

## Psalm Ninety-One

Psalm 91:1 to 16: (1) 'He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall rest under the shadow of the Almighty. (2) I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress; my God Whom I trust. (3) For He will deliver you out from the snare of the fowler and from deadly pestilence. (4) He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings you shall find refuge. His faithfulness is your shield. (5 & 6) You shall not be afraid of terror at night or of the arrow that flies by day; nor of the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor of sudden destruction and death that come at noonday. (7) A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand but it will not come near you. (8) Only a witness will you be as you see the reward of the wicked. (9, 10 & 11) Because you have made the Lord your refuge and the Most High your dwelling place, no evil will happen to you and no plague will come near your home, for He will give His angels charge over you to protect you in all your ways. (12) The angels will bear you up on their hands so you will not dash your foot against a stone. (13) You shall tread on the lion and the snake; the young lion and the serpent shall you trample underfoot. (14) Because you have set your love upon the Lord, therefore He will deliver you. God will set you on high because you know His name. (15) You shall call upon Me and I will answer you. I will be with you in trouble. I will deliver you and honour you. (16) I will satisfy you with a long life and I will show you My salvation'.

This wonderful Psalm is full of promises – but all of the promises are conditional. We must first obey the first two verses and then the Lord will fulfil the following fourteen verses. That concept was the same in the days of the children of Israel. 'If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, and will obey all His commandments and keep all His statutes then ... I will put none of those diseases upon you for I am the Lord Who heals you' (Exodus 15:26).

Verses 1 and 2; 'He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall rest under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress; my God Whom I trust'. Where is the secret place of God and how do we dwell in a place that we may not be able to find? What is His shadow? The Lord's secret place for us, can only be found by spending time ... a lot of time alone in the presence of God, listening to His quiet whisper and reading the Bible so much we quote it during our normal conversations without trying – not by religious rote but in the Spirit. The secret place is a spiritual place of closeness to God. The only way to get there is through humility and repentance. The Lord resists the proud and will show His grace only to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). Once we come into His presence in that way every day, it becomes our way of life then it becomes easier to find our way into the presence of the Lord during subsequent times of prayer. The secret place is wholly spiritual, peaceful and filled with the presence of the Lord. It is being still and knowing He is God; He is sovereign; He rules the whole universe (Psalm 46:10), yet we can be intimately acquainted with Him. It is not a religious piety; it is soaking in the perfect presence of the Most High God. Once we live in that place every day, in complete harmony with the Lord, the scriptures say we are walking in the Spirit. 'If we live by the Holy Spirit, let us also walk by the Holy Spirit' (Galatians 5:25). The 'shadow' is not visible with the naked eye – it is spiritual. If we can think in the natural for a moment, and picture an eagle flying overhead casting its shadow over us, that is an earthly 'picture' of the shadow of the Holy Spirit as He hovers over us with His mighty outstretched wings. No enemy of God can penetrate that invisible shadow of protection. It is a hiding place, a covering, our defence, a private place, an intimate place, a concealed place, a shelter, an inner sanctuary, a place where God can reveal His secrets and His will to us. The secret place is a place of worship and intercession. It is a safe place to sit in comfort and peace. The enemy cannot reach us while we are in there. When God speaks to us, it is with a tiny whisper (1 Kings 19:12) so to hear Him we have to be sitting very close to Him. Mary Magdalene was one person who sat so closely to Jesus when she sat at His feet to listen to His teaching (Luke 10:39 to 42), she was the only person anywhere who was able to understand the significance of Jesus' death. She was the one who anointed Him with perfume to prepare Him for burial. Everyone else failed to realise what she was doing and criticised her (Luke 7:37 to 50; John 11:2; 12:3). Mary could only have learned what she did learn, by listening closely to His teaching in that secret spiritual place. This secret place is not revealed to unsaved, unspiritual people in the world. That is why it is called secret; because the carnal mind cannot comprehend the intimacy we can have with God. The carnal mind considers it foolishness (1 Corinthians 2:14). The secret place is where we dwell – we don't just visit there – we live there. It is where we are seated – in a heavenly place (Ephesians 2:6). Once we become accustomed to being with God in that quiet spiritual place, it becomes as real as the people around us. He becomes our normal, everyday way of life, but first we must put our trust and confidence in the Lord. We must rely on Him and lean on Him with our whole heart. 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean (or rely) on your own understanding' (Proverbs 3:5). These are the two conditions we must reach before the Lord will fulfil His promises in this Psalm, but we must

understand, comprehend, accept and realise, this is a spiritual condition of the heart, not a physical one. It is by faith we accept the conditions, and faith is spiritual.

Verses 3, 5, 6 and 7; 'For He will deliver you out from the snare of the fowler and from deadly pestilence. You shall not be afraid of terror at night or of the arrow that flies by day; nor of the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor of sudden destruction and sudden death that come at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand but it will not come near you'. The fowler is the devil and pestilence is the strife the devil can bring to our lives. We do not need to be afraid or fear any of the things listed here. Terror or the pestilence that comes by night, that stalks our senses (terrifying nightmares, terrorism), arrows (fiery darts) that are the evil weapons that wicked people plot and plan against our lives in league with the devil. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, it is against evil wickedness, it is spiritual (Ephesians 6:12). We do not need to be afraid of anything, including death if we are walking closely to God. We do not need to be afraid of death in wars, floods, massacres or terrorist bombs. Thousands may die around us, but we do not need to fear if we remain in the secret place with the Almighty. These verses mention day, night, darkness and noon. The Lord is saying we have His protection day and night. There is never a time when He is not with us, no matter what the circumstances or how we are feeling.

Verse 4; 'He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings you shall find refuge. His faithfulness is your shield'. The Lord will cover us with His feathers and wings of protection like a hen covers her chicks, but we must be willing to allow Him to do so (Luke 13:34). He is our shield and refuge. 'Lift up the shield (covering) of faith so you can quench all the fiery darts (missiles, lies, slander, plans) of the devil' (Ephesians 6:16). These 'arrows' are the troubles cause by spiritual forces in the spiritual realm. When the Lord Himself covers us, we do not need to fear any of these things. Death has no sting of fear or terror when we walk closely to God. 'O death, where is your sting?' (1 Corinthians 15:55). When we are in the secret place with the Lord Almighty, death has no victory over us.

Verses 8 and 9; 'Only a witness will you be as you see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your refuge and the Most High your dwelling place ...' We will be witnesses to the judgement of the wicked from that secret place, almost as though we are hiding in a 'booth' watching the judgement go on around us, and that can only happen if we make Him our refuge.

Verse 10, 11 and 12; 'No evil will happen to you and no plague will come near your home, for He will give His angels charge over you to protect you in all your ways. The angels will bear you up on their hands so you will not dash your foot against a stone'. When the Lord says no evil will happen to us – again, that is in a spiritual sense. We know terrible things have happened to the fleshly bodies of even the most faithful believers, mainly through persecution. Although the Lord does deliver us from dangerous situations sometimes, He does not always choose to keep our bodies from physical harm. It is our souls that are protected – our innermost being. God protects us in the spiritual realm. The words of Stephen help us understand that secret place of protection. Even before the religious people began stoning Stephen, he saw the heavens opened and saw Jesus standing at God's right hand and he said that very clearly. How did Stephen see heaven opened? Because he was walking in the Spirit – filled with the Holy Spirit. After they stoned him, Stephen asked God to forgive them, then he asked Jesus to receive his spirit (Acts 7:54 to 60). The Lord did not protect Stephen's physical body, but He did protect Stephen spiritually. The Lord has promised to send angels to watch over us. Angels live in the spiritual realm, not the earthly realm. When God chooses not to protect our physical body, some people lose faith and question God, but we must not focus on earthly situations, but on our secret place in God where no evil enemy can invade. If we die as a martyr, we are carried to heaven by the angels (Luke 16:22). Paul suffered dreadfully in his physical body (2 Corinthians 11:23 to 27), but there was no sense of anxiety, panic or self-pity. Quite the opposite. When he was whipped and put into stocks in prison, he prayed and sang praises to God so loudly, other prisoners could hear him (Acts 16:23 to 25). When Paul was shipwrecked, couldn't eat for two weeks (Acts 27:14 to 44) and bitten by a poisonous snake (Acts 28:3 & 5), he never acted out of panic or fear, but with the authority of a man who knew God intimately. He told the sailors they should have listened to him in the first place and said to cheer up! Cheer up in the midst of a wild storm? They did eventually cheer up (Acts 27:36), but not until after Paul gave thanks. How did Paul know what to do? How was he able to go through all that without any sense of fear? By listening to the Lord's instructions during prayer (Acts 27:25). Paul's secret place with God was so real to him, that what he suffered in the flesh was of no consequence. Jesus had the most intimate and loving relationship with God the Father and spent many hours in prayer, yet Jesus suffered terribly in His body during the crucifixion. It was His Spirit that God protected. 'Into Your hands I commit My Spirit' (Luke 23:46).

Verse 13; 'You shall tread on the lion and the snake; the young lion and the serpent shall you trample underfoot'. The proof God is talking about spiritual protection is in this verse. The action of a lion is likened in scripture to the enemy tearing at our lives. 'Lest my enemy tear my soul like a lion, ripping it in pieces' (Psalm 7:2). 'That enemy of yours, the devil, roams around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he can devour' (1 Peter 5:8). The serpent and snake, adder or viper spoken of in this verse is a demon and we have been given the authority to trample on all evil beings, including the devil himself. 'Jesus called the twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons ... "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your Name" ... Jesus said, "Behold! I have given you authority and power to trample upon serpents and scorpions and power over all the power that the enemy (the devil) has, and nothing shall in any way harm you"' (Luke 9:1; 10:17 & 19).

Verses 14, 15 and 16; 'Because you have set your love upon the Lord, therefore He will deliver you. God will set you on high because you know His name. You shall call upon Me and I will answer you. I will be with you in trouble. I will deliver you and honour you. I will satisfy you with a long life and I will show you My salvation'. These verses tell us we have the protection of the Lord because we love Him, because we have a personal relationship with Him and because we have learned His name. Learning His name, the name of power that represents all that He is, is very important for us. When we do all these things in obedience, He honours us. That is something many people miss ... God will honour us for our obedience and for putting our trust in Him. By learning His name, we can do mighty things. That does not mean simply acknowledging the name of our Saviour – it means understanding His Godly name in all its fullness and power. There is power in the name of Yeshua (Jesus) and His name should never be used lightly. We should only use His name in prayer when we are representing all that He is. When we gather under the banner of the name of Jesus it draws His presence into our midst (Matthew 18:20). We cast out demons in His name and we speak in languages of angels in His name (Mark 16:17). After this world is all over and finished, we will see Him face to face and His name will be written on our foreheads, and we will reign with Him forever and ever (Revelation 22:4 & 5).

Amen and God bless you.

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