



This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.



Living with God's Loving Assurance

Study Scripture: Psalms 91:1-8, 11-16

Lesson 13, February 23, 2019

Key Verse

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

Psalm 91:15

INTRODUCTION

The search for a sense of security has plagued the human race to as far back as recorded history. A foreboding sense of insecurity was always it seems a part of man's social environment, since sin entered the world. This has been the experience of individuals, families, tribes and nations. History provides evidence that the pervading sense of insecurity is well founded. There is just too much that can bring harm that is outside man's control and even things within his control has brought him harm. Arguably, man's greatest threat is himself.

Even in our modern societies, despite the great advances in science, medicine, communications, international cooperation and social organizations that have eliminated so many threats and insecurities, new ones have emerged. It seems the lot of man is to be insecure. Where can we find security? The psalmist provides a reassuring answer to this bedeviling question in Psalm 91.

The world is certainly more dangerous today than it was in the day of the writer.

Psalm 91 looks at a picture of redeemed man.

The next thing to be considered is that this is not a Psalm written to mystics or to the person who considers himself to be super-spiritual. This is a Psalm the writing of which is attributed to David, a man who was a warrior and a man who was extremely well maintained with the harsh realities of life. He had suffered a lot, being exposed to many

trials and tribulations whose life was often in danger, who faced many internal enemies as well as external enemies as the psalms that he wrote reflected. So this is no namby-pamby believer in God who lives and spouts nice sounding platitudes. He was taken through the ringer many times.

But this is a man that is in fellowship with God and secure in his position. Thus he is in a position to reflect on the admirable and awesome qualities of his Redeemer. This revelation is rich in promises, and it is on these promises that we rely and which maintains us in times of difficulty, for they flow from Yahweh Himself. He knows that if one does not have Yahweh one has nothing. It is all a death and destruction and pain.

In order to properly understand this psalm from our modern perspective the New Testament points us to the temptation of our Lord where Satan quotes from Psalm 91:11-12, challenging Jesus to prove that he was the divinely appointed Messiah by throwing Himself down from a high point in the Temple and show that God would deliver His Beloved from death.

But Jesus did not let him get away with his nonsense by quoting a Scripture which forbade putting God to the test. Psalm 91 did not guarantee that the people of God even including Messiah would not or need not suffer if suffering or death was divinely appointed. In fact therefore God would promise and guarantee deliverance to those who trusted in Him. God would guarantee that Jesus would suffer and die and be resurrected from the dead and exalted and so there was no real reason to avoid the Cross and going to the Cross. So that should be our perspective as we look at this Psalm. The life of David and his experiences and the life of the Messiah puts us on the correct track for proper interpretation of the Psalm.

The psalmist points out that the Lord God is the home in which we are to live. In this home there is welcome, a relief from burdens, the end of the journey, and a haven of rest and peace. These facts, of course, are designed to open our eyes to some extremely great and wonderful truths about God and His love for us. We pray that this would happen as you read this lesson.

Persons who have experienced intimacy with God and for whom God is their dwelling place experience security now and as well look forward to seeing Jesus face to face and gain more even more.

The central theme of Psalm 91 is that security is to be found only in God Almighty, that God is the protector of those who put their trust in Him. This is a theme found throughout the Scriptures and based here on God's position and power and found in the very first line of Psalm 91: He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

We tend often to forget that God's love is found in relationship and it is when we are in relationship that we discover God's protection and His commitment to those that are in relationship with Him.

The author of Psalm 91 is not identified, however many attribute authorship to Moses, while there is some support for David as the writer. Whoever the writer, the reader gets the impression he is reading a OR singing a personal testimony and this helps to deepen our own convictions and strengthen our faith in God.

In listing the threats in his day, the Psalmist certainly paints the world as a very dangerous place. While those threats (snare of the fowler, arrow that flieth by day) real or figurative might seem abstract to us, terrorism, crime, pandemics, nuclear holocaust, economic collapse among other things, pose an imminent and present danger in our day. But let us not forget that just as how the fowler trapped or snared birds in those days so today nations deceive, trap, and snare other nations and peoples today. Today nations and people do have arrows, terrible weapons, underwater submarines, missiles that can fly through space and hit you before you even know for they have methods and technologies to disguise their flight.

So do not think these dangers do not apply to us today. As a matter of fact our situation is dangerous. Amid the gloom of fear and uncertainty however, the psalmist points us to an unassailable security in God Almighty.

Importantly and very comforting the psalmist' strong statement about security in God is first from a personal standpoint. It helps little if everyone else is at ease but you are anxious, stressed and worried. Whatever the source of our unease, the believer can be assured he or she is under the shadow of the Almighty. References to refuge, fortress, cover, shadow emphasize that God watches over and protects the covenant community from a lurking multitude of dangers. Beyond protection, the Psalm ends on a note of triumph for the faithful soul, with promises of long-life, salvation and God's presence.

While the godless scurry back and forth in futile attempts to find security, only the child of God is assured of the protection and security presented in this Psalm. Remember as you read this psalm that there are two kinds of people with two very different destinies. One group is delivered from destruction and the other group is destroyed.

The people of God as a whole and the individual believer have received personal assurances from God the Father and Jesus Christ that they are secure, and their salvation guaranteed.

It is important therefore that this Psalm not be viewed as some kind of charm against misfortune or trial coming into the life of a believer. The poet makes the point that God will be with us in trouble (vs.15), meaning there could be trouble in the believer's life. Historically the Israelites came under bondage and suffered as the writer mentions. His point is however, God will always be with us. Remember therefore and never forget it that as we said before interestingly Satan used a misinterpretation of this Psalm in his temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4:6) and we can reasonably expect him to try and distort its message in our lives.

The Psalm should also be understood in light of the essentially physical blessings promised the children of Israel if they remained faithful and obedient to God. Still, they knew their God to be holy and certainly anticipate the day God would 'remove sin from Jacob', thus their blessings would somehow have to transcend the physical and include spiritual blessings, which their Messiah was to bring.

The pervading and oppressive sense of fear and insecurity that people feel, the wide variety and apocalyptic nature of many of the threats they face, makes Psalm 91 and its message particularly relevant to our day.

This Psalm has been called a Psalm for danger, and so, let us carefully consider its message and meaning.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. The basis for our security is now discussed. Remember that this is not dealing with God taking care of those outside of God, but about individuals who are believers and who always have faced deadly temptations, enemies who aim to do us harm, and from whom we are often in need of protection. This is clearly a Psalm of protection and rescuing grace. Interestingly it has four names for God.

Quite appropriately and like so many of the Psalms this one opens with a statement about God. God is called the Most High (Hebrew: 'elyon) and the Almighty. 'Most High' speaks to His position as Sovereign Ruler of the universe. There is none above Him, there is none with whom He must consult. It literally refers to God as the One who is concealed from human eyes, the One who is inaccessibly high. This as in Genesis 14:9 is the God over all the nations, "The possessor of Heaven and Earth".

- 'Almighty' speaks to His omnipotence and limitless power. It is the name Shaddai and was the name of God known to the Patriarchs, (Ex. 6:3). Shaddai or Saddy is often seen with the Hebrew word 'el, which is the generic name for a god-any god. But when taken together as El Shaddai this means the Almighty God. This name refers to the "All sufficient One. This was the God that kept them safe and prospered them as they lived in tents and moved over the land of Canaan (Gen.48:15). This God intervenes and saves as in Genesis 17:1, 28:3. One writer advises us:
"The Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) translates the Hebrew word "shaddai" as Greek word protokrator, which literally means "all power" or "all dominion" and is usually translated Almighty One. Protokrator appears several times in the New Testament in passages that emphasize God's almighty power (2 Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 1:8; 4:8; 11: 17; 15: 3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22".

Another name of God used is Yahweh (Hebrew YHWH or yehowah). This is the name that God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3: 15. Yahweh was God's personal name for the nation of Israel as opposed to the other names that are all descriptive (such as Most High and Almighty)

Another name used in the Psalm is God (Hebrew 'Elohim". This is the next most common name for God in the Old Testament, the most common name being Yahweh, which means I am who I am (Exodus 3:14).

The writer obviously chooses significant titles to underline the power of the Sovereign Ruler of the world to defend His people.

Poetically the psalmist pictures the one that puts his trust in God and who is in right relationship with Him as being ensconced in God's 'secret place'. In that dry and sun-baked land a shadow or shade is a welcome place of rest and repose and suggests security in this context.

Practically the beneficiary of God's love and power (...he that dwelleth...) may be seen as the trusting worshipper habitually found at the Tabernacle or the Temple.

Verse 2. Following his observation of verse 1, here the writer fittingly offers a personal testimony of his confidence and trust in God. He is comfortable with his situation and can apply God's promises to himself. Obviously his affirmation was based on his experiences with God and so he could confidently encourage others to look to the Lord as their protector and defender.

...my refuge...from the writer's standpoint, a place of safety, a shelter and implies someone was in dire need of protection, vulnerability, desperation. Having chosen God as his refuge he has forsaken choosing the refuge of lies held onto by those worshipping idols. He knows that God will not fail him.

...my fortress... when your refuge is the 'Most High' and the 'Almighty', then you are in a fortress, impregnable and beyond harm.

...my God... because he knew God in a intimate and personal way, not just by reading manuscripts or books or hearing the prophets and scribes speaking about God's personality, personal habits, and so on.

He was in a close relationship with God which must have developed over a period of time during which he discovered more and more about God and came to know him as trustworthy and able. One writer notes:

If Jehovah be our God, our refuge, and our fortress, what can we desire which we may not be sure to find in him? He is neither fickle nor false, neither weak nor mortal; he is God and not man, and therefore there is no danger of being disappointed in him. We know whom we have trusted.

We too have to come to the position of the writer where God becomes our God. It is not acceptable to just know God from an academic standpoint. "Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent", John 17:3.

Verse 3. The psalmist identified God as his trustworthy security in the first two verses seen particularly as he becomes a refuge and a fortress for the believer. Now starting in verse 3 he moves from the personal to the general and expands on the ideas of the previous verses.

The poet uses figurative language to illustrate God's deliverance as he becomes a refuge for the threatened or persecuted believer. He is faithful.

...fowler... is a bird trapper and the allusion is to evil, secret plots, conspiracies, those dangers that are unseen until it's too late and has the element of surprise, being caught unawares.

Now if we are to regard this Psalm as being applicable to us, we must understand that we are now speaking about Satan, the great enemy of our souls and the great deceiver, liar, and murderer.

He behaves as a fowler, which always lays a snare to destroy us. The fowler uses different modes of attack depending on the circumstances, and we should understand that Satan nowadays is not like the old grimy being with two horns and a tail portrayed in ancient pictures, but nowadays is probably a well-dressed, smooth talking gentleman that depends on persuading us and beguiling us rather than frightening us. Sometimes he is a roaring lion and persecutes us and sometimes he is like a snake, creeping along and using his poison to weaken us.

Note that the fowler operates with secrecy, carefully covering up his traps in order to beguile his prey. The fowler does not want a bird to see him as he lays his net. The fowler like the Devil adapts himself and his strategy. The fowler adapts his snare to the bird and Satan does the same. He snares some with drunkenness, some with lust, some with sensuality, some with what looks like the easy life, some with power, and some with riches. One writer warns us:

"The fowler's snare is frequently connected with pleasure, profit, and advantage. It is some tempting bait which allures him to his death. And usually Satan; the fowler, uses a temptation wherewith to beguile you...

Take care of pleasures, mind what you are at and when you are at them. Many of them are innocent and beautiful, but many of them are destructive....

Sometimes the fowler very wisely employs the force of example. We all know the influence of the decoy- duck, in endeavouring to bring others into the snare. ...

How very often Satan, the fowler, employs a decoy to lead God's people into sin....he makes use of a man who is pretendedly religious, and who looks to be of the same quality as yourself, and therefore entices you away....

Note, once more, that sometimes the fowler, when he faileth to take his hand by deceit and craft, will go a hawking after it- will send his hawk into the air, to bring down the prey.

It often happens, when the devil can not ruin a man by getting him to commit a sin, he attempts to slander him; he sends a hawk after him, and tries to bring him down by slandering his good name".

It is to be carefully noted that God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler, meaning that He does not let His people get into the snare, but He also delivers his people out of the snare once they get into the snare.

God often uses trouble to deliver us from snares, as in the case of the Prodigal son. Then He often strengthens His people with courage and spiritual strength to keep them from the snare of the fowler.

It is the sovereign grace of God that saves us from the snare of the Devil that seeks to destroy us.

Surely God will deliver you, says the psalmist. God has promised and He will always and must honour His promises.

...noisome pestilence...deadly plague, destruction, ruin and speaks to those threats that are fatal. This is the impersonal attackers from nature that respects no one, whether good or bad. This pestilence comes on a person unawares and there is no guard against these afflictions. The believer's protection in God meets any danger, whether invisible, mortal, secret or declared.

Verse 4. Here the psalmist uses the imagery of a mother hen that eagerly shelters her threatened chicks, who just as eagerly seek the comfort and protection of her wings. A sense of warmth, well-being, security and contentment is suggested in this picture and surely this is a desired state of mind and indeed the reality for those that come under God's protection. Jesus adopted this beautiful metaphor (Matthew 23:37) to express His own love and concern for those who rejected Him.

The psalmist uses the example of maternal care, this extremely deep and unswerving commitment that parents especially mothers have to protect their children. They will often give their lives to protect their children, their urges run deep to protect their children.

Consequently, when dangers threaten, the trusting know they are not alone. Metaphorically His feathers protect them and His wings provide a refuge.

The writer might have in mind the wings of the cherubim stretched out over the Ark of the Covenant, between which was God's symbolic dwelling place. In either case, this is a call to put oneself under God's protection.

Note, for the believer there is no recourse but to turn to God in faith and prayer in our times of distress. It is equally important that we have a right and constant relationship with God both in times of ease and times of distress.

In contrast to the tenderness and warmth of God's love and concern expressed in the mother hen and her chicks imagery, 'shield and buckler' (bulwark, rampart), the armour is the fortress element of God's protection. Not only is God a refuge but He can repel any threat to or aggression against His people. One writer notes:

"Not only is there a tenderness in God's care, there is also a toughness, as is seen in the imagery of the metal armor (v. 4). From the perspective of the protected, God is warm and tender; from the vantage point of the attacker, God is as strong as steel".

The shield and or rampart were the means for personal and mass protection respectively in the day of the writer and so he portrays God's protection with these images.

Note, it is His truth (faithfulness) that is the shield. This is as good as saying God is the shield. Because of who He is, the promise of protection is all we need for assurance. After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. (Gen.15:1)

Note, other texts inform us that believers will face persecution and even death and this has happened and is the experience of many; so we know that they are by no means to be protected from death from every threat and at all times. What is meant is that God will protect them even through death. Jesus himself spoke of Christians who would be killed and yet, "...But not a hair of your head shall perish", (Luke 21:18).

We point this out knowing fully well that making sense of suffering is a struggle for the human mind. It is a deep mystery to us. We do not have answers to many of our questions even though the Bible is filled with stories and teachings that lead us to both hope and joy when we experience suffering.

It is so peculiar but often when we experience pain, disappointment, family turmoil, physical sickness, broken relationships, economic worries, and deadly attacks that we discover God's care at the deepest level.

Many Christians have the wrong idea about a "right to happiness" which precludes any real suffering or hardship. Many have turned away in anger and despair because of these wrong ideas. We must understand that suffering does not mean you are a true disciple.

We urge you to accept that the promises of Psalm ninety one are true. This Psalm tells us about the heart of God. It might be difficult to believe that the promises are true, but they are nevertheless true.

Those that dwell in the presence of God are loved, sheltered, watched over, are defended all the time. His love will never fail. He is like a tender-hearted parent who will always protect and do the best for His children.

Verses 5 - 6. The prior verses gave us a picture of the protection God provides those who trust Him and in these verses we see the reach and all encompassing nature of that security. Such it is that we should not fear any danger. The psalmist mentions possible threats in figurative language and while these are not clearly identified, he captures the range of possibility with the use of extremes (merism).

'Terror by night', 'arrow by day', 'pestilence in darkness', destruction at noonday'; God's provides around the clock protection and there is no threat, seen or unseen, anticipated or unexpected, slight or great, local or national which can catch God off-guard or unable to protect us. One commentator says:

"God's protection touches all times night....day; all circumstances, darkness...noonday; all perils, the arrow of the human foe; pestilence of the unseen foe; destruction, (plague) that wasteth (lays waste) at noonday (Job 5:22); and all catastrophes, even the gravest

calamities that might cause death to a thousand, or even ten thousand... but it shall not come near thee. The believer will only look on and see the reward (recompense) of the wicked”.

Today there are a wide array of threats that could fit into all of these categories and God's protection covers the entire spectrum. This is a psalm for today!

Even though the metaphors are very real and physical they are still figurative but we should not limit God's protection to physical threats. God is sufficient for all situations and challenges in whatever form they threaten, bother or put His people under stress. We are to seriously consider our God, His love and concern for us and this should inspire confidence which should then lead to worship, praise and thanksgiving.

God keeps a vigil on His own at all times and in all places. So rather than be plagued with fear, as is the ungodly that are called the fearful, His people experience His abiding peace. He preserves the upright from the terrors that strike in the dark and sudden attacks, ambushes in the daytime.

Verse 7. The Israelites could definitely identify with the picture here and Moses in particular if he in fact wrote this Psalm. Moses was very instrumental as God applied the plagues in Egypt to force Pharaoh's hand in a most discriminating fashion. They actually saw their enemies destroyed in the Red Sea, while they experienced a safe passage through on foot! God certainly showed Himself as the 'Almighty' and willing to exercise His infinite power to protect His people.

In every case, the Egyptians suffered, but not the Israelites who trusted in God. “But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel.” And the Lord set a definite time, saying, “Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land.” So the Lord did this thing on the morrow, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died (Exod. 9:4-6, NASB).

Hail destroyed the crops, the cattle, and the servants of the unbelieving Egyptians, but the Israelites were not harmed (Exod. 9:18-26). The first-born of the unbelieving were all killed by the death angel, but those who believed God, applying the blood of a lamb to the doorposts and the lintel of their house, were not touched (Exod.12). Again, at the Red Sea the Egyptian army was drowned, yet the Israelites passed through safely.

One writer comments in part:

Those who fall by our side (v. 7) are those who do not trust in the Lord. The believer is invincible until his or her time is up. We will see the wicked fall around us, but God will sustain us. Nothing can touch us except what He permits, nor can any rebel escape His retribution (v. 8).

Verse 8 - 10. While the previous verses assured and gave comfort to believers that they are safe from the schemes of wicked men and the forces of evil, this verse gives assurance that we are protected from the ultimate danger, the righteous wrath of God.

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell; (Matt.10:28).

These verses flow naturally in their numeric order: the wicked will reap divine wrath, which is their recompense (v. 8), but those who have placed their trust in God (v. 9) will never suffer God's righteous wrath (v. 10). The sharp contrast between the wicked and those who place their trust in God highlights the vast difference in their ultimate destinies. And while the details of the recompense of the wicked is not disclosed, the sure implication is that their lot is the opposite of that of the trusting believer. (Matt.25:32-46).

The sentiments of verses one and two are repeated here. Those who seek God's shelter find it and as a result they have an assurance that no affliction or adversity will overwhelm them nor will any threat approach their dwelling. There is also a sense of vindication and encouragement for the trusting (vs 8), as often the wicked appear to be flourishing while the righteous endure hardships.

One writer observes:

The protection of those who abide under the shadow of the Almighty should wipe away all unwarranted fear. With God as our shield, we need not dread the opposition of either human or superhuman forces. With God as our refuge we should not fear and we cannot fall. We will certainly not fall under God's wrath and neither will we fall under the terror of any other. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, (Rom. 8:31-39).

As noted earlier, and from our own experiences and the biblical record, this does not mean that believers are exempted from suffering. What we are being told is that when we are under God's protection, we need not fear the array of terrors and dangers listed by the psalmist. The fact is we have no guarantee of success in every venture and we will experience failure. However, we will never fall from God's purposes and design nor from His protection. (Luke 21:16-18).

Verses 11 – 12. Here we are given some insight into how God effects His protection over those that abide under the shadow of the Almighty. We see that His care extends even to the inconsequential, minute detail of our lives and circumstances. Here is the reason ...there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling: the angels have been entrusted with the care and protection of believers. So often we hear

believers testify to providential interventions and miracles in their lives and even say it must have been an angel that helped them.

These verses suggest angels are responsible for preventing so much that might have gone wrong in our lives, certainly more than we can even imagine. They appear to somehow act as 'bodyguards'.

Given the unrelenting efforts of the enemy of our souls and our own destructive bent, it is well that the angels 'keep us in all our ways'. The psalmist certainly manage to capture all possible threats to the believer in the preceding verses, including divine retribution, demonic opposition, natural disasters and man-made hostilities. We are spared God's judgment by Jesus' sacrificial death on our behalf and we may be equally assured that the protection provided by His holy angels is greater than Satan's means of opposing us.

The particular ways and manner in which angels protect believers is not explained, however several texts spread some light on the issue and give additional information on their roles. (1) Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Heb.1:14.

They carry away the souls of the righteous in death (Luke 16:22). (2) They oppose purposes and designs of Satan, not in their own names, but in the name of the Lord (Jude 1:6). (3) They execute God's judgments upon the incorrigibly wicked (2 Kings 19:35; Acts 12:23). (4) They exert influence on rulers and governments (Daniel 10:20). (5) They aid providentially in bringing the unsaved to hear the saving gospel of Christ (Acts 10:3). (6) They exercise watchful care over little children (Matthew 18:10).

Verse 12 is likely meant to be figurative but even so, it graphically shows the extent of God's care and concern (...lest you strike your foot against a stone...) even to what might be just a nuisance to His people. His angels will ...bear thee up... so we avoid even small inconveniencies. Note, one writer observes:

The promise of protection is stated in a figure of speech to emphasize the minute matters to which God's care extends, but it is not meant to imply that "toe-stubbing" is never the lot of the saint. While God's protection extends to the smallest matters, His prevention may include trials both great and small.

Satan quoted this verse in his temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. He invited Jesus to take a spectacular dive off the Temple, since God instructed the angels to bear Him up and ensure He did not 'dash His foot against a stone'. Of course Satan was rebuffed as Jesus quoted Deut.6:16 to him.

Jesus' reply showed that while the servant of God may live dangerously, this is not an excuse to live presumptuously and why Jesus talked about not tempting God. Believers should be careful not to dictate or create conditions for divine intervention by deliberately setting up situations of need.

The experience of Jesus during His temptation by Satan has led many to regard this as a messianic text, a text ultimate about the work of Jesus.

The Psalm itself speaks about the secret place of the Most High, and we know that Jesus was the only One who has dwelt in the secret place of the Most High. The sentiments in the first few verses seem to reflect the description of the behavior and the life pictured by the prophet Isaiah of the Suffering Servant of the Jehovah. We know of course that this Suffering Servant of Jehovah was Jesus Christ of Nazareth

But in any case, we must understand that we participate in the work of Jesus for we are called on to engage the evil one. So we too face the snake and the lion, two figures that are used to depict the devil. In verse thirteen the description is even intensified, literally from cobra to sea serpent and from lion to the great lion. So we are called on to join the battle supported by the angels with the devil.

Note: 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. This is putting God to the test, by demanding that He rescue us from self-made danger. That is not faith, but presumption.

Verse 13. To this point the trusting believer should have banished all fear of attacks from any source, in light of the protection and assurance from the Almighty. Not that there will not be attacks but that they would not be victimized, having the presence of God with them always.

Prior to, the believer might have been intimidated and rightly fearful but here the psalmist switches his posture from that of the 'defended' to that of an aggressor. Now with an appreciation of our safety under the shadow of the Almighty, we can boldly confront and even defeat the most fearful opponent.

The poet uses figures to portray the enemies to be engaged and defeated. The lion represents the strong, formidable and intimidating and the cobra, the deceitful, the devious and the deadly. Interestingly the Scriptures use these same figures to represent Satan.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: (1Pet.5:8). And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev.12:9).

This verse could also be seen as prophetic. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly... (Rom.16:20). So a day is coming when God will place our arch-enemy under our feet.

Sadly some have put a literal interpretation on this verse and put themselves in harm's way in a manner that cannot be justified scripturally and sometimes with serious consequences.

Verse 14 - 15. These statements are not really conditional (Because...) because if we love God, it is because He first loved us. We love him, because he first loved us. (1John 4:19; See Deut.7:7-8).

In the final verses of the Psalm God gives His own assurances and makes a number of important promises. He goes past protection and promises to deliver and honor the one that has set his love on God and the one that knows His name. As it stands, God has promised to deliver those who are in danger or great peril. Either the believer will be spared from a dangerous circumstance or he will be brought safely through the danger. So what we have is both an escape from disaster and His presence in danger. These promises are the out-workings of being under the shadow of the Almighty which we can see in the experiences of the three young Hebrew men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, (Dan. 3:25); Daniel alone in the lion's den (Dan. 6:22) and Jesus' personal appearance to Paul in prison, (Acts 23:11).

We will not only be delivered but God will do it in an honourable fashion. Note that the guarantee of the promise rest entirely on the fact that it is God that has promised and He cannot fail.

...known my name... to know God's name is to understand His person and attributes and only those who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and those to whom God has revealed Himself can actually know His name.

He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. (Psalm 103:7). The ones that know His name are those who dwelleth in the secret place of the most High and who abide under the shadow of the Almighty, (vs.1) and who therefore have assurance of God's presence and protection.

Verse 16. The gracious God that first loved us makes even more promises in this final verse. Long life is promised and this can be seen as a direct promise or the natural outcome of the lives of those who are obedient and who put their trust in God. (Deut. 28:1-14). It was promised to the Israelites that faith and obedience would lead to longer life and prosperity. This, however, was not a guarantee nor a formula for success. But even today, obedience to God and living by Christian principles generally tend to longer life.

...shew him my salvation...some see the term "salvation" here as having a wide 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).

The psalmist lists God promises of help, honor and a hope for eternal life back in his day and those same promises are still alive to today's believers.

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 (John 8:1-11; Matt. 23). Only the sick need to be healed (Mark 2:17) and only those in danger need deliverance....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

We too are obviously called to rest and dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
And note without a doubt we can do it just as many Saints in the past have done it.

The danger we face is that when we are in difficulty we tend to take matters into our own hands. We have not learned that Premier virtue of patience. Or alternatively we try to make God perform on our terms. Even when we think that we have spent all our resources tackling our problems, we still keep going instead of depending on our faith in God.

So we must ask ourselves the questions whether God really knows. Does He care? Remember that the Suffering Servant of Jehovah faced these questions and felt them more deeply than any other human being ever could, and He trusted that God would defend Him. He did exactly what God the Father wanted, and He was successful, and finally, He was raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of His Father.

This Psalm tells us that we should trust Him and that He is our defender. He has overcome, and we can overcome and dwell with Him in the secret place of the Most High.

So trust the Lord that has called you, and has made a home for you in His presence. One writer summarizes this psalm this way:
"You may be less sure that you love him than he is that you love him. This is a psalm filled with a marvellous perspective of the care of God, care for the minute things of our lives, the particular needs of our circumstances, and drawing us into the great work of the Savior, the Messiah, who is changing the world".

Referring to verses 14-16 he comforts us as follows by reminding us:
"Finally, this is a text that has the voice of the Lord speaking to those who will hear off his commitment to us".

The unchanging, gracious, faithful and merciful God, the Almighty was so known back in the day of the psalmist. He is the same God today. His ultimate revelation which the psalmist and his contemporaries only saw faintly has been revealed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The basis for all the mercies of this just God has been laid by the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary.

God's comforting presence and assurance was felt and experienced by Old Testament saints but now even more-so among believers by the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit. Consequently, believers are to live confident, assured lives, free from fears and anxiety from all and every source. Jesus has come and offered the efficacious sacrifice for

sin and so to abide under the shadow of the Almighty is now to be indwelt by God's Holy Spirit.

Our security and protection is as iron-clad as that of the trusting saint of old. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. (John10: 28-29).

Christians should have no fear as it pertains to doing the work of God and being obedient to His word. God's protection can hardly be more comprehensive than the way it is presented in this psalm. New Testament writers also teach that the Father safeguards those who trust in His Son and the protection and security of today's saint is no less than that of our brethren of old. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet.1:5).

Christians are to learn the whole counsel of God which He has revealed in His Holy Scriptures. Satan will use even the Scriptures to lead the saints astray. Jesus certainly showed us the way to refute Satan's overtures by quoting the pertinent Scriptures.

Despite the pervasive fear and insecurity in present day societies and the frenzied efforts to find some kind of cure, man's most urgent need remains 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 (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, the ultimate security).