

Peace or Panic?

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Psalm 91:1–16 (NKJV) “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.’ ³ Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. ⁴ He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. ⁵ You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, ⁶ Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. ⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. ⁸ Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked. ⁹ Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, ¹⁰ No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; ¹¹ for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. ¹² In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. ¹³ You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. ¹⁴ Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. ¹⁵ He shall 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 I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.”

As I write this article, our nation is experiencing a virus pandemic that has caused a panic in the hearts of millions. This pandemic and panic is threatening the two most important things people care about in our nation—health care and the economy. The secondary consequence is a change in our lives and in our lifestyles. In such a time as this we must ask ourselves, “Will we be controlled by peace or panic?” That is a difficult question to answer for most. How can we have peace in the midst of panic?

The word “panic” is derived from the name of the Greek god Pan, the god of pastures, flocks, and shepherds. He is represented as having the legs, horns, and ears of a goat.¹ He is able to cause mental or emotional distress and induce men to flee in unreasonable fear. The definition of panic is “a sudden unreasoning terror often accompanied by mass flight and by extreme measures to protect property.”² The essence of panic is fear. The essence of peace is faith. The root of fear is insecurity. The essence of peace is security that comes through faith. Are you secure? If so, you have peace. If not, you will panic with fear. In light of this another question must be asked, “What is the basis of your security? In what are you trusting? Unfortunately, nothing in this world offers a lasting basis of security and peace.

Where does peace come from? The Bible says that peace comes from God. He is the God of peace: *“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”*³ God’s peace comes through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your*

¹ Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). [Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary](#). (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

² Ibid.

³ Philippians 4:9 (NKJV)

heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."⁴ The peace that Jesus gives is not based upon the conditions of the world. As such, the world cannot take His peace away from us.

Unfortunately, we do not always experience the peace that Jesus gives. Why is this? It is because peace comes from a heart and mind stayed on the LORD: *"You will keep him in perfect peace (Lit. "peace peace"), whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."*⁵ How do we keep our minds stayed on the Lord when we are confronted with issues that cause anxiety? The answer is through prayer. Philippians 4:6–7 (NKJV) says, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* As we take our problems to the Lord in faith, we lay them down at the feet of the One who can take care of them and who can take care of us. We express our faith that He has heard us when we give Him thanks. Thanksgiving is an expression of our faith in God's faithfulness to do what He has said.

Our peace is often challenged by the things we hear and see around us. We need assurance from God. That is why Jesus said: *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*⁶ God's peace is possible even in the midst of the storm. His peace is possible even in the time of tribulation. His peace is found in knowing that God loves us and cares about us and is in control of the details and outcome of our lives.

Psalm 91 contains many of God's promises that can bring peace in the time of trouble. I want to point out five different categories of promise that I see in this psalm.

First is the promise of His *preservation*. Consider the following verses:

Psalm 91:3 (NKJV) *"Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the perilous pestilence."*

Psalm 91:9-10 (NKJV) *"Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, ¹⁰ no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;"*

Psalm 91:15 (NKJV) *"He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him."*

Psalm 91:16 (NKJV) *"With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation."*

Second is the promise of His *protection*.

Psalm 91:1 (NKJV) *"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."*

Psalm 91:4 (NKJV) *"And He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler."*

⁴ John 14:27 (NKJV)

⁵ Isaiah 26:3 (NKJV)

⁶ John 16:33 (NKJV)

Psalm 91:11-12 (NKJV) *“For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. ¹² In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”*

It is important to point out that God’s protection (or any of God’s promises) is not guaranteed to the presumptuous. Satan quoted Psalm 91:7-8 to Jesus in the wilderness to tempt Him into tempting God. Testing God is attempting to make God prove Himself by presuming upon His Word.

Third is the promise of His *peace*.

Psalm 91:5 (NKJV) *“You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, ⁶ nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. ⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. ⁸ Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked.”*

Peace is knowing that God and His angels are with us and are watching over us.

Fourth is the promise of His *power*.

Psalm 91:13 (NKJV) *“You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.”*

Fifth is the promise of His *presence*.

Psalm 91:15 (NKJV) *“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.”*

These are wonderful promises! Yet we all know believers who have not experienced their fullness. Is God a liar or is there something we are missing? Psalm 91 is not a magical incantation. The promises of Psalm 91 are predicated on meeting the conditions of the first two verses. First, we must “dwell” in the secret place of the Most High. These promises are not for casual visitors. The “secret place” speaks of the place of God’s presence in His tabernacle (Psalm 27:5). Jesus applies it to the place of private prayer (Matthew 6:5-6). We must live in the place of prayer in His presence. The name “Most High” (*Elyon*) refers to the God who is highest in elevation. There is none higher. These shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. The name “Almighty” (*Shaddai*) refers to the God who is omnipotent and all powerful. When we dwell under the “wings” of the highest and most powerful Being in the universe, we can find peace regardless of the situation.

How shall we respond when fear wants to take over our hearts and minds? Here are seven principles. First, combat fear with faith in God and His promises. Stop worrying about what you cannot control. Second, draw near to God in the secret place of prayer. Ask God for His help and wisdom. Third, profess your faith in YAHWEH as your refuge, your fortress, and your God in whom you will trust. Fourth, claim God’s promises as your own. Fifth, don’t be presumptuous; be wise. Take responsible precautions based in wisdom for the sake of yourself and others. Sixth, find creative ways to do the work of God in light of the current situation. Be willing to adapt and change. Seventh, minister to the weak, vulnerable, and affected. These are the ones on God’s heart.

Trouble surrounds us but Christ indwells us. We must choose to dwell in Him. Circumstances tempt us to worry and panic, but Jesus has offered us His peace instead. Don't be controlled and paralyzed by fear. Choose faith over fear. Choose peace over panic. In closing, consider the benediction of the apostle Paul: *"Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."*⁷ Peace be with you! Amen!

⁷ 2 Corinthians 13:11 (NKJV)