

Psalm 91:9

- The Lord is my Refuge -

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Introduction

- ❖ The devil is portrayed in the New Testament quoting from this psalm. That must spark our interest. Why did he quote this Psalm to tempt Christ? Is it because the Psalm calls for strong confidence in the Lord, his power, and his faithfulness? The Psalm says:

- “If you make the Most High your dwelling
— even the Lord, who is my refuge—
then no harm will befall you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” (Psalm 91:9-12)

And:

“You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.” (Psalm 91:5-6)

- ❖ But the daily experience of almost everyone is different. People do experience terror, harm and disasters. People do get sick in many different ways. People do suffer from the hardships of life. Only a few seem to be exempted. See also Psalm 73. The question arises how to understand this Psalm, which is cited by the devil tempting our Lord Jesus Christ in the desert (Mt 4:5-8):

- Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “
‘He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” (The devil cites Psalm 91:11, 12)

Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

- ❖ Reading the Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ did suffer rejection, unbelief, the crucifixion, and ultimately death.
- ❖ To understand this Psalm fully, it is necessary to study its structure, the metaphors, the hyperboles, the rhetorical devices, such as suspense, and especially to have a look at the final part, Psalm 91:14-16:
 - “Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
He will call upon me,
and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.
With long life will I satisfy him
and show him my salvation.”
 - This part of the Psalm indicates that there are circumstances to be rescued from. The one who calls upon the Lord finds himself in trouble and is in need of deliverance.
 - Therefore this Psalm fits into the life story of Jesus Christ.
 - He called upon the Lord, his Father.
He found himself in, humanly speaking, severe troubles.
He was delivered from death and the grave.
He was honoured by his Father in the resurrection.
He is satisfied with long (eternal) life.
In Christ, the Father has shown his ultimate salvation, indeed my salvation.
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Book of Psalms. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Literary and historical context

- ❖ The historical context and the author of Psalm 91 are not known.
- ❖ The textual context: Psalm 91 is part of the fourth book of Psalms (Psalm 90-106).

Form and structure

- ❖ Psalm 91 consists of five parts.¹

Statement of Faith	
(verse 1-2)	¹ He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ² He says of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”
Assurances	
(verse 3-8) <i>Note the use of “you(r)”.</i>	³ Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. ⁴ He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. ⁵ You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, ⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. ⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. ⁸ You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.
Prayer	
(verse 9a)	⁹ Yes, Lord, you are my refuge!

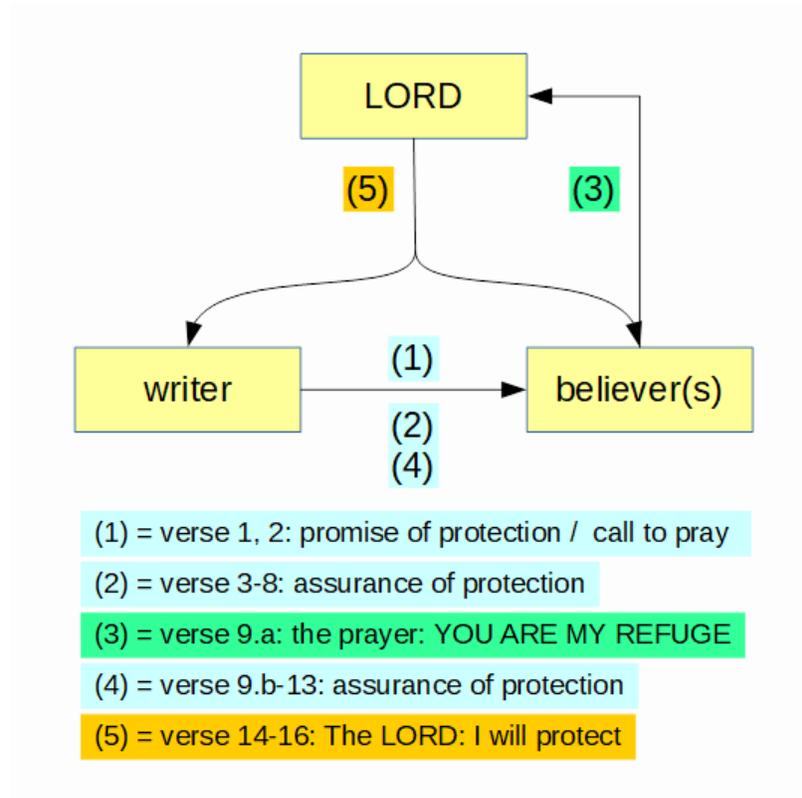
¹ VanGemenen, W. A. (2008, p. 700). *Psalms*. In T. Longman III & D. E. Garland (Ed., Vol. 5).

Assurances	
<p><i>(verse 9b-13)</i> <i>Note the use of "you"</i></p>	<p>⁹ You have made the Most High your habitation"² ¹⁰ and so no disaster will strike you, no violence will come near your home. ¹¹ God will put his angels in charge of you to protect you wherever you go. ¹² They will hold you up with their hands to keep you from hurting your feet on the stones. ¹³ You will trample down lions and snakes, fierce lions and poisonous snakes.</p>
Statement of Faithfulness by God	
<p><i>(verse 14-16)</i> <i>Note that God is speaking</i></p>	<p>¹⁴ "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. ¹⁵ He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. ¹⁶ With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."</p>

² Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 805).

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

- ❖ The following pattern of communication can be discovered WITHIN the Psalm:



- ❖ The Psalm has an ABCB'A'-structure.
 - A = statement of faith in God – (the use of “he”)
 - B = assurance (the use of “you(r)”)
 - The actual PRAYER (The use of “I”)
 - B' = assurance (the use of “you(r)”)
 - A' = statement of faithfulness by God (the use of “he”)

The Rhetorical technique of suspense

- ❖ It is interesting to look at this Psalm from the perspective of suspense. Suspense is a literary device, already used in antiquity. “Suspense is a state of mental uncertainty, anxiety, of being undecided, or of being doubtful.”³ This uncertainty is intended by the author. “In

³ Suspense. (2019, November 5). Retrieved February 24, 2020, from Wikipedia website: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suspense>

literature, films, television, and plays, **suspense is a major device for securing and maintaining interest.** It may be of several major types: in one, the outcome is uncertain and **the suspense resides in the question of who, what, or how;** in another, the outcome is inevitable from foregoing events, and the suspense resides in the audience's anxious or frightened anticipation in the question of *when*. Readers feel suspense when they are deeply curious about *what* will happen next, or when they know what is likely to happen but don't know *how* it will happen.”⁴ This can be illustrated by Matthew 4:5-11.

- The modern reader who is familiar with this text already knows the outcome, and unfortunately, the suspension is often lost. But it can be recovered, **by pausing and asking questions about when what, or how while reading.**

When answering the first temptation Jesus said to the devil:

“It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” (Ps 91:11, 12)

Pause for a moment

Suspension.

What will happen? What will Jesus do? What will Jesus answer? *Jesus has already assured that he (as a man) lives on every word (the written word) that comes out of the mouth of God.*

To test him at this point, the devil cites Psalm 91 verse 11 and 12. The reader must be aware that the Devil is implicitly referring to the first verses of Psalm 91. Jesus is not standing near a cliff, but on the highest point of the temple, the house of his Father, where the children of God find there refuge (Ps 91:1, 2). Will Jesus really live on every word?

Human experience teaches us that throwing yourself from the highest point of the temple, will cause at least severe injuries but more probably death. Is it really true that God “will command his angels concerning” Jesus? There is also the implicit contrast between “live on every word”, and impending death!

⁴ Suspense. (2019, November 5). Retrieved February 24, 2020, from Wikipedia website:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suspense>

If Matthew could have produced a film, he might have paused for a moment during this scene.

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Pause for a moment

Suspension.

*At this moment, we still do not fully know what it means to Jesus to **live on every word**. At this point, we know that he doesn't accept abuse of the word of God by the devil or by anyone to test the Lord.*

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Suspension.

*We are still in **doubt**, **how and when God will command his angels** concerning Jesus (and me). The reader (I) might become disillusioned: "Now I still do not know how I can apply the assurances of Psalm 91 to my personal life."*

It seems to be that the third temptation is drawing the attention of the reader away from Psalm 91 to the main question, the question of worship, leaving him still in doubt about the outcome.

Then the reader comes to verse 11:

Then the devil left him, **and angels came and attended him.**

The suspension comes to an end.

God, the Father is faithful to his word. Angels attended Jesus. Jesus lives on every word which comes from the mouth of God. And God decides when and how!

- ❖ Does the literary device of suspension help us to understand Psalm 91 more fully?
 - The writer of Psalm tries to convince the reader and invites him to trust the Lord and seek refuge with him. He is doing so by setting an example of a fictional third person.

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." (verse 1).

Suspension

The writer wants to convince the reader and uses the literary device of the hyperbole (see below). You can trust the Lord. He will protect you!

Then at the centre of Psalm, the believer doesn't hesitate any longer. He prays a short prayer.

YES LORD, YOU ARE MY REFUGE! (verse 9.a)⁵

Suspension

Will the Lord God answer his prayer? Within the Psalm, some time elapses the prayer and the answer of God. The believer might ask himself why doesn't the Lord answer my prayer immediately? Why do I have to wait?

The writer fills this gap in time with new assurances. And, then there is suddenly the voice of God. He has heard the prayer.

He will call upon me, and I will answer him (verse 15).

The end of the suspension

The Lord assures that he really answers him, who calls upon him. The Lord will do this when, where and how he thinks is best.

Metaphor

- ❖ A metaphor is very often used as a literary and rhetorical device, especially in poetry. It belongs to the same group as the simile. The simile compares two things: "A loud voice like a trumpet" (Rev 1:10), whereas the metaphor creates an implicit comparison: "I heard a trumpet saying." The trumpet serves as a metaphor for "a loud voice."
- ❖ A metaphor consists of two parts: which are called the tenor(1) and the vehicle(2). The tenor(1) is the subject to which attributes are ascribed. The vehicle(2) is the object whose attributes are borrowed. In the example given above, the tenor(1) is "a voice", the vehicle(2) is "a trumpet" and the attribute is "loud". Often, more attributes might be applicable.
- ❖ Look at "the fowler's snare" (Ps 91:3).
 - The tenor(1) is "a danger", the implicit comparison.
 - The vehicle(2) is "the fowler's snare."
 - The attributes are "hidden trap," "catching by surprise", "inescapable when trapped", "deliberately."

Hyperbole

- ❖ **Hyperbole is the use of exaggeration** as a rhetorical device or figure of speech. In poetry, such as the Psalms, it emphasizes, evokes strong feelings, and creates strong impressions. As

⁵ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, P. 805).

a figure of speech, it is usually not meant to be taken literally. The Lord Jesus used sometimes hyperboles such as the one found in “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away” (Mt 5:29).

The use of hyperboles generally relays feelings or emotions from the speaker, or from those who the speaker may talk about, in the case of Psalm 91, the Lord God.

Psalm 91:7:

“A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.”

If taken literally, this hyperbole would contradict the experience of many people, for instance, soldiers in Biblical and recent wars, and of ordinary Christians who suffer from the adversities of life, or by persecution. The meaning of this hyperbole is: have high expectations of the power and wisdom of God.

Parallellismus membrorum

- ❖ Parallellismus membrorum is a special feature of Biblical literature, especially of the Old Testament Wisdom Literature, i.e. The Book of Job, Psalms and Proverbs. It “is also present, although less prominent, in biblical prose. It can be defined as the repetition of the same or related semantic content and/or grammatical structure in consecutive lines or verses.”⁶
- ❖ There are three kinds of parallelism:
 - Synonymous parallelism.
 - Two or three (or even four) lines express the same thought. Verse 5, 6 is an example:
 1. You will not fear the terror of night,
 2. nor the arrow that flies by day,
 3. nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
 4. nor the plague that destroys at midday.
 - Verse 13 is an example of two lines:
 1. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra;
 2. you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
 - Syntactical parallelism

⁶ See for more information: Berlin, A. (1992). *Parallelism*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.)(Vol. 5, p. 155).

- In verse 4, the third line is partly a conclusion/application of the first and second line (his feathers – his wings – his faithfulness):
 1. He will cover you with his feathers,
 2. and under his wings you will find refuge;
 3. his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- A special case is the climactic or expansive parallelism. The following sequence can be noticed in verse 15: he will call > I will answer him > be with him > deliver him > honour him
 1. He will call upon me,
 2. and I will answer him;
 3. I will be with him in trouble,
 4. I will deliver him and honour him.
- Antithetical parallelism
 - The third line contrasts the first and the second line, as is shown by verse 7:
 1. A thousand may fall at your side,
 2. ten thousand at your right hand,
 3. but it will not come near you.

Exposition

Remark

- ❖ The context of this Psalm is not known. There are no references to historical circumstances.

Verse 1-2 Statement of faith

- ❖ This is a statement of faith and trust. This same faith is expressed by different Psalms (3:5; 27:5; 32:7; 64:2.) It is best understood within the context of the covenant.
- ❖ **“Shelter”, “shadow”, “fortress”** are metaphors, images to describe the protection provided by the Lord.
 - In verse 4 comparable images are used: **“his feathers”, “his wings”**. These two belong to the same group as “shelter” and “shadow”. **“Shield”** and **“rampart”** belong to the same group as **“fortress.”** These or comparable metaphors are often used in the Psalms (Ps 5:12, 17:8, 36:7, 57:1 a.o.). Psalm 18:2 provides also a very good example.
- ❖ There are four different references to God: **“Most High”, “Almighty”, “Lord”** and **“God.”**

- **“Most High”** = “עֶלְיֹן”⁷: He is the supreme God.
- **“Almighty”** = “גֹּבַהּ”⁷: Translated into παντοκράτωρ (Greek) and into *omnipotens* (Latin).⁷
 - By this name God made himself known to Abraham (Gen 17:1): “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘I am **God Almighty**; walk before me and be blameless.’” See also Genesis 28:3 and 35:11.
- **“rest”** = **to be resident throughout the night**.⁸ In verse 5 and 6, there are references to the night and its dangers.
- ❖ **“I will say of the Lord.”** It is also possible to read **“He will say to the Lord”** (RSV), which is preferred. But this doesn’t have much effect on the meaning of the Psalm.
 - Translators experience a similar problem in verse 9.a and are emending the text (NIV). In that particular verse, emendation does have an effect on the meaning of the Psalm. (See above)

Verse 3-8 Assurances

- ❖ In these verses, the author uses different metaphors to describe the dangers man can encounter. Some might refer to real diseases and plagues. All are aimed at to kill and cause death and destruction.
 - Some commentators think that these words refer to demons. This is, I think, the problem of the modern reader engaging with the ancient text. These words are probably “used in a general sense of natural dangers and epidemics, with no thought of demons as their cause.”⁹ Or real dangers caused by “the wicked,” who are mentioned in verse 8.
 - Metaphors can have a wide range of explanations. And perhaps, it is not a metaphor at all. So “deadly pestilence” can refer to real deadly epidemic diseases, killing many people. In this case “deadly pestilence” is not a metaphor. But if “deadly pestilence” is a metaphor, it can refer to “the wicked” who want to kill the righteous.
 - Bratcher and Reyburn comment: “*The arrow* in verse 5b may be human or demonic dangers; Anderson suggests a sunstroke may be meant.”¹⁰
 - It is better to try the arrow as a metaphor (see above) and to analyse it looking at attributes.

⁷ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000, p. 1421).

⁸ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000, p. 529).

⁹ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 804).

¹⁰ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, 803).

- The tenor(1) is “a danger”, the implicit comparison.
The vehicle(2) is “the arrow.”
The attributes are “a missile shot from a distance” “it can kill.”
(An arrow was shot during day time because during the night the enemy could not target his victim.)
- ❖ **“A fowler’s snare.”** See also Psalm 124:7 and Psalm 141:9, 10:
 - “Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, from the traps set by evildoers. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by in safety.”
 - “Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or **birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them**” (Ec 9:12).
- ❖ **“Cover with his feathers.”** Look at similar images:
 - “In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions.” (Dt 32:10, 11). See also the following Psalms: Ps 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7.
- ❖ **“Faithfulness”, “trustworthiness”** preludes verse 14-16!
 - “By the word **“truth”** the psalmist means God’s faithfulness to his word, his covenant promises.”¹¹
- ❖ **“A thousand”** and **“ten thousand”** are used as hyperboles, a rhetoric device which must not be taken literally, but figuratively and which are meant urge and to convince by the author to trust God. (See above.)
 - This might refer to death caused by warfare or by pestilence.
- ❖ **“Only”** may be translated **“Just open your eyes and you will see ...”** or **“All you have to do is look, and you will see....”**¹²
 - Ross suggests: “It appears from verses 7 and 8 that the plagues, terrors, and traps enumerated here are things that the LORD brings on the nation for disobedience (see Lev 26), but those who make the LORD their refuge, hopefully the whole nation, have nothing to fear. The believers who are safe in the LORD will see the devastating punishment of the wicked.”¹³

¹¹ Ross, A. P. (2016, p. 52).

¹² Bratcher, R. G., & Rebyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 804).

¹³ Ross, A. P. (2016, p. 53).

- This suggestion is not completely in accordance with verse 14-16, where the believer is also in trouble, from which the Lord will rescue him.
- ❖ **“The wicked.”** The wicked are often portrayed as sinners but also foes of the righteousness. See Psalm 139:19-22:
 - “If only you would slay the wicked, O God! from me, you bloodthirsty men! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name.”

Verse 9.a *The prayer*

- ❖ **“Yes, Lord, you are my refuge!”**
 - “I” is the one who has been convinced. Amidst all dangers surrounding “I”, “I” is following the example set in verse 1 and 2. “I” is convinced to call the Lord his refuge he has received all these assurances.

Verse 9.b-13 *Assurances*

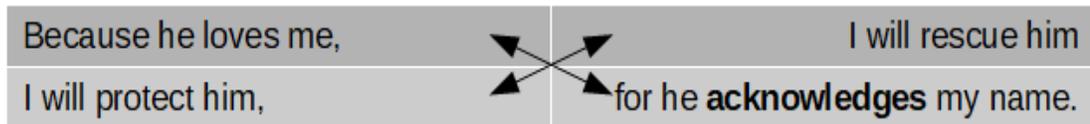
- ❖ The following assurances serve again as a suspension. Will the Lord answer? How will the Lord answer? When will the Lord answer? God doesn’t always answer our petitions immediately. Often we have to wait. See above, and especially how suspension functions in the narrative of the temptation in the desert.
- ❖ **“You have made the Most High your habitation.”** The writer continues to assert the “I.” You have done the right thing and you will not be disappointed.
- ❖ **“Angels”** God will protect you by his angels. “Weiser comments that the language expresses ‘the almost motherly solicitude of God.’ The angels ‘will carry him like a child, carefully and protectively.’¹⁴
 - “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them” (Ps 34:7). See also Psalm 71:4. See also 2 Kgs 6:16, 17; Mt 18:10; Heb 1:14.
 - “If the Lord delights in a man’s way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand” (Ps 37:23, 24).
- ❖ **“Lion”** and **“cobra”** are again metaphors for dangerous, strong, suddenly appearing dangers.
 - He will give you the power and strength to face the problems. You will tread upon the line and the cobra.

Verse 14-16 *Statement of God’s faithfulness*

- ❖ These verses show that believers, the children of God, the people of God still encounter problems, from which they need to be **rescued** and **delivered**, against which they need to be **protected**.

¹⁴ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 806).

- ❖ **“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, “for he acknowledges my name.”**
 - This is chiasmic or cross-structure. Both parts explain each other. To love God = to acknowledge his name. And to rescue = to protect him.



- A chiasmic structure emphasizes the message.
 - The love of God and the acknowledgement of his name is expressed in verse 2: “I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’” And in verse 9.a: **Yes, Lord, you are my refuge!**
- ❖ **“He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.”**
 - This is very nice climactic verse: call upon > answer > be with him > deliver him > honor him.
 - This honour is expressed in: **“With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.”**
- ❖ **“With a long life.”** See also Psalm 21:4; 23:6; 93:5; 102:24.
- ❖ **“Show him my salvation.”** Below are some important examples from Scripture given, for instance, the story of Joseph, the people of Israel, and of course the life of Jesus.

Application

Short overview

- ❖ The writer of this Psalm urgently calls the reader, and the listener to trust God and seek his refuge and his protection (verse 1, 2). He also gives the words of a short prayer:
 - **“I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’”**
- ❖ He tries to convince the reader to trust God by using several hyperboles (verse 3-8).
- ❖ The believer is convinced! A short prayer follows: **“Yes, Lord, you are my refuge!”** (verse 9).
- ❖ The Lord doesn’t always answer our prayers, even when we are in serious trouble, he can even wait for years to answer. Again the writer comforts the believer. Trust the Lord. He will send his angels! He will protect you! (verse 9-13).
- ❖ Finally, the Lord himself assures the believers with a beautiful climax: call upon > answer > be with him > deliver him > honor him (verse 14-16).

Remark

- ❖ The use of metaphors and hyperboles opens up a whole range of possible applications.

- When Christians are persecuted they can face traps, lies, slander, oppression. All can be covered.

Praise

- ❖ Praise God, our heavenly Father. He is faithful to his covenant. He is our deliverer. He is like a fortress. When we call him, he will answer.
 - Note that man ultimately cannot deliver and save himself. We are completely dependent on the salvation of the Lord.
- ❖ Christ is our refuge and saviour. See also Romans 8:38,39.

Call to Pray and Trust

- ❖ “Do you live in close fellowship with God? Do you rest in the shadow of the Almighty? Is he your place of habitual dwelling? The psalm is written to urge you to trust and cling to God in all circumstances.”¹⁵

Lessons

- ❖ “Some argue that the teachings of this psalm are simply not true. They think of someone who was not protected from or delivered from calamity and conclude on that basis that this psalm is mistaken. What are we to say about this?”¹⁶ Furthermore, be aware of feelings of disappointment, failure, lack of faith when people hear this psalm.
- ❖ To understand and apply this Psalm to the lives of people who especially are facing difficulties, it is advisable to have first a look at:
 - The story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50).
 - “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Gen 50:20).
 - The exodus of the people of Israel (Exodus 1-19).
 - “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles wings and brought you to myself” (Ex 19:4).
 - The story of Job.
 - The life of David (1 and 2 Samuel).
 - The life of Paul (Acts 7-28; and the letters of Paul, in which he writes about himself).
 - “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).
 - **The life of Jesus, our Lord.**
 - **“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by**

¹⁵ Boice, J. M. (2005, p. 748).

¹⁶ Ellsworth, R. (2006, p. 40).

God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:22-24).

- ALL these stories speak of afflictions, dangers, hardships, and of salvation – and people can identify themselves with (parts of) these stories. Augustine of Hippo is a profitable source.¹⁷

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