

A Name Like No Other

Session 6

January 7, 2024

The Protection of God's Name

The Point: We can trust God to strengthen and help us.

Session Passage: Psalm 91:1-6,9-16

Psalm 91:1-6

Connection to The Point: We can trust God's power to protect us.

Lives Dwelleth Dwells (v. 1). The term (*yashab*) has the meaning "to remain." It refers to someone who inhabits a house, a city, or a country. The one who *lives dwells* under the protection of the Lord settles and lives dwells there.

Protection Secret place Shelter (v. 1). The term *protection secret place shelter* (*seter*) literally refers to a hiding place or shelter. It describes a place where a person would conceal himself from danger.

Most High (v. 1). *Most High (Elyon)* was the name with which Melchizedek blessed Abram after the Lord had delivered Abram from the battle against the four kings who had captured his nephew, Lot (Gen. 14:19). Other psalms also used this name of God. It emphasizes God's supreme might and absolute authority (Pss. 18:13; 47:2; 83:18; 97:99:2; 21:7; 50:14).

Dwells, Shall abide, Will rest (v. 1). In this context, the term (*lun*) means to stay somewhere for an indeterminate amount of time. The one who lives under the protection of the Most High stays in His shadow for a long time. Ideally, this individual would permanently dwell there.

Shadow (v. 1). A *shadow* provided a place of shade, protection, and/or security (Ps. 121:5; Isa. 30:2-3; 49:2; 51:16). The psalmist encouraged God's people to run to Him like a little child and hide in His shadow because He is capable of delivering them from the trials they face. **Under the shadow** (v. 1). The one who dwelleth in the secret place of the most High abides under the shadow of the Almighty. A *shadow* provides a place of shade, protection and/or security (Ps. 121:5; Isa. 30:2-3; 49:2; 51:16).

Almighty (v. 1). *Almighty (Shadday)* is the name God used when He established His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:1-2). God explained to Moses that He had revealed Himself to the patriarchs by the name *Almighty* (Ex. 6:3). David used this name when he sang about God driving out the militaries that threatened the Israelites (Ps. 68:14).

Lord (v. 2). This is a substitution for God's personal, covenant name, *Yahweh*. The substitution follows the practice of the Jews, who substituted the word *Adonai* (meaning "lord" or "master") for *Yahweh* because they feared saying God's name lest they mispronounce it. When Lord occurs (in small caps) it is an indicator that the word being referenced is *Yahweh*. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. The KJV's "Jehovah" is a transliteration of this name by combining the Hebrew consonants of *Yahweh* and the vowels of *Adonai*.

Refuge (v. 2). A *refuge (machaseh)* is a place of temporary shelter from things like a rainstorm (Isa. 4:6) or a danger when one is in the wilderness (Ps. 104:18).

Fortress (v. 2). A *fortress (metsudah)* provides permanent shelter, as it refers to a castle or stronghold built on a high place. *Metsudah* is related to the term meaning "mountain height" or "summit."

God (v. 2). The Hebrew term is *Elohim*. It emphasizes the majesty and infinite nature of God. “This name suggests that there is a mystery to the Creator God which mankind cannot fathom. God is the absolute, infinite Lord over creation and history.”¹

Trust (v. 2). This word (*batach*) has the meaning of fleeing to a place of solidity and firmness. Figuratively, it has the meaning of *trust*. The psalmist had placed his hope and trust in the Lord. He was resting in God even as the storms of life approached.

Rescue (v. 3). With verse 3, there is a shift as another speaker addresses the psalmist. The term for *rescue* (*natsal*) means “to snatch away” or “escape, defend, and deliver.” **Deliver** (v. 3). The term for *deliver* (*natsal*) means “to snatch away” or “escape, defend and rescue.”

Bird trap, Snare of the fowler, Fowler’s snare (v. 3). The psalmist’s enemies are personified using hunting imagery. Ancient artwork often depicts flocks of birds captured in cages or nets.

Destructive, Noisome, Deadly (v. 3). The term (*havvah*) means “deadly, destructive,” “corruption,” or “ruin.”

Plague, Pestilence (v. 3). That which destroys—a plague or pestilence (*deber*). It could include everything from disease to flood, hail to fire.

Cover (v. 4). The term (*sakak*) means to “fence in” or “cover over.” Figuratively, it means to protect—to “cover, defend, or hedge in.”

His feathers . . . his wings (v. 4). God’s protection has maternal qualities. Like a mother hen covering her young, God will cover those who trust Him with His protection (Ps. 17:8; Matt. 23:37).

Refuge, Thou shalt trust (v. 4). The term (*chasah*) means “to hide oneself” or “to flee for protection.” It suggests trust and hope.

His faithfulness (v. 4). God’s *faithfulness* (*emet*) has the characteristics of stability, certainty, and trustworthiness. He does the right thing at all times. God remains faithful to those who trust in Him both in the good times and the times of trial and tribulation. **His truth** (v. 4). The term *truth* (*emet*) can also be translated “faithfulness.” It has the characteristics of stability, certainty, and trustworthiness. God does the right thing at all times. He remains faithful to those who trust in Him both in the good times and the times of trial and tribulation.

A protective shield (v. 4). Two words are used to describe God’s protection of those who take refuge in Him. The first (*tsinnah*) is a large shield that protects the entire body. The second (*socherah*) is a smaller shield or buckler attached to the arm for close combat. The second term is sometimes translated as “rampart,” a defensive wall of a fortress or the wall surrounding a city. The two terms together emphasize that God’s protection completely surrounds those who place their trust in Him.

Shield (v. 4). The term (*tsinnah*) refers to a large shield that protects the entire body.

Buckler (v. 4). The term (*socherah*) describes a smaller shield or buckler attached to the arm for close combat. It is sometimes translated as “rampart,” a defensive wall of a fortress or the wall surrounding a city. Together the *shield* and *buckler* emphasize that God’s protection completely surrounds those who place their trust in Him. **Shield** (v. 4). The term (*tsinnah*) refers to a large shield that protects the entire body.

Rampart (v. 4). A *rampart* (*socherah*) is a defensive wall of a fortress or the wall surrounding a city. The term can also be translated as “buckler,” a smaller shield attached to the arm for close combat. Together the *shield* and *rampart* emphasize that God’s protection completely surrounds those who place their trust in Him.

Terror (v. 5). The term (*pachad*) means to be startled. It is a general term for fear. Negatively it can mean to be afraid; positively it means to stand in awe of someone or something. Fear is a natural reaction to the dangers of this life.

Night . . . day (v. 5). God is more than capable of protecting those who take refuge in Him from the unseen threats of the night and the visible threats of the daytime. They need not fear.

PlaguePestilence (v. 6). The term (*deber*) refers to an outbreak of disease that causes sickness and death.

PestilenceDestructionPlague (v. 6). The term (*qeteb*) comes from a root that means to “cut off, destroy, or ruin.” *Qeteb* refers to extermination, destruction, and devastation.

Stalks in darkness . . . ravages at noon, Walketh in darkness . . . Wasteth at noonday, Stalks in the darkness . . .

Destroys at midday (v. 6). The psalmist personified both plague, pestilence and pestilence, destruction, plague as wild animals stalking their prey in the darkness or ravaging their prey in broad daylight. Whether the psalmist saw the danger coming or not, he was under the protection of the God who sees everything and is more than capable of defending those who put their trust in Him from anything life throws at them.

Psalm 91:9-13

Connection to The Point: We can rest in God’s power to keep us secure.

Dwelling place, Habitation, Dwelling (v. 9). The psalmist had made the Lord his “refuge” (*machaseh*), but the Lord was also his *dwelling place, habitatio, dwelling (maon)*. While taking refuge may suggest a temporary action until the trouble had passed, the *dwelling place, habitation, dwelling* was a more permanent structure. Here it suggests that the believer has made God his dwelling place, where he has settled down to live and remain.

Harm, Evil (v. 10). The Hebrew word for *evil harm (ra)* is also a word for “evil.” It is used in relation to drought, famine, calamity, distress, and disease.

Will come to you, Befall thee, Overtake you (v. 10). The verb (*anah*) means to cause to happen. While God can and may place a hedge of protection around one who trusts in Him, this cannot be taken as a blanket promise of protection for all believers. Our experiences in the world bear this out—even believers experience pain and tragedy in this life. One of the most recent examples of this is COVID—believers were among the many who contracted COVID—and some even died. Furthermore, Jesus told His disciples that they would suffer persecution in His name (Matt. 10:22; John 15:18-21; see also 2 Tim. 3:12). Despite all of this, we can trust God as we go through life’s trials and tribulations. He will walk with us through them (Ps. 23:4) and nothing is out of His control (Rom. 8:28-30,38-39). He will not allow us to endure more than we can handle (1 Cor. 10:13), and in Christ we will share in His victory (15:25-27,51-57).

Plague (v. 10). This is a different term (*nega*) than “plague pestilence” (*deber*) in verses 3 and 6. *Nega* means “affliction” In addition to “plague” (Ex. 11:1), *nega* is translated as “disease” (Lev. 13:22), “assault” (Deut. 21:5), and “affliction” (1 Kings 8:38). In addition to “plague,” *nega* is translated as “reddish sore” (Lev. 13:43), “stroke” (in the sense of assault, Deut. 21:5), “stripes” (2 Sam. 7:14), and “wound” (Prov. 6:33). **Disaster** (v. 10). The term (*nega*) literally means “a blow” and figuratively “infliction.” It can also be translated as “diseases” (Gen. 12:17), “plague” (Ex. 11:1), “defiling disease” (Lev. 13:22), “sore” (Lev. 13:3), “assault” (Deut. 21:5), “skin disease” (Deut. 24:8), “afflictions” (1 Kings 8:38), “wounds” (Ps. 38:11), and “blows” (Prov. 6:33).

Command (v. 11). God's angelic hosts serve at God's command. He gives them His orders, which the angels then act on, carrying out the Lord's will, which includes serving and protecting believers (Gen. 19:10-11; 24:40; Isa. 63:9; Dan. 3:28). Another psalmist wrote, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them" (Ps. 34:7).

Angels (v. 11). *Angels* are created beings whose purpose is to serve God by delivering messages and carrying out His will. The Hebrew term is *malak* while the Greek term is *angelos*. Both words mean "messenger."

Orders, Charge (v. 11). God's angelic hosts serve at His command. God gives them His orders, which the angels then act on, carrying out the Lord's will, which includes serving and protecting believers (Gen. 19:10-11; 24:40; Isa. 63:9; Dan. 3:28). Another psalmist wrote, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and rescues them The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7).

Protect, Keep Guard (v. 11). The word *protectkeepguard (shamar)* means to "exercise great care over." Again, this isn't saying that bad things will never happen to the Lord's people, but rather that nothing happens outside the watchful eye of God. His eye is on the sparrow, and His eye is on His children (Matt. 6:25-26). He watches over His children in all their ways, in both the good times and the bad. One example of God watching over His people is Job, who suffered at the hands of Satan, but only as far as God would allow (Job 1-2).

Ways (v. 11). The term (*derek*) refers literally to a road. Figuratively it refers to a way of life, one's journey or actions.

Strike your foot, Dash thy foot (v. 12). The holy land has many pathways covered with stone, and the danger is always present to trip and stumble over them. This became a metaphor for stumbling in temptation and trials (Prov. 3:23). God may not always remove the trials and tribulations of life, but He does keep His children from stumbling over them. Satan quoted Psalm 91:12 as reason for Jesus to test God by jumping from the pinnacle of the temple. In response, Jesus quoted a portion of Deuteronomy 6:16, "Do not test the Lord your God, Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (see Luke 4:12). Believers today need to trust God, not test Him by holding to the mistaken view that suffering, trials, and tribulations will never touch the lives of God's faithful. Jesus said His followers would have suffering in this world (John 16:33), but we have a refuge during that suffering in God. Also as James wrote, the trials of this life serve a purpose in the lives of believers: "Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (Jas. 1:2-4).

Lion . . . young lion (v. 13). The term for *lion (shachal)* probably refers to a mature animal, while the *young lion (kephir)* refers to one that is still maturing. Together, they represent animals that hunt their prey. **Lion . . . great lion** (v. 13). These two terms refer to animals that hunt their prey.

Cobra, Adder (v. 13). The Hebrew term (*pethen*) refers to one of the species of venomous snakes found in Israel.

Serpent, Dragon (v. 13). *Serpent, Dragon* could refer to anything from a large snake to a reptile, or sea monster like a whale. In this case, it is parallel to the cobraadder, so it most likely refers to another form of venomous snake, though it could also be referring to a venomous reptile.

Will tread . . . will trample, Shalt tread . . . trample under feet (v. 13). The lion, cobra, and serpent dragon are metaphors for the dangerous troubles and calamities of life. Those who trust in the Lord will be victorious over all such dangers because God will give them the strength needed to conquer and crush these enemies (Rom. 8:37).

Psalm 91:14-16

Connection to The Point: God will work on our behalf to strengthen and help us.

Heart set on, Set his love, Because he loves me (v. 14). In this section of the psalm, God speaks, commending the person who has his *heart set on his love* on (*chashaq*) Him. The Hebrew term (*chashaq*) can also be translated “because he has his heart set on me.” The original meaning of the term is something that attached to something else. It came to describe love, which is the attachment of two people emotionally, spiritually, physically, and mentally. On some occasions, it describes God’s love for Israel (Deut. 7:7), but here it describes the psalmist’s love for God. “The psalmist does not just know about the Lord intellectually, but he truly knows the Lord personally. Consequently, the Lord affirms that he will deliver the one who is devoted to him, placing him high and out of danger.”²

Deliver, Rescue (v. 14). This Hebrew word (*palat*) is used either in praise for God’s deliverance (Ps. 18:2,43-44) or as a plea that God would deliver the one who calls out to Him in times of trouble (31:1; 40:17). God promises to *deliver rescue* the one who loves Him, and this word implies rescue and escape from that which threatens His child. That being said, “The Lord does not say *when* he will deliver the psalmist or *how*, but only that he will. Those who trust the Lord never have to walk through trouble alone. Instead, the Lord rescues them and restores them to honor.”³

Protect, Set . . . on high (v. 14). The Hebrew term (*sagab*) pictures someone being raised up so high as to be inaccessible and therefore safe from all danger and harm. God places the person going through a trial in the highest, most secure place there is, where only what the Lord sovereignly allows can touch the believer (Job. 1–2).

Knows, Hath known, Acknowledges (v. 14). In this context, to *know, know, acknowledge* (*yada*) someone is more than intellectual knowledge. It is an experiential knowledge that comes through a relationship. To know God is to know His ways and live them out in one’s life (John 14:15). Such knowledge comes through God’s revelation of Himself to the individual, particularly through His Word in conjunction with His Holy Spirit.

My name (v. 14). To know someone’s name (*shem*) was another way of saying that the individual was in a covenantal relationship with the person whose name he knows. The psalmist used four names of God in this psalm, describing various aspects of the Lord—“Most High” (*Elyon*, v. 1), “Almighty” (*Shadday*, v. 1), “Lord” (*YahwehJehovah*, v. 2), and “God” (*Elohim*, v. 2). To know God’s name is to know Him through the personal experience of being in relationship with Him.

Calls out . . . answer, Call upon . . . answer, Will call on . . . answer (v. 15). Those who have attached themselves to the Lord through the covenant of grace will pray when they experience difficult times (Ps. 118:5). God will not abandon them, for He answers the prayers of those who love Him. Sometimes His answer means deliverance from a trial, while at other times it means preservation in the midst of such trials. In all such cases, God is still answering those prayers. The key to such prayers is ultimately leaving the nature of God’s response to our prayers in His hands. Jesus modeled such prayer when He prayed to God on the night of His arrest in the garden of Gethsemane. He prayed that God would remove the suffering He was about to experience in His trial followed by His crucifixion. But He also prayed that God’s will would reign supreme: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me — nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Jesus’s glorification came by way of the cross (Heb. 12:1-2).

Rescue/Deliver (v. 15). The term (*chalatz*) means to “deliver/rescue, equip, and/or strengthen.”

Long life (v. 16). These words begin the verse in the Hebrew text (*orek yom*), placed there by the writer for emphasis. God satisfies the one who loves Him with a full and meaningful life, intended to accomplish all that He desires for that person. However, this passage cannot be taken as a blanket promise that all believers will experience long lives. Nor does this mean that such a life will be free from trials and tribulations. “This . . . must not be claimed as an absolute guarantee because other biblical passages in both the Old Testament and New Testament indicate that godly people do suffer according to the plan of God.”⁴

Satisfy (v. 16). The word (*sabea*) pictures someone who sits down to a scrumptious meal and eats until he is full. That person leaves the table completely satisfied. The word also suggests a sense of fullness in other areas of life. In addition to delivering believers from or through trials, God also satisfies the deepest longings of our hearts. In Christ, we find true love, joy, and peace.

A long life (v. 16). These words begin the verse in the Hebrew text (*orek yom*), placed there by the writer for emphasis. God satisfies the one who loves Him with a full and meaningful life, intended to accomplish all that He desires for that person. However, this passage cannot be taken as a blanket promise that all believers will experience long lives. Nor does this mean that such a life will be free from trials and tribulations. “This . . . must not be claimed as an absolute guarantee because other biblical passages in both the Old Testament and New Testament indicate that godly people do suffer according to the plan of God.”⁴

My salvation (v. 16). The Lord’s faithfulness and compassion are demonstrated through His acts of deliverance and salvation of those who love and obey Him. The greatest act of salvation is what God has done in the atoning work of Christ, through which those who put their faith in Christ receive forgiveness of their sins, are reconciled to God, and are given the gift of eternal life.

1. Brad Creed, “Names of God,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Chad Brand, rev. (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 1144.
2. Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, vol. 13, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), 188.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.