Psalm 91 Study Guide

Last week many of us looked at Psalm 90, which painted a bleak picture of this present world with its many troubles – things that make us sigh and groan. In contrast, the very next psalm, Psalm 91, seems to paint an entirely different picture.

- Verses 1 and 2 speak of God as a shelter, a refuge, and a fortress who protects us from the troubles of life.
- In verses 3 and 4 he is the one who “delivers” us from enemies and disease.
  - A “fowler” is someone who hunts or traps birds, but God is like a mother bird who keeps her young safe under her feathers (pinions).
  - A pestilence is a widespread disease like the Coronavirus, but God protects us like a shield (“buckler” is another word for a shield).
- Verses 5 - 7 tell us that with God as our refuge, there is no need to fear the night, or warfare, or sickness.
- Verses 11 - 12 give us a glimpse into the unseen part of God’s care for us. We see here that angels are part of that care. In times of need God commands his angels to guard and protect us.
- Verse 13 makes what sounds like a fantastic claim, that even dangerous creatures like poisonous snakes and lions will be no match for the person who has God as his fortress.

As we consider these verses, it is important to keep a few things in mind.

- First, we need to keep in mind the main message of this psalm, that God is the answer and solution to the troubling and dangerous things of this world.
- Second, we must be clear about what this psalm is not saying. The psalm writer is not telling us that those who trust in God are “bulletproof” and will have no trouble or not get hurt in this present world.
- Third, it is important to see the “long view” that this psalm (along with the rest of Scripture) takes. In the end, everything that this psalm says will be true in a full and complete way. But right now the psalm writer is calling on us to trust God for this, even though present circumstances may make it seem otherwise. The promise of this psalm is not that we will not have trouble in this world (see John 16:33), or that we will never get hurt. Rather the message is that God will be with us in it, see us through it, and in the end deliver us from it.

The practical take away from this psalm is that we need not fear the trouble we may encounter (v. 5). It should not be something that moves us to doubt God, but instead to call to him (v. 15) and continue to hold fast in our love for him (v. 14). There may be temporary suffering and even death, but in the end we serve a God who delivers and who raises the dead.

The long life and the salvation promised in verse 16 may in a partial way find present-time fulfillment in the lives of some individuals. In this present world God does grant deliverance from trouble, and he gives long life to some. But that is not always true. Jesus is the prime illustration of this. Here was someone who perfectly trusted his heavenly Father, and yet he experienced great trouble, a short life, and a horrible death. But even with this, the words of Psalm 91 still applied to him. This Jesus, who was crucified God raised from the dead, never to die again, and has now been exalted to the right hand of God in all power and glory (Acts 2:32-33). This glory awaits all who make the Lord their dwelling place. Jesus has promised that he will bring with him all who believe in him (John 14:3). Truly God is a refuge and fortress worthy of our trust!
Discussion Questions for Psalm 91

1. Where is a place that you feel safe? What about that place makes you feel that way?

2. We all experience trouble and fearful circumstances in this world.
   a. What troubles have you experienced in life? Which ones were particularly difficult for you?
   b. In what ways have you experienced God as a refuge or fortress in the midst of trouble?
   c. What would you say is your greatest fear?
   d. What specifically has helped you to face your fears?

3. Verse 4 says that God’s “faithfulness” is a shield.
   a. How is it helpful to you to know in times of trouble that God is faithful in keeping his promises?
   b. What examples are there in the Bible that God is a faithful promise keeper?

4. In the New Testament, in Matthew 4:5-7, the devil quotes verses 11-13 that speak of God commanding angels to guard us. He then tempts Jesus to jump off the roof of the temple in Jerusalem presumably to test God on his word.
   a. Why was this a misuse of this passage?
   b. Why would it be wrong for us to think we will not get hurt by jumping off roofs or handling poisonous snakes and lions?
   c. Will there ever be a day when there will no longer be any harm or hurt? When will that be? (See Isaiah 11:7-9; 65:17-25; Revelation 21:1-4).
   d. What has Jesus done so far to make this day possible? What must he still do?

5. This psalm calls us to trust God (v. 2), hold fast to him in love (v. 14), and to know his name (v. 14).
   a. How does your life show that you are doing these things?
   b. Where do you need to grow in doing these things?
   c. Ask God and others to help you in these areas of your life.