

Psalms: The Songs of the People of God

Psalm 91: Safe in the Care of God

Sunday, August 4, 2019

Introduction

In the Gospel of Mark we have an account of Jesus and disciples sailing across the Sea of Galilee. During the trip a large storm blows in and threatens to sink the ship. While the disciples fear for their lives Jesus is fast asleep in the back of the boat. In desperation they wake Him, but He doesn't rise in fear. He simply tells the storm to cease and then rebukes His friends: *"Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"* (Mark 4:35-40).

While we may be tempted to shake our heads at the disciple's lack of faith, most often we respond in very similar ways. We see a situation that seems too big or too dangerous and we begin to wonder if God has forgotten us.

Psalm 91 is a psalm of confidence that reminds us that God protects and preserves those who are His. Life will bring trouble and we will face danger, but as the people of God we can live above fear and trust that He will never let us fall (Romans 8:31-39).

Structure – Changes in Voice

As we read through the psalm there are three different voices that are used. The psalmist begins in the first person, claiming his own trust in God. Starting in verse 3 there is a shift into the second person as the psalmist tells the reader that God protects those who are His. Then, in the final section (vv. 14-16) we hear the voice of God as He reiterates that He will in fact protect and care for those who trust in Him.

A Statement of Personal Trust in God's Care (91:1-2)

- The psalm is saturated with pictures and images to help the reader meditate on the care of God. In verses 1-2 God is described as a shelter, a shadow, a refuge and a fortress. God's people can find safety and protection from danger as they draw near to Him (Psalm 46:1-3, 7).
- **The psalmist's testimony** – Before moving into the body of the psalm and exhorting others the psalmist makes clear His own trust in God. The point is highlighted by the repeated personal pronouns in verse 2.

A Declaration of God's Care for His People (91:3-4)

- **The presence of danger (vs. 3)** While this is a psalm about God's protection and care the psalmist refers often to the dangers that are present. He speaks through images and pictures, here describing being caught in a hunter's trap and then suffering from a deadly disease.

- **A God who draws near and fights our battles (vs. 4)** The vivid imagery continues as the psalmist describes God's intimate care (a mother bird) and His faithful protection (His shield and armor).

The Results of God's Care (91:5-8)

- **We will not fear (vv. 5-6)** While dangers come in various forms and at any time (day or night) those who trust in Him can live without fear.
- **We will not fall (vv. 7-8)** God will judge the wicked, but this is our hope – that as His people we don't have to fear His judgment. He will judge the world, but we will not fall (Exodus 9:4-7; 12:12-13).

The Means of God's Care (91:9-13)

- **The ones who God protects (vv. 9-10)** One thing that is emphasized throughout the psalm is that the promises of safety and care are not for everyone; they are reserved for the people of God.
- **Protected by angels (vv. 11-12)** The Bible teaches that angels are created by God and used by Him for different purposes. One way God uses angels is in the guarding and protecting of His people.
- **God's care should not be needlessly put to the test (Matt. 4:5-7)** When Satan tempted Jesus in the desert He quoted Psalm 91:11, calling on Jesus to trust the protection of God's angels. Jesus makes it clear that God's promise of protection is not to be tested. At the same time He shows us the need to rightly interpret and apply God's Word.

God's Promise of Care for His People (91:14-16)

- In this final section we hear the voice of God as he reiterates the promises of the psalm.
- **A promise of safety and rescue** – In these three verses God promises His care in seven different ways. The point is clear: God offers safety and rescue for those who are His.
- **Promises for the people of God** – Again we see that these promises are not universal, they are reserved for the people of God: those who know Him, hold fast to Him and call on Him. This is a relationship that is made possible through repentance and trust in Jesus Christ.

Summary - *The purpose of the text is to instill within us faith in God as the ultimate source of our protection from the dangers of life, even as we wait for the perfection of the life to come, when we will be categorically free from all danger.* – Mark Futato