

Psalm 91:3-4

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-91/psalm-913-4/>

God is the Deliverer who overcomes evil with good. It is the unyielding faithfulness of the Lord Himself that creates this protective environment for those who abide in His care.

Shifting in form through direct address in the 2nd person perspective, the psalmist regales the listener with a poetic listing of the sorts of benefits that come from placing one's fullest faith and unyielding confidence in Yahweh, saying *For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence.*

As is true in our own time, there were any number of threatening dangers regularly presenting themselves to people in the Biblical world. Verses 3–6 assure the faithful that the Lord is an active presence offering deliverance from truly frightening predicaments. Circumstances may push the Lord's people into grave situations, but Yahweh is the deliverer who will break the hold of that which intends to harm His own.

In verse 3 *the snare of the trapper* may be understood as poetic reference to the various and grievous accidents or unexpected circumstances that can entangle the unsuspecting over the span of a lifetime. Hebrews presents sin as a snare that can entangle us, preventing us from reaching the potential God has for us (Hebrews 12:1-2). It is God who can *deliver* us from such a *snare*.

With the phrase *deadly pestilence*, perhaps the listener is also being warned of unfortunate experiences that come from being caught in the plots of unsavory miscreants who take advantage of their victims. (In the New Testament, 1 Peter 5:8 sounds a similar warning.) The *deadly pestilence* may be read either as a literal reference to sickness that ends life, or as a metaphor describing an individual's self-consuming moral corruption. Scripture has examples of both. But since it is appointed to man once to die, it seems likely that the metaphor has the more universal application (Hebrews 9:27).

In deliverance from both the *snare of the trapper* and *deadly pestilence* there is Yahweh's providential care. The psalmist declares a unique sort of deliverance—a thorough release and redemption—from the worst such soul-crushing happenstances might seek to impose upon those who abide in the Lord. God alone is the source of the impossible being made possible (Jeremiah 32:17; Luke 1:37). It is He who can make good come out of bad (Romans 8:28). God is the Deliverer who overcomes evil with good. When we trust in Him, we are trusting the One who is trustworthy.

Verse 4 states *He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.* This verse offers surprising and compelling evidence that strength can be delivered in gentleness as well as through sheer might or power. The psalmist offers two extraordinarily opposing descriptions of Yahweh's protective inclinations. The first likens the Lord's encompassing care to the embrace of a protective bird over its brood; *He will cover you with His pinions.* Feathers (Hebrew, “*ebrah*”) and wing span (Hebrew, “*kanaph*”)

provide warmth and a buffer against the onslaught of nature's elements. The parenting bird absorbs and deflects rude intrusions that otherwise the chicks would suffer. Beneath gently protective wings, the helpless offspring are kept safe, *under His wings you may seek refuge*. There is here a premonition of what the Bible would say regarding that which Jesus Christ suffered on our behalf:

“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

(1 Peter 2:24)

The second description of Yahweh's protection provided in verse 4 communicates rugged impenetrability; *His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark*. A well-made shield (Hebrew, “tsinnah”) is crafted to both absorb and deflect the energy exerted from a kinetic blow, thus protecting its bearer.

The adjoining descriptive term rendered *bulwark* can also be translated “buckler,” referring to a small but tough and maneuverable shield, worn on one's arm for use in direct combat (Hebrew, “socherah”). Many popular English translations prefer *bulwark* for this second depiction. A *bulwark* is an unmovable, massive fortification structure designed to prevent injury by outside forces to those within its confines. It is the unyielding *faithfulness* of the Lord Himself that creates this protective environment for those who take *shelter* and *abide* in His care. The classic hymn written by Martin Luther, leaning heavily into similar imagery, has uplifted Christians' spirits for centuries:

“A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.”

(Martin Luther, *ca.* 1529)

It is God's *faithfulness* that makes Him completely trustworthy. God never fails. He never changes (Hebrews 13:8). He never sleeps nor slumbers (Psalm 121:1). His promises never fail (Romans 11:29).

Biblical Text

**³ For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper
And from the deadly pestilence.**

**⁴ He will cover you with His pinions,
And under His wings you may seek refuge;
His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.**