

# Our Rescuing God

Psalms 91:1-8, 11-16  
SS Lesson for 02/24/2019

**Devotional Scripture:** 2 Cor 1:1-10

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: Psalms 91:15*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### RESCUE FROM TROUBLES (PS 91:1-4)

*Rescue from troubles through God's indwelling (1-2)*

God's indwelling delivers through power (Ezek 36:27)

God's indwelling delivers because the Holy Spirit provides life (Rom 8:11)

God's indwelling delivers because the Holy Spirit guides in truth (John 16:13)

God's indwelling delivers because the Holy Spirit teaches how to live (Gal 5:16)

God's indwelling delivers because the Holy Spirit is the conduit of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)

God's indwelling delivers because the Holy Spirit is the guarantee and proof of Divine ownership (Rom 8:9)

*Rescue from troubles through God's refuge (3-4)*

God is a refuge for the oppressed and those in trouble (Ps 9:9)

God is a refuge because He is a fortress and shield (Ps 18:2)

God is a refuge because He is good (Ps 34:8)

God is a refuge because He is all powerful (Ps 46:1)

God is a refuge for the righteous (Prov 10:29)

God is a refuge through His word (Prov 30:5)

God is a refuge to those who trust in Him (Nah 1:7)

#### RESCUE FROM TERRORS (PS 91:5-6)

*Rescue from terrors through not being afraid of man and his actions (5)*

Man can only kill the body, not the soul (Matt 10:28)

Man only can harm temporarily (Isa 51:12)

Do not fear suffering from man's hands for doing right (1 Peter 3:14)

If we are faithful to God, He will deliver us from man's persecutions (Rev 2:10)

*Rescue from terrors through not being afraid of earthly troubles (6)*

Man was born into trouble (Job 5:6-7)

Even from birth, there seems to be trouble and sorrow (Jer 20:18)

Do not worry about tomorrow's trouble because today has enough on its own (Matt 6:34)

Enjoy daily life because we don't know what the next day will bring (Eccl 3:22)

Life is too short to worry about tomorrow (James 4:13-14)

Every man's days are full of trouble (Job 14:1)

Man may cause us troubles, but these cannot separate us from God's love (Rom 8:35-39)

#### RESCUE ASSURED (PS 91:11-16)

*Assurance because of angels (11-13)*

Because God sends His angels to protect those who are representing Him (Dan 6:22)

An angel delivered Peter from jail (Acts 12:6-11)

God gathers through His angels (Matt 24:31)

Angels encamp around God's children (Ps 34:7)

*Assurance through God's love (14)*

God's love provides assurance through obedience to His Word (1 John 2:5)

God's love provides assurance and confidence (1 John 4:15-18)

God's love provides assurance when faith expresses itself through love (Gal 5:6)

God's love provides assurance by making us alive in Jesus (Eph 2:4-5)

God's love provides assurance through the promise of eternal life (John 3:16)

God's love provides assurance through answered prayers (John 16:26-27)

*Assurance through prayer (15-16)*

Prayer provides assurance through the confidence to approach God's throne (Heb 4:16)

Prayer provides assurance because Jesus is interceding for us (Rom 8:34)

Prayer provides assurance because Jesus commanded us to pray (Matt 26:41)

Prayer provides assurance because the prayer offered in faith is effective (James 5:15-16)

Prayer provides assurance because God hears prayers (1 Kings 8:39)

Prayer provides assurance because God receives prayer as a memorial offering (Acts 10:4)

## CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

*God's Promise of Protection (91:14-16)*

*Conclusion*

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

## Lesson Background and Key Verse

### Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

People understand protection and security in different ways. Children often feel most secure when in the strong and trusting arms of their parents, possibly holding a threadbare blanket or teddy bear. Parents might feel most secure in a safe neighborhood, with doors that lock and money in their savings account. A backpacker seeks protection from a storm under a rock overhang that can block the elements. As Christians, however, we know that our ultimate protection and security come from God. It is no wonder that the Bible uses images of strength to describe him: rock, refuge, fortress. No blanket or padlock can compare with the strong protection available from God. Elisabeth Elliot (1926–2015) was well known for sharing the gospel with an indigenous tribe in Ecuador some 60 years ago. The title of her book *Shadow of the Almighty* alludes to the description of God in Psalm 91:1. As such, it highlights her belief in God's protective grace, even in dangerous circumstances. Elliot understood that God was not distant, but very close—a steadfast refuge. And she lived out her trust in radical ways. Psalm 91 can teach us to live the same way.

The historical setting of Psalm 91 is unclear, but the literary context sheds light on its meaning. The preceding psalm, Psalm 90 (which begins Book IV of the Psalter), is a lament. As such, it reflects mournfully about the fleeting nature of life, which withers under the wrath of God because of sin. That psalm ends with a petition for renewal from God. Psalm 91 seems to be a response to the lament of Psalm 90. Psalm 91 is comprised of four stanzas, which are distinguished by shifts in speaker. These four are verses 1, 2; 3–8; 9–13; and 14–16. Analyzed in a more technical way, the structure of Psalm 91 has as its touchstone a certain Hebrew conjunction that can be translated in various ways. Depending on context, some possibilities for translating this word are “for,” “that,” “if,” and “when.” This word also can be an emphatic “indeed,” “truly,” or “surely,” again depending on context. In Psalm 91 this conjunction is translated “surely,” “if,” and “because” in verses 3, 9, and 14, respectively. We should also keep in mind that the psalms are poetry, and one of the defining features of Hebrew poetry is parallelism. As discussed in previous lessons, this is often seen where one line corresponds in some way with the line that follows, as the second line repeats the thought(s) of the first line in different ways. Parallelism can also feature contrasting ideas or even show how one event or action leads to a certain consequence. While English poetry is often identified by the rhyming of words, Hebrew poetry has been described as the “rhyming of ideas”—that’s parallelism.

### Key Verse: Psalms 91:15

*He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Because the psalmist was convinced that there is security in trusting in the Most High God, he encouraged himself that he would be delivered from the various frightening attacks of the wicked. He knew that the Lord had appointed His angels over him to protect him. This psalm is a beautiful testimony about security in life. Several terms link Psalms 90-92, thus suggesting they are a unit. “Dwelling” occurs in 90:1 and 91:9; “grass” in 90:5 and 92:7; “spring(s) up” in 90:6 and 92:7; “make... glad” in 90:15 and 92:4; “Your deeds” in 90:16 and 92:4; “Most High” in 91:1, 9 and 92:1. Also the judgment of the wicked is mentioned in 91:8 and 92:11.

**91:1-2.** The psalmist expressed his great confidence in the fact that whoever trusts in the Most High finds security and protection. The titles of God in verse 1 (**Most High** and **the Almighty**) are significant, for they stress His power as the sovereign Ruler of the world. (On the meaning of “Almighty,” *šadday*, see Gen. 17:1.) The images of **the shelter** and **the shadow** vividly portray divine protection. “Shelter” (*sēter*) is a hiding place (also used in Pss. 27:5; 32:7; 119:114, “refuge”). The shadow, perhaps the shadow of a bird’s wing (cf. 91:4), also pictures shelter and protection as well as comfort. **God** is also the believer’s **Refuge** (*maḥseh*, “shelter from danger”; cf. v. 9 and 14:6) **and... Fortress** (*mešûdâh*, “strong protection”; used in 18:3; 31:3; 71:3; 144:2). Psalm 91:1-2 admirably expresses the fact that safety is in **the LORD**. The psalmist, encouraging himself, expanded on the theme of the Lord’s protection from danger.

**91:3-8.** He enumerated how God delivers a believer from various frightening attacks: (1) God delivers **from the fowler’s snare** (v. 3a; cf. 124:7), a figure for insidious attempts against his life. (2) God delivers **from... deadly pestilence** (91:3b). (3) God covers him with **His wings** (v. 4a), a figure of safety and comfort (cf. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7). (4) God protects with **His faithfulness** (91:4b), explained here by the metaphor of a **shield and rampart**. As a result of God’s help in these ways one who trusts in the Lord **will not fear... terror at night, attack by day... pestilence or plague** (vv. 5-6). Destruction that might lay thousands in defeat will not affect a trusting believer; rather, he will **see... the wicked** destroyed (vv. 7-8).

**91:9-13.** The psalmist explained that **no harm** or **disaster** can **befall** those who have made **the LORD** their **refuge** (*maḥseh*, “shelter from danger”; cf. v. 2 and 14:6) because He has commissioned **angels** to care for them. Angels protect from physical harm and give believers strength to overcome difficulties, pictured here as wild lions and dangerous snakes. Satan, in tempting Christ, quoted 91:11-12 (Matt. 4:6), which shows that even God’s most marvelous promises can be foolishly applied.

**91:14-16.** The psalmist wrote as if God Himself spoke to confirm the psalmist’s faith. In return for the psalmist’s love, **the LORD** promised to **rescue him** from danger, **protect him** from harm, **be with him in trouble... honor him**, and **satisfy him**. All the kinds of danger mentioned in this song are ineffective against one who rests in the shadow of the Almighty.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Rescue from Troubles (Ps 91:1-4)**

- 1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."
- 3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence.
- 4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

### **Rescue from troubles through God's indwelling (1-2)**

*God's indwelling delivers through power (Ezek 36:27)*

- 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

*God's indwelling delivers because the Holy Spirit provides life (Rom 8:11)*

- 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

*God's indwelling delivers because the Holy Spirit guides in truth (John 16:13)*

- 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

*God's indwelling delivers because the Holy Spirit teaches how to live (Gal 5:16)*

- 16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

*God's indwelling delivers because the Holy Spirit is the conduit of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)*

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

*God's indwelling delivers because the Holy Spirit is the guarantee and proof of Divine ownership (Rom 8:9)*

9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

### **Rescue from troubles through God's refuge (3-4)**

*God is a refuge for the oppressed and those in trouble (Ps 9:9)*

9 The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

*God is a refuge because He is a fortress and shield (Ps 18:2)*

2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

*God is a refuge because He is good (Ps 34:8)*

8 Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

*God is a refuge because He is all powerful (Ps 46:1)*

46 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

*God is a refuge for the righteous (Prov 10:29)*

29 The way of the Lord is a refuge for the righteous, but it is the ruin of those who do evil.

*God is a refuge through His word (Prov 30:5)*

5 "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

*God is a refuge to those who trust in Him (Nah 1:7)*

7 The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him,

### **Rescue from Terrors (Ps 91:5-6)**

5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day,

6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

### **Rescue from terrors through not being afraid of man and his actions (5)**

*Man can only kill the body, not the soul (Matt 10:28)*

28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

*Man only can harm temporarily (Isa 51:12)*

12 "I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass,

*Do not fear suffering from man's hands for doing right (1 Peter 3:14)*

14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."

*If we are faithful to God, He will deliver us from man's persecutions (Rev 2:10)*

10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

### **Rescue from terrors through not being afraid of earthly troubles (6)**

*Man was born into trouble (Job 5:6-7)*

6 For hardship does not spring from the soil, nor does trouble sprout from the ground. 7 Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.

*Even from birth, there seems to be trouble and sorrow (Jer 20:18)*

18 Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?

*Do not worry about tomorrow's trouble because today has enough on its own (Matt 6:34)*

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

*Enjoy daily life because we don't know what the next day will bring (Eccl 3:22)*

22 So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?

*Life is too short to worry about tomorrow (James 4:13-14)*

13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

*Every man's days are full of trouble (Job 14:1)*

14 "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.

*Man may cause us troubles, but these cannot separate us from God's love (Rom 8:35-39)*

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **Rescue Assured (Ps 91:11-16)**

11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.

12 In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

13 You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.

14 "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.

15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.

16 With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation."

### **Assurance because of angels (11-13)**

*Because God sends His angels to protect those who are representing Him (Dan 6:22)*

22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

*An angel delivered Peter from jail (Acts 12:6-11)*

6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. 8 Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. 11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

*God gathers through His angels (Matt 24:31)*

31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

*Angels encamp around God's children (Ps 34:7)*

7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

### **Assurance through God's love (14)**

*God's love provides assurance through obedience to His Word (1 John 2:5)*

5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:

*God's love provides assurance and confidence (1 John 4:15-18)*

15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. 17 In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

*God's love provides assurance when faith expresses itself through love (Gal 5:6)*

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

*God's love provides assurance by making us alive in Jesus (Eph 2:4-5)*

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

*God's love provides assurance through the promise of eternal life (John 3:16)*

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

*God's love provides assurance through answered prayers (John 16:26-27)*

26 In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. 27 No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

### **Assurance through prayer (15-16)**

*Prayer provides assurance through the confidence to approach God's throne (Heb 4:16)*

16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

*Prayer provides assurance because Jesus is interceding for us (Rom 8:34)*

34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

*Prayer provides assurance because Jesus commanded us to pray (Matt 26:41)*

41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

*Prayer provides assurance because the prayer offered in faith is effective (James 5:15-16)*

15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

*Prayer provides assurance because God hears prayers (1 Kings 8:39)*

39 then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive and act; deal with each man according to all he does, since you know his heart (for you alone know the hearts of all men),

*Prayer provides assurance because God receives prayer as a memorial offering (Acts 10:4)*

4 Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### **Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

#### **God's Promise of Protection (91:14-16)**

14 "Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name. 15 He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him, and honor him. 16 With a long life I will satisfy him, And let him behold My salvation." (NASB)

In the final analysis, our safety is only as certain as the guarantee of the God who promises it. We are not safe because we hope so, but because God says so. Just as a buyer is assured by a written guarantee from the manufacturer, so we are assured by God's personal promise to protect us in verses 14-16. This is the "last word" in terms of our safety. We must be able to answer two questions before we can appreciate the promises found in these verses: "What exactly is God promising to do?" "On what basis does God promise to do it?"

Let us consider what it is that God has promised in verses 14-16. Two terms, "deliver" (v. 14) and "rescue" (v. 15), indicate that God has promised to deliver those who are in danger or great peril. Either God will spare us from a dangerous circumstance or he will bring us safely through the danger. God's promise is that we should not fear for we cannot fall (vv. 5-10), and He cannot fail (vv. 1-4).

More than just to help us, God has promised to honor us. God says of the one who knows His name, "I will set him on high" (v. 14, KJV).<sup>153</sup> In verse 15 He promises to honor him. This means that God will do far more than merely "save us by the skin of our teeth"; He will deliver us with dignity and glory. God's deliverance of Israel at the exodus was glorious. David's deliverance from the hand of Gath was divine (1 Sam. 21:10-15; cf. Ps. 34), but it was not dignified.<sup>154</sup> In verses 14-16 God promises deliverance and honor.

God promises not only His protection from disaster, but His presence in danger. This is the assurance of the words, "I will be with him in trouble" (v. 15). At times He will pluck us from danger, but when He chooses to preserve us through it He does not abandon us. The three young Hebrew men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were not alone in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace (Dan. 3:25), nor was Daniel alone in the lion's den (Dan. 6:22). Our Lord personally appeared to Paul during the night as he was imprisoned, threatened by an angry mob (Acts 23:11).

Verse 16 takes God's deliverance one step further. God will not only save us from death, He will give us long life. I believe this promise should be understood in the light of the Mosaic Covenant (e.g. Deut. 28:1-14) and the other Old Testament assurances that faith and obedience toward God tend toward longer life and prosperity. This, however, was not a guarantee nor a simple formula for success. I understand the term "salvation" to cover

a very broad range of meaning, from deliverance out of danger, to long life, to the eternal life which the saint has by faith in God (even though the Old Testament saint did not understand this as fully as we do today).

God therefore promises help, honor and a hope for eternal life. To whom do these promises apply? Who may receive them and how are they obtained? Verses 14-16 also answer these questions.

The promise of help, honor and hope are for those who are in peril. The word “deliver” (v. 14) implies danger. Verse 15 promises that God will answer and be with the one in trouble. It is those in peril who receive God’s help. That is precisely why the woman caught in the act of adultery was forgiven, but the self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees received scathing words of rebuke (cf. John 8:1-11; Matt. 23). Only the sick need to be healed (Mark 2:17) and only those in danger need deliverance.

The promise of God’s help is for those who are personally related to Him. “Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him” (v. 14). The second half of this verse goes on to explain that God exalts the one who has known His name. It is only those who intimately know God and love Him who “dwell in the shelter of the Most High” (v. 1) and therefore have assurance of God’s presence and protection.

Finally, those whom God protects are those who petition Him to do so: “He will call upon Me, and I will answer him” (v. 15). Those who ask will receive, and to those who knock the door will be opened (Matt. 7:7-8). Those who recognize their peril and ask for God’s protection, receive it.

### **Conclusion**

Man’s most urgent need is deliverance from the ultimate danger—eternal judgment and separation from God’s presence forever (2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:12-15). If you have never come to a personal faith in God, you must first recognize your sinful condition and the danger which this creates (cf. Rom. 1–3). You are a sinner, condemned by God’s righteous law, and destined to eternal punishment (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Jesus Christ offers you the forgiveness of your sins and the safety of eternal life in the presence of God by acknowledging your sin and trusting in Christ’s death in your place (Rom. 3:21–5:21). By calling upon Him for salvation, you will be delivered from the danger of divine wrath and given the free gift of eternal life in the presence of God (Rom. 10:9-13).

I assume that most of my readers have taken this first step of trusting in Christ and calling upon Him for salvation. If this is not true, what I will now say has no application to your life. If you have experienced the forgiveness of sins in Christ, you can experience the safety and security which this psalm promises by “abiding in the shelter of the Most High” (v. 1).

There are two extremes which Christians should avoid in the application of this psalm to their lives. The first danger is not to take God’s protection seriously enough. Psalm 90 has shown us a healthy, life-giving fear, the fear of God. On the other hand, Psalm 91 exposes a paralyzing fear—the fear of failing and falling under opposition. This fear keeps us from serving God and obeying His word.

Abraham’s fear caused him to lie concerning the true identity of Sarah as his wife (Gen. 12:11-13; 20:11). Moses was afraid to go to Egypt and lead Israel out of captivity (cf. Exod. 3–4). The Israelites feared the “giants” in Canaan and did not possess the land God promised (Num. 13–14).

While there are those who faint due to fear, most of us live so conservatively that we don’t think we have much to fear. We have insurance for our life, our health, our retirement, our wage-earning ability, and so on. We fail to live dangerously and thus we have little danger to fear.

May I suggest to you that living obediently means living dangerously. Discipleship is dangerous. Jesus always discouraged the person who sought the path of least resistance, and encouraged would-be disciples to count the cost (cf. Luke 9:57-62). Paul warned that godly living brings persecution (2 Tim. 3:12), as was evident in his own life (2 Cor. 4:11-13; 2 Tim. 3:10-11).

I want to suggest to you, my Christian friend, that you will never come to appreciate the promises of Psalm 91 until you have experienced the peril of living for God obediently. Look at the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11. These are all men and women who lived dangerously by obeying God’s commands. Abraham was instructed to leave the refuge of his home and family. Moses left the security of his position in Pharaoh’s palace. On and on we find that living by faith is living dangerously.

Have you read through the Sermon on the Mount recently (Matt. 5–7)? If you would dare to live in accordance with our Lord’s teaching I can tell you it is dangerous. The reason why most of us fail to appreciate the dangers

of this present age, seen and unseen (cf. Eph. 6:10-20), and the safety which God promises (as in Ps. 91) is because we have failed to live in obedience to His word.

To some, I can confidently say, you should live much more dangerously—but not to all. There is another extreme to be avoided. Some seem to love danger for danger’s sake. They may not be driving race cars at breath-taking speeds or jumping chasms on a motorcycle, but they always seem to be flirting with disaster. To any who might fall in this category, let me remind you of Satan’s abuse of Psalm 91 in the temptation of our Lord, as recorded in Matthew 4. Satan took Jesus into the Holy City and stood Him on the pinnacle of the Temple (Matt. 4:5). In verse 6 we read, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down, for it is written ‘He will give His angels charge concerning You and on their hands they will bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.’” Here Satan is quoting Psalm 91:11-12. Satan is saying to the Lord Jesus, “If You are really the Son of God, then You, of all people, can live dangerously. Do you see this pinnacle here? Jump!” Jesus responded in a very interesting way. His reply indicates that while the servant of God may live dangerously, this is not an excuse to live presumptuously. That is why Jesus spoke to Satan about not tempting God.

The life of faith is obeying God, doing what is right, and trusting God to protect us. God didn’t instruct Jesus to “jump,” Satan did. If the Lord Jesus had jumped from the pinnacle of the Temple God would have been **forced** to act.

Some Christians today like to engage in what I call “Christian gambling.” They are gamblers at heart who have learned to sanctify their actions with Scripture. They love to live on the thin edge of peril. Every time things get dull they precipitate another crisis. “The Lord has told me that I need to buy this or that thing,” they tell us, even though they don’t have a penny. They claim they have acted on faith, trusting God to provide for what they presumptuously purchased. In reality, they have jumped off a financial pinnacle.

Now if God said to you “Do this,” then whether or not you have the means, you had better do it. But many of us give God credit for jumping off of pinnacles that are simply our way of manipulating God and saying to Him, “I’m going to put Your reputation on the line God, and if You don’t come through and do it my way, You are going to look bad.” This is putting God to the test, by demanding that He rescue us from self-made danger. That is not faith, but presumption.

Notice that Jesus said to Satan, “On the other hand, it is written . . .” (Matt. 4:7). Here our Lord reminds us of an important principle in the interpretation of any passage of Scripture. We must always correlate any Scripture with the entire Bible. The great danger of those who love to live dangerously is that they do so on the basis of isolated passages. Often the excesses of some Christians are the result of taking a single verse and leaping from it, without balancing its truth with other truth. Let us be careful not to confuse faith with foolishness.

One final word. This Psalm teaches an important lesson concerning the strengthening of our faith. The most important thing about faith is not its amount, but its author. Many Christians who wish to grow in faith focus on the identity of *their* faith, rather than in the quality of faith’s object. If we want to see our faith grow let us dwell upon the Person in whom our faith is rooted, the Almighty, the Most High. He is our security!

*(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-91-psalm-safety>)*

### **Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

In this fallen world, God’s people are surrounded by evil, danger, and suffering. Psalm 91 is an emphatic reminder that God is trustworthy and mighty to save. Christians should expect to share in Christ’s suffering, even unto death (Matthew 16:24, 25; 1 Peter 2:19–21). But we should also expect God’s protective blessings. Rather than contradictory realities of the Christian life, the existence of persistent sin in the world alongside the victory of Christ is a dynamic tension. Elisabeth Elliot understood this tension and fiercely trusted in God as her refuge. She knew firsthand that God’s protection did not preclude suffering and death in this life. Her book mentioned in the Introduction is a biography of her late first husband, Jim Elliot, who was killed by the very people with whom he tried to share the gospel. After his death, Elisabeth Elliot returned to her husband’s murderers. She was frightened, but she was faithful. She knew of the dangers, but she also knew of God’s trustworthy protection and salvation. For twenty-first century Christians, it is all too easy to seek protection in something other than God himself. It is tempting to trust in financial security, military defenses, reputation, or even in church membership. Service to the church is an important responsibility of all Christians; but as we give of our time, talent, and treasure, we take care that our trust is in God himself and not in what we think our works earn.

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary***

The psalmist knew fear and trouble full well and gave them names. But another reality is described in this psalm, one which overshadows the great troubles of this life. The psalmist knew the Father is the only true refuge we will ever find both in this life and the next. We have a part to play, as the psalmist tells us—we stay close; we recognize the Lord as our only true refuge; we put our trust in Him; we make Him the dwelling place of our heart; we attach ourselves to Him in love; and we call upon Him at all times. But too often, as Isaiah said, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way" (Isa. 53:6). I have turned to other ways, to other things I thought were solid and secure. I have trusted people and places with my very life and soul, only to discover they were not fortresses; when the wind and storms came, they crumbled. It took me many years and many wrong turns to realize that the Father is the only fortress where there is true safety and deliverance. Once, when I was staying in what I thought was a safe place with people who truly loved me, I clearly heard Him speak to me and warn me about my situation. His words were terse and reprimanding, like a father whose child had run out into a busy street: "Stay Close to Me!" I did, and when I turned to Him, I saw that I needed to leave and find security in Him. I have learned to listen to His voice and remember what He says throughout the Psalms: "Make Me your refuge"; "Dwell in My shelter"; "Abide under the shadow of the Almighty." When I stay close to Him, He will do the rest. He will answer when you call; He will rescue you; He will show you His salvation.