

# Psalm 91:8-13

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-91/psalm-918-13/>

*Because of the Lord's providential care, those faithful to Him will overcome all manner of adversity. If difficulty comes into our lives, God has authorized it, and we can trust that it is for our best. His ministering spirits see to our care and protection.*

The next six verses of psalm 91 continue to reassure the faithful who depend fully upon Yahweh's protective concern. Verse 8 suggests there will be "degrees of separation" between the faithful and the events or circumstances that cause broader human suffering: *You will only look on with your eyes, And see the recompense of the wicked.*

Those who steadfastly *abide* (v. 1) and *trust* (v. 2) in the Lord will *look* (to perceive) and *see* (to perceive and understand). These faithful witnesses will perceive and understand, perhaps through experience, the very real calamities and sorrows that beset the world.

Those who reject God's providential love and sovereignty, and so become *the wicked*, will continue to suffer the inevitable consequences—*the recompense*—of unshielded exposure to evil and "sin which so easily entangles" (Hebrews 12:1). Those who trust in God, and dwell in His shelter, will be able to look upon evil circumstances in a fallen world and see justice, *the recompense of the wicked*. This *recompense of the wicked* may be seen through the eyes of faith. This world is full of injustice. But because the one who trusts in God also trusts in God's justice, they will see through the eyes of faith that God will fully *recompense* all that is evil.

It could also be that the wisdom of the one who can *see* because of their faith will be able to discern the *recompense* that is embedded within all *wickedness*. As Romans 1 demonstrates, the wrath of God is revealed against *wickedness* through God giving people over to their desires. They fall into slavery to their passions, resulting in addiction and loss of mental stability (Romans 1:18, 22, 24, 26). However, the world constantly spins an illusion that death is life. Perhaps those who rest under the wings of God are able to see with clearer eyes of reality.

God's people may *see* and experience the reality of tribulation but they will have the ultimate hope of redemption. Those who *look* to Yahweh in all of life's circumstances need "not be afraid" (verse 5) because God is with them:

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."  
(Joshua 1:9)

The preposition *For* in the beginning of verse 9, *For you have made the Lord, my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place* is to be understood as "because of." God's people can be confident of these assurances—that we can trust God through difficulties—precisely because of their wholehearted trust in and dedication to the Lord's keeping. These protections occur when believers make God their *refuge*. When they make God's presence their *dwelling place*.

By such dedication, the faithful become the cherished subjects of Yahweh's protection. The *Lord*, Yahweh, is the *Most High*. A repetition of this title *the Lord* initially used in verse 1, is a reminder to the faithful that God cannot be surpassed nor overtaken (2 Samuel 7:22). Under His protection is found the only lasting *refuge* from all that harms life and threatens the soul (Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4-5). Those who make Yahweh their *dwelling place* gain the benefit of God's invincible presence and eternal purposes.

Verses 10 through 13 are bold proclamations of supremely confident reassurances for those who keep faith with Yahweh. Verse 10, *No evil will befall you, Nor will any plague come near your tent* is absolute in the declaration that neither *evil* (Hebrew, "raah") nor *plague* (Hebrew, "nega") will have the final say over the dedicated believer.

They will not *befall* or *come near* enough to permanently infect nor deflect the good of the faithful person's God-given destiny.

These two descriptors *evil* and *plague* are used as generalized terms encompassing virtually anything that troubles one's peace and secure contentment. *Plague* includes but is not limited to the various afflictions, assaults, diseases, repeated distresses and other intrusions into an otherwise untroubled life. *Evil* points to any form of adversity, calamity, injury or pain, as well as to the inevitable products of wickedness and immorality.

While *plague* and *evil* may be prominent features of human experience in a fallen world, they cannot and will not thwart the ultimate redemption of those who make *the Lord*, Yahweh, their *dwelling place* (verse 9). God will cause all things to work for good to those who love and trust Him (Romans 8:28).

Verses 11 and 12 rise in tone to that of prophetic utterance: *For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, that you do not strike your foot against a stone.* The psalmist invokes the powerful imagery of active celestial beings as surety of God's protective care. *Angels* will *guard* the individual who gives himself or herself in faithful commitment to the Lord.

Their charge or assignment from God is all-encompassing: *to guard you in all your ways*. The angels are not wardens, keepers who restrain and punish. They are companions, deeply concerned—even involved—with the well-being and eternal destiny of each individual under *the Lord*, Yahweh's salvific care. In a warmly intimate portrayal of God's provision, the psalmist depicts the Lord's faithful follower being caught up in the supportive, embracing grasp of the angelic presence.

The portraiture of angelic attendance was so compelling that centuries later, at the outset of the earthly ministries of Jesus, the devil unsuccessfully attempted to pervert its redemptive intent and so sway the Son of God from His single-minded commitment to the Father's purposes, quoting this psalm and tempting Jesus to demonstrate its truth by jumping from the top of the temple (Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:10-11). Jesus answered with another scripture from Deuteronomy, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Deuteronomy 6:16). This tells us an important thing

about applying this verse: it is God who will determine our best. It is for us to trust His ways. When we trust His ways, we can be assured that they are for our best.

The Gospel of Mark reports that “angels were ministering to Him” during Jesus’s time of preparation in the wilderness (Mark 1:13). As unimaginable suffering of the crucifixion drew close, Jesus again received angelic help to strengthen Him for what lay ahead (Luke 22:43). Scripture expands this to say that angels are ministering spirits sent by God to help believers (Hebrews 1:14). Jesus also told His disciples to give high esteem to children because their guardian angels continually see the face of God the Father (Matthew 18:10).

This is incredibly encouraging for the believer who trusts in God. God’s angels have a number of charges. They are to *guard* the faithful of God *in all their ways*. Even to carry you if necessary, to *bear you up in their hands*. Even to keep you from “stumping your toe” so to speak, that you do not *strike your foot against a stone*. This indicates that the angels care about the small things. And in the presence of great danger as well; the angels will allow you to *tread upon the lion and cobra. The young lion and the serpent you will trample down*. This all means that if difficulty comes into our lives, God has authorized it, and we can trust that it is for our best. His ministering spirits see to our care and protection.

Verse 13 says *You will tread upon the lion and cobra, the young lion and the serpent you will trample down*, which is an exultant cry of celebration at the assured triumph over that which is clearly threatening. Written during a time when and in a place where wild beasts and venomous snakes were commonly a near and present danger, this poetic couplet revels in the angelic care of God’s obedient follower in the presence of great adversity.

The *young lion* represents the merciless vigor and astonishing strength with which *evil* wages its pernicious warfare against Yahweh’s followers. The New Testament tells us that the devil prowls about like a lion, seeking those whom he can devour (1 Peter 5:8).

The *serpent*, in this case a lethal *cobra*, depicts the surreptitiously malignant and deadly threat of all that stands counter to the pure goodness and redeeming love of Yahweh. Satan is also depicted as a serpent (Revelation 12:9). We can be assured from this psalm that God has assigned spiritual guardians to offset our spiritual enemies (Ephesians 6:12). The key is for us to resist the devil, and trust in our Lord (1 Peter 5:5).

Because of the Lord’s providential care, those faithful to Yahweh will overcome all manner of adversity. Reflecting the language of Genesis 3:15, where God utters the prophetic word that His Messiah would bruise the head of the serpent who is Satan, the psalmist declares the faithful will tread upon and trample down that which would otherwise destroy them (John 16:11). It is God’s redemptive might at work on their behalf that will bring it to pass.

### **Biblical Text**

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**And see the recompense of the wicked.**

**<sup>9</sup> For you have made the Lord, my refuge,**

**Even the Most High, your dwelling place.**

**<sup>10</sup> No evil will befall you,**

**Nor will any plague come near your tent.**

**<sup>11</sup> For He will give His angels charge concerning you,**

**To guard you in all your ways.**

**<sup>12</sup> They will bear you up in their hands,**

**That you do not strike your foot against a stone.**

**<sup>13</sup> You will tread upon the lion and cobra,**

**The young lion and the serpent you will trample down.**