

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent

# Psalm 91

1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15

*Under His wings  
you will find*  
**REFUGE**

*Psalm 91:4*

## God as divine refuge and fortress - Entrusting one's whole life to God

Two well-known names for God illustrate the role that God plays in Psalm 91:

- **He is the Most High** – in Hebrew, it is *Elyon*.
  - It means lofty, elevation, and supreme. Most High denotes God's supreme authority over all other authorities.
- **He is the Almighty** - in Hebrew, it is *Shaddai*.
  - It means most powerful, denoting that there is no power greater than God in the vast universe.
- **He is also the Lord, (Yahweh) my God (Elohim)**
- **He is my shelter, my shadow, my refuge, my fortress.**
  - These are references to security

By attributing to God these titles, the psalmist means to generate trust in God. **Psalm 91** praises God as worthy of the community's trust, worthy of being trusted with our lives.

You who dwell in the shelter of the **Most High**, who abide in the shadow of the **Almighty**, say to **the LORD**, "My refuge and fortress, my **God** in whom I trust.

✠ **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

No evil shall befall you, nor shall affliction come near your tent, for to his angels he has given command about you, that they guard you in all your ways.

✠ **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

Upon their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the asp and the viper; you shall trample down the lion and the dragon

✠ **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

Because he clings to me, **I will deliver him;** **I will set him on high** because he acknowledges my name.

He shall call upon me, and **I will answer him;**

**I will be with him** in distress;

**I will deliver him** and **glorify him.**



Verses 3-13 imagine divine protection in the face of a number of crises. The images are striking and portray quite a list of difficulties a believer could face in ancient Israel and that could produce considerable anxiety and fear. *(In today's world, there are many things that cause us anxiety and fear. What are you afraid of? In today's Gospel reading, Satan quotes Psalm 91:11-12 to Jesus. He uses this sacred text to tempt Jesus in his time of trouble. We too can be tempted to anger/despair when trouble comes and God does not behave as we believe God should.)* The Lord is our protection against living in a fallen world. He is the light when darkness comes. It may appear, as at Calvary, that evil has won and good has lost. Such a perspective fails to see with the eyes of faith and to remember "the rest of the story" is yet to come. He will keep us from falling now and forever. **Psalm 91 is a confession of faith, a song of trust and an assurance of God's being with us when we are in trouble.**

**The psalm's final verses take the form of a divine oracle confirming God's favor for those who trust.** The psalm's affirmation is that God is the source of refuge in the midst of trouble. Verses 14-16 are in the form of first-person speech from God. The Most High confirms that those in intimate relationship with God will be protected. Those who call on God will be heard and delivered. These verses are in the tradition of the salvation oracle that promises deliverance and hope for the future. The verbs here come in quick succession:

- I will deliver. (v.14)
- I will protect (v.14)
- I will answer (v. 15)
- I will be with them (v. 15)
- I will rescue. (v.15)
- I will honor. (v.15)
- I will satisfy. (v.16)
- I will show them my salvation (.16)

Eight glorious blessings are showered on us by the Lord. Two are found in each verse.

Those who are on the receiving end of these divine acts are characterized as **"those who love me," "those who know my name,"** and those who **"call on me."** These phrases suggest not simple acquaintance with the divine but an intimate relationship with God, an ongoing encounter with the divine. *(Do you live in God's presence every day or do you merely visit him for an hour on Sunday? Do you occasionally run to God for help when you are in trouble? Or can you call God by name? Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ?)* God is our home. His protection is based in love. It is in him and in his love that we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

"In your Gethsemane of suffering, pray for deliverance according to God's sovereign power and mercy... But then say, "not my will but thine be done.' And believe that what befalls will not, in the end, be evil for you, but good. (Romans 8:28)."(Piper, 55)



**Bibliography**

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