the temple service.

If this is someone who loved in the temple, then the portrayal is that of someone who is certain that God will protect His worshippers. He describes how it is that God will thwart our enemies and will rescue us if we are in danger. That is, this is the point at first glance. Is that in fact the point?

It is interesting to note that this is the Psalm quoted by Satan when tempting Jesus in Matthew 4:5-6. There Satan challenges Jesus' identity as being the Son of God, claiming that God says He will keep His people (His Son) from injury.

Is this Psalm a Divine promise to protect us? Does not Psalm 91 say God keeps us from harm? What is interesting is that even Satan said that was God's message. But while it might appear that way, we must weigh the entirety of Scripture in this message. Truth must be in agreement; what does the rest of Scripture say about our suffering?

In fact, a review of the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, would quickly reveal that this conclusion is not accurate. In fact, we are repeatedly told we will suffer. First, we will suffer the same ailments of the world – 1 Corinthians 10:13. Second, we will additionally suffer persecution for Christ's name – 1 Peter 4:14. Finally, there are additionally difficulties in being faithful – Matthew 19:12. Therefore, the Psalm cannot be saying God prevents suffering. With that in mind, re-approaching it reveals a different message.

God is the fortress we go to when suffering, not to prevent it from occurring. His protection is not from suffering, but from the fear that comes with suffering. "You shall not be afraid" applies to a variety of things we suffer;

- Terror (mental anguish)
- Arrows (evil deeds of men)
- Pestilence (health problems)
- Destruction (nature of all things)

This promise of the absence of fear requires action on our part. Our obligation is that "you have made the LORD...your dwelling place" and "he has set his love upon Me". If we do these things, God makes a series of promises to us in our suffering: (1) "I will be with him"; (2) "I will deliver him"; (3) "I will answer him"; (4) "I will set him on high"; (5) "I will honor him"; (6) "I will show him my salvation".

Understanding these promises in the context of all Scripture causes us to see that Psalm 91 is part of the New Testament promise of Christ made in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 6:25-34 Jesus told us that we need not worry (have no fear) if we seek first the kingdom (set your love on Him). Doing this results in all things added to you (all the blessings of God).

Understanding this important Psalm means understanding that the righteous will suffer as all suffer. However, our sufferings can produce blessings. We are told that our God will deliver us, understanding that our obligation is to flee to Him in difficulty.