



Pathways of Life - Does God Allow # 5

Hello everyone. Welcome to “Notes from the Presence.” In our last article, we discussed a few absolutes and possibilities when talking about the curse and evil in our world. We also talked about pathways of life, ending with the following two verses:

Matthew 7:14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Psalm 16:11 You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy: in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Today, I would like to add a third scripture:

John 10:10 - The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy; I (Jesus) came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

I do believe there is a way to live above the curse, evil, and disaster - to live above the "snake line" so to speak. I would be the first person to admit, I have not consistently arrived at this place in my life. However, I have seen glimpses of it from time to time. I often pray for the Holy Spirit to make known to me the pathways of life and I have become aware that there is a narrow gate and path that leads down this road. In these pathways, protection is found as well as the abundant life that Jesus has come to offer us.

As most of you know, I am a huge Psalm 91 fan. I have this Psalm memorized in a couple of different translations and I quote it every day, sometimes multiple times. Today, I am going to post it simply because it is unmatched when it comes to absolutes in the realm of protection. Along with the words of this Psalm, I am going to post a few comments in between the lines. These are revelations and observations that have come

from my quoting this Psalm literally thousands of times. Today we are looking at the Message translation.

You who sit down in the High God's presence, spend the night in Shaddai's shadow, say this: "God you are my refuge, I trust in You, and I am safe!"

First of all, this Psalm is written to a specific group of people - those who spend time in God's presence and sleep in His shadow. In other translations it speaks of dwelling or "living" in the shelter of the Most High, abiding in His shadow, or living in the secret place of the Most High. Think of how close you need to be to someone in order to abide (rest and stay) in their shadow. This is the reason why the first verse we quoted in today's article says the gate is small and the path narrow that leads to life. In my experience, there are few who have the patience to find this place of shelter and stay there. It is a place free from worry, it is a place of rest, and a place of refuge. ONLY from this place and in this context are the following verses lived out with the absolute confidence in which they are written. We continue with Psalm 91:

That's right, He rescues you from hidden traps, shields you from deadly hazards. His huge, outstretched arms protect you, under them you are perfectly safe. His arms fend off all harm.

Fear nothing -

Not wild wolves in the night

Not flying arrows in the day

Not disease that stalks through the darkness

Not disaster that erupts at high noon

In my last article, I talked about fear and how it short circuits faith, putting us directly in harm's way. Here we receive the command, in the context of living life in the secret place, to "fear not." The items listed here are extremely fearful. They include wild bloodthirsty animals, a battle situation where both random and targeted deadly arrows are flying all around, sickness and disease of all kinds, and natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, tornados, and earthquakes. Yet, in this Psalm, we are told not to fear any of these situations. Ponder that for a moment. There is a place of protection so firm that it is possible to face absolute disaster of all sorts without fear. In my own life, I am far from this reality, but I am gaining ground and learning more about this place every day. I can tell you that when I am able to live without a reaction of fear, there is little the devil can do to harm me. He might try to put me in a scary situation, but without fear, it will not stick. It slides right on by. I have experienced this space enough to know that it is solid and I endeavour to live my life in this place 24/7. The "no fear" reaction does not

come from a mental "psych yourself out of fear" place, but a place of absolute rest, trust, and faith. In this context, we find the following stunning verses of protection:

Even though others succumb all around, drop like flies right and left, no harm will even graze you. You'll stand untouched, watch it all from a distance, watch the wicked turn into corpses.

Yes, because God is your refuge, the High God your very own home, evil can't get close to you, harm can't get through the door.

Once again, it talks here about God being our refuge, and making our home in the secret place. When living in this manner, is it any wonder that harm can't even get through the door! In this context, we have another amazing promise - angelic protection:

He ordered His angels to guard you wherever you go. If you stumble, they will catch you. Their job is to keep you from falling.

You'll stand untouched among lions and snakes, and kick young lions and serpents from the path.

Other translations say that we will trample snakes, lions, and scorpions under our feet. This picture indicates that the devil is to be under our feet at all times. Let's continue with our Psalm:

If you hold on to me for dear life, say God, I will get you out of any trouble. I will give you the best of care if you only get to know and trust me. Call me, and I'll answer, be at your side in bad times. I'll rescue you, then throw you a PARTY!!

I'll give you a long life, Give you a long drink of salvation.

Notice this Psalm does not indicate the absence of trouble (in this world we will have persecution), but it emphatically says that God will get us out of the trouble, be at our side in bad times, and rescue us. Psalm 23 says "*He prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies.*" Here we find the ultimate party! We also have the promise of long life and salvation. The word "salvation" in the bible is a very wide reaching word. It's meaning encompasses every good and perfect gift that comes to us by our Father in heaven.

This entire Psalm is written in the context of the secret place, the shelter of His wings, living life so close to Him that we are in His shadow, and making our dwelling place His presence. Friends, here is where we find the narrow pathways of life and protection that

we all long for. As for me, I choose to live here. I will not be sidelined or sidetracked by busyness. I will make the necessary lifestyle changes in order to stay in the secret place of His presence always. It is all about the presence - it is not a formula, it is a relationship.

Thanks for reading today. Jesus is real and He is the source of abundant life.