

PSALMS

Songs From The Heart

Psalm 91

OVERVIEW OF PSALMS

- The word Psalms is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *mizmor*. It signifies “music accompanied by stringed instruments.”
- The word *mizmor* is found 57 times in Psalms, so the translators used it to describe the whole book.
- Cymbals, timbrels, wind instruments, and stringed instruments are all named in the Psalms.
- There were Levites who were professional ministers and musicians for worship at the tabernacle and later the temple. There must have been large Jewish orchestras and large families of God-ordained musicians and singers constantly preparing, practicing, and then leading worshipers in the Psalms.

PARALLELISM IN HEBREW POETRY

- **SYNONYMOUS PARALLELISM** - a line of thought is immediately followed by another line of similar thought that expresses the same thought in a different way. A good example is Psalm 71:5-6.
- **ANTITHETICAL PARALLELISM** - a line of thought is immediately followed by another line of opposite thought or contrasting insight. A good example is Psalm 71:13-14.

THE SEVEN TYPES OF PSALMS

- The Psalms have seven types or categories. There is the **hymn**, the **lament**, the **thanksgiving psalm**, the **psalm of remembrance**, the **psalm of confidence**, the **wisdom psalm** and the **kingship psalm**.
- The hymn psalm takes us to the height of our experience in the Lord. The lament psalm takes us to the depth of our experience. These can be known as the mountain tops and the valleys of faith.
- The Psalms show us that we can control our emotions, and they help us process and focus them properly. We should never repress our emotions, but to release them rightly to God and invite Him in.
- God will turn your doubts into trust, fears into faith, sorrow into joy, and hate into love if you let Him.

- The Psalms always lead from a negative to a positive. They always end in faith, hope, or praise.
- The lament psalms have a similar structure. Not all of these will be in every lament psalm.
 1. Invocation
 2. Cry for help
 3. Complaints
 4. Confession of sin or assertion of being innocent
 5. Curse of enemies
 6. Confidence of faith in God's response
 7. Hymn or blessing

THE PSALMIST'S TESTIMONY (91:1-2)

POWER VERSES: (91:1-3) "WHOEVER DWELLS IN THE SHELTER OF THE MOST HIGH WILL REST IN THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY. I WILL SAY OF THE LORD, 'HE IS MY REFUGE AND MY FORTRESS, MY GOD, IN WHOM I TRUST.' SURELY HE WILL SAVE YOU FROM THE FOWLER'S SNARE AND FROM THE DEADLY PESTILENCE." SOME COMMENTATORS BELIEVE THIS IS JUST ONE BIG LONG SENTENCE AND FLOW OF HEART!

- (vs1) Verse 1 is the overshadowing verse that states the focus of all of Psalm 91. It sums up everything in the next 15 verses in an overarching, beautiful statement and expression of faith.
- The psalmist expresses in absolute confidence that whoever trusts in the *Most High* finds security.
- His audience is the Israelites, the people of Zion, who might falsely and vainly believe that they are safe in the strength of their military or in their fortified city walls.
- He is beckoning them to focus not on their own individual strength and might, but on the access and strength available to them from their God. He begins to elevate their understanding of who God is.
- The Hebrew word *elyon* is translated "Most High." This word connotes being the "highest" or being "exalted." It was used in ancient Ugaritic and Phoenician texts in the epithets of the highest gods of the pantheons.
- The psalmist is saying, "our God is the absolute highest God, higher than any other gods that the enemies of Israel serve."
- The name "Most High" is used thirty times in scripture and is always found in poetry.

- Abraham was given this name for God first by Melchizedek, and it has been used ever since.
- The Hebrew word and name for God *sadday* is translated “Almighty.” This word is used 30 times in the Old Testament and is used the most in the Book of Job.
- Isn’t it interesting that the one person who could say in the flesh that God isn’t protecting him, or seems God is unable to, uses or hears this name more than any other Old Testament man or woman of God?
- *Sadday* speaks to God’s omnipotent and unmatched strength. There’s nothing that God cannot do.
- The first time this name appears is once again with Abraham and Sarah. God reveals that He can make the impossible possible because He is God Almighty.
- The truth that a God who is being described as the inaccessibly Most High, Almighty God is actually accessible to His followers, should cause us to be in absolute awe.
- Not only do we have access, we are being extended an invitation to stay with Him!
- The word “dwell” is the Hebrew verb *yashav*. It means “to sit, to stay, to inhabit or live.”
- When we “dwell” in the presence of God, the natural byproduct is the “rest” we so desperately need.
- The Lord is showing us in Psalm 91 that the secret to finding security and rest is in slowing down and simply putting our faith and trust in Him. We need to slow our minds, our hearts, and our bodies.
- We need to get to where we experience the power of Psalm 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God.”

THE PROMISE OF PROTECTION & SHELTER (91:3-9) - WHAT GOD DOES FOR YOU

- The psalmist switches his focus from one of faith for himself to encouragement for the worshiper.
- There’s an emphatic statement of guaranteed promise “Surely, God will save you.”
- (vs3) The word “fowler” in Hebrew represents human entanglements. It occurs only four times in the Bible. Two times it is used to describe humans who ensnare others to destroy them economically.
- (vs3) In Hebrew, “He shall deliver you” emphasizes the pronoun *He*. God alone will deliver you!
- In general, this verse speaks to God saving those who dwell in Him from all sorts of evil traps that are set for us in life. God will save us from snares and

entanglements that are set by evil people, from harmful words spoken against the innocent, and harmful actions.

- (vs4) When you come under the wings and the feathers of God, you will find *refuge*. The phrase, “He will cover you,” carries a connotation of being *shut up*, or completely *sealed* and *hidden*.
- The word “cover” used here in the Hebrew is *sakhakh*. The literal sense of covering for a screen appears in connection with the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle. The wings of the cherubim “covered” the mercy seat where God manifested His presence.
- When you dwell in the shadow of the Most High, you are shut up in His presence under His wings.
- When you are in and with the Lord, no one can touch you. You are untouchable unless He allows it.
- God will actively fight for you. “His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.”
- (vs5) “The terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day.” This speaks to the fears and troubles we expect or worry about at night that are unknown, or the unexpected attacks we can’t see in the day.
- (vs6) Even if it’s known problem or disease that works both night and day, God will fight for you.
- The Hebrew for “midday” is *tsahorayim*. It means “double light or most splendid intense light.” Culturally, it also speaks to when things are going well or we’re in the midst of “very great happiness.”
- There are times in life when everything is going fantastically and we are sideswiped with issues we never saw coming. God is not unaware, nor caught by surprise. He will help us in our time of need.
- (vs7) When it seems like everyone else is being destroyed by a calamity, whether it be a thousand or ten thousand, God will protect and take care of you.
- (vs8) There is a day of reckoning for the wicked. There is a reckoning between God and them. There is a payday for evil. God in His justice will deal with those who attack or curse His children.
- “You will only observe with your eyes” the calamity and destruction that will come on the wicked, but you will never experience it!

THE PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE BY ANGELS (91:9-13) - HOW GOD DOES IT FOR YOU

- (vs9) The psalmist now challenges the worshiper and reader to respond to his testimony and encouragement. “If you say... and you make” it’s as if he’s

saying, “What will you do with the promise of “Whoever dwells in the shadow of the Most High?”

- Who will you choose to trust and rely on? Will you let God do this for you?
- (vs10) The phrase “no harm” in the Hebrew is “no touch.” People in the Ancient Near East believed any disease or death that was out of the norm was the touch of a god against them. God is promising to protect them and not to bring them harm.
- (vs11) God will send angelic beings to take care of those who are putting their trust and safety in Him. The idea that eternal supernatural beings have the job of watching over us and helping us is amazing.
- This statement is a universal promise of angelic activity, not a solitary promise occurring only in extraordinary instances.
- The Bible tells us we never know when we are entertaining angels. Think about it. How many times have you been helped by or even encountered an angel and you never knew?
- (vs12) In times you could have been tripped up or caused to stumble and fall, angels have actively helped. The use of the phrase, “They will lift you up in their hands,” speaks to personal interaction.
- (vs13) The Hebrew word for “tread” means to *bend, bring under control, or overcome*. The word for “trample” means to literally *destroy and defeat*.
- The very things which would frighten us to death and would normally destroy us, we have no fear to worry about. The victory is guaranteed even before any threat may surface or surprise us.
- Have you ever had something hit you that should have damaged or destroyed you, and you didn’t have time to react or defend, and God took care of it before you could even pray about it?
- The Hebrew word for “serpent” is *wetandin*. It can mean a *dragon, sea monster, or large powerful beast*. Nebuchadnezzar was described with this word. It means an unbeatable monster of an enemy.

THE PEACE AND PERSPECTIVE FOUND IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD (91:14-16)

- What is the reason that someone so great as God Most High, God Almighty would even care about you and I? Why would someone so incredible and who is Divine even bother?
- (vs14) God’s answer is simple and profound. “Because you love me, I will rescue you.”

- (vs15) When you call on God He promises to answer you! The fact that the most powerful being in all of creation and the universe, the creator Himself, desires for you to speak to Him, is unfathomable.
- Why do we not take prayer more seriously? Why do we not take advantage of this immeasurable gift?
- He promises to save us. And for giving Him the chance to do so, He promises to honor us!
- (vs16) God gives us blessings we don't even ask for. When you allow God to be your shelter, and you allow God to be your protector, He will also bless you with long life and eternal salvation!
- For you, the beauty of this Psalm and the power and intimacy it speaks of with God, comes down to the first word of verse 1. Whoever! That means anyone. That means you! It's your choice.

POWER VERSES: (91:1) "WHOEVER DWELLS IN THE SHELTER OF THE MOST HIGH WILL REST IN THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY."

Psalm 91

NIV

¹ Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

² I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

³ Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

⁴ He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

⁵ You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,

⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.

⁸ You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

⁹ If you say, "The LORD is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling,

¹⁰ no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;

¹² they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

¹³ You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

¹⁴ "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

¹⁵ 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 With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."