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## **You Will Not Be Afraid**

*Psalm 91:5–10<sup>1</sup>*

### **Introduction**

News article after news article brings yet more bad news for our already discouraged world. The pain and suffering all around us are a grim reminder to Christians of the awful penalty for rebellion.<sup>2</sup> Yet for the godless world these distressing times bring panic and fear. You can see it when you simply go into the grocery stores and look for common household food needs. The world is bent on self preservation and I must even admit that the fear can at times be contagious (example: going to the store to get spaghetti sauce and only finding one boxful left).

Yet this attitude does not become a child of God. In fact, it is in these times that the world should see a marked distinction between the way the unbelieving world reacts to distressing circumstances and the way Christians do. I believe that this psalm (along with the unity of the rest of Scriptural teaching) reminds you that *you do not have to fear about the circumstances around you because you have made the Lord your protection.*

**Psalm 91:5–10**<sup>5</sup> You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, *Nor* of the arrow *that* flies by day,<sup>6</sup> *Nor* of the pestilence *that* walks in darkness, *Nor* of the destruction *that* lays waste at noonday.<sup>7</sup> A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; *But* it shall not come near you.<sup>8</sup> Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked.<sup>9</sup> Because you have made the Lord, *who is* my refuge, *Even* the Most High, your dwelling place,<sup>10</sup> No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling.

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### **Preview Outline:**

- 1. Confidence in God's Protection (v. 5a)**
  - 2. Scope of God's Protection (vv. 5b–8)**
  - 3. Assurance from God's Protection (vv. 9–12)**
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*The psalmist assures us that we can have—*

### **1. Confidence in God's Protection (v. 5a)**

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version.

<sup>2</sup> See the gospel G.R.A.C.E. acronym by Pastor Gordon Dickson and the accompanying Scripture references on our church website: <https://www.cbcfindlay.org/im-new/>

*“You will not be afraid”*

This statement is a declaration of confidence. Why can the psalmist make such a statement? What leads him to reach such a confident conclusion? It is the fact that he “dwells in the shadow of the Almighty” (v. 1). He is under the divine protection of a sovereign God. If the psalm was indeed penned by David (thought we cannot know for certain), David had watched God protect him on numerous occasions (cf. Goliath — 1 Sam. 17:1ff). He could attest to the surety of God’s protection. Moreover, he has made the LORD (Heb., Yahweh/Jehovah) his refuge. Yahweh is the covenant name of God. God’s promises will be accomplished.

As a believer in Christ you do not need to fear. Why? Here are four that come to mind:

- A. Because God is with you (Ps. 23:4; Is. 43:2).
- B. Because God knows what you need (Matt. 6:25–34).
- C. Because the end for every Christian will be only a joyous beginning (Phil. 1:21).
- D. Because God controls all of creation (Col. 1:17).

*The confidence we have in God’s protection helps us say with the psalmist “I will not be afraid.” But to what extent do we know this to be true? The psalmist next reminds us of the—*

## **2. Scope of God’s Protection (vv. 5b–8)**

The Unknown — “*the terror by night (v. 5), pestilence that walks in darkness (v. 6)*”

The first phrase in v. 5 “the terror by night” could refer to complete fear of the unknown, or it could refer to the fear of invasion by night (cf. Song of Solomon 3:8). Either way, the metaphor of “night” and “darkness” implies the fear of the unknown. Yet we intimately know the God who commanded the light and darkness to exist (Gen. 1:3–5). He sees the darkness as if it were light (Ps. 139:12). There is nothing that can surprise God for He sees and knows the unknown.

*App:* You do not know what tomorrow will bring forth (James 4:14). It can be easy to ask “what if \_\_\_\_\_ happens? What about \_\_\_\_\_?” Remember that the One who knows the unknown and holds you in His hand will supply the sufficient grace for you for today. In the end, there are enough worries in the current day to worry about what you do not and cannot possibly know (cf. Matt. 6:34).

The Known — “*the arrow that flies by day (v. 5), destruction that wastes at noon (v. 6)*”

The words “day” and “noon” contrast that of “darkness” and “night,” and indicate what can be seen and known. The *arrow* refers to the physical affliction that may very well attack us (for example, see how David referred to God’s divine protection from his enemies; Ps. 11:1–2, 6–7). The word *destruction* is used in the Old Testament only 4 times. Each time it refers to the destruction of brought about death and havoc. This same word is used in Hosea:

**Hosea 13:14** (KJV) I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

These words are quoted in 1 Corinthians 15:54–55 by Paul with regards to the final victory that Christ brought by His resurrection from the dead. Death is ultimately destroyed by God through Christ such that it has no sting for Christians. In the end, death will be vanquished by God in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14). The dangers of life and even the fear of death has no affect on the believer because he has placed his complete trust in the One who has ultimately defeated death. This is why you do not need to fear what is unknown or what is known. The same God who saved you from your helpless state will preserve you. Nothing will touch you that has not gone through God’s permissive governance (cf. Job 1–2).

The Uniqueness — In verse 7 the psalmist gives an illustration of the uniqueness of this protection. While people around might be afflicted and indeed fall, God’s protection is so unique that you will be preserved out of tens of thousands of others who will fall. This is not to say that you will *not* experience hardships; rather, this is an illustration of “exact, minute providence.”<sup>3</sup> The question may arise *Does God not notice that I am suffering?* Or, in the words of the hymn writer “does Jesus care?” Scriptures clearly give evidence to the fact that others have asked that very question (e.g. Elijah, 1 Kings 19:1–8). Yet the psalmist assures this listener that *it will not come near you*. This is unique, divine protection for the one who trusts in God.

*Illustration:* The Passover is a poignant illustration of this truth. Exodus records the appeal of Moses to Pharaoh on behalf of the people of Israel. He exhorted Pharaoh over and over to let them go, yet Pharaoh hardened his heart time and again. God brought plague after plague on the Egyptians for their refusal to submit to Moses’ exhortation. The final plague was the most devastating: the angel of the Lord went into the land at midnight to strike down all the first-born of the Egyptians (Exod. 11:4–8; 12:12–13, 21–32). The sign of safety for the people of Israel was the blood of a lamb on the door posts of their homes.

This picture of the ultimate passover sacrifice, Jesus, also depicts the unique care with which God will protect His children. Jesus died on the cross so as to provide the atonement for our sins (1 John 4:10). Those who confess Jesus as Lord will be saved from eternal death (Rom. 10:9). Those who trust in Christ do not need to fear the first death because it is the passage to eternal heaven (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

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<sup>3</sup> Kidner, Derek, *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 16. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975): 364.

This unique love of God on you as a Christian provides the basis for hope in uncertain, even fearful times. You have been accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1:6 KJV). You know that your loving Father does all things for your good (Rom. 8:28–29).

In the end, we can know that the wicked actions of evil men will be judged by God (v. 8). It is in hardships that Christians are most acute and perceptive of the prosperity of the wicked. In fact, Revelation records that those who were martyred for the sake of Christ asked when the Lord would avenge their blood (Rev. 6:9–11). We wonder how God can let the wicked prosper (e.g. Ps. 71:1ff). Yet God assures us of two things: (1) the prosperity of the wicked will last only so long (cf. Ps. 73:17–20); and (2) the suffering we experience now produces a Christ-like effect:

*It proves the genuineness of our saving faith.*

**1 Peter 1:3–9** <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

<sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup> whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup> receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.

*It produces in us endurance.*

**James 1:2–5** <sup>2</sup> My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience [i.e. endurance]. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

*Not only can we have confidence in God's protection, and not only is the scope of God's protection in every fear we might have, we can also know that we gain—*

### **3. Assurance from God's Protection (vv. 9–10)**

Note that v. 9 gives the answer for why we can confidently have not fear about our circumstances: *Because we have made the LORD our dwelling place*. The language here might seem slightly confusing, so lets break it down:

- The Psalmist is speaking to “the one who dwells in the the shelter of the Most High” (v. 1).
- He says of that person “You have made the Lord your dwelling place” (v. 9).
- He says that this same LORD is his own refuge (cf. 91:2).

- In other words, *the same Most High God that the psalmist has made his own personal refuge is the same one that you have made your dwelling place.*

This is the basis for your hope in distressing times: You have made your dwelling with the Lord. This concept should not be foreign to us. You are supposed to let the “Word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). God dwells in us (Rom. 8:9, 11; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:22).

The final assurance given in v. 10 is probably the one that most of us stumble over. How can it be true that “no evil will befall me, or plague come near my tent? I think that this is not a “prosperity” assurance (i.e. true Christians will never suffer need; they will always experience health and wealth). Rather, this is a principle that contrasts the end of the wicked (v. 8) and the end of the believer. That being said, remember these truths that our Savior told us about:

- *Jesus assured us that persecution will happen* (John 15:18)
- *God will always give us precisely what we need* (Matthew 6:25–34)
- *As we obediently fulfill His commands, He will be with us* (Matt. 28:18–20)

It is these promises that illustrate the difference between Christians and nonChristians. NonChristians have no one to assure them that their needs will be met or that their circumstances are for a unique purpose. Christians know that their loving heavenly Father has ordained their suffering so as to produce in them sanctification. Thus, they do not need to worry about their circumstances because they trust the One Who has led them into it to provide for them and protect them through it all.

## Conclusion

What a comforting assurance for you and I to remember: *You do not have to fear about the circumstances around you because you have made the Lord your protection.* When challenging times come (and they will) you must remember that God’s purposes for these trying circumstances is to grow you. It is in these times that you should inundate your mind with Scriptural truths so that you can rehearse them as you walk through uncertainty to the glory of God.