



NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## DAILY DEVOTIONAL

June 1, 2020

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### Psalm 91

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,  
    who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,  
will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress;  
    my God, in whom I trust.”  
For God will deliver you from the snare of the fowler  
    and from the deadly pestilence;  
God will cover you with his pinions,  
and under God’s wings you will find refuge.  
Because you have made the Lord your refuge,  
    the Most High your dwelling place,  
no evil shall befall you,  
    no scourge come near your tent.  
Those who love me, I will deliver;  
    I will protect those who know my name.  
When they call to me, I will answer them;  
    I will be with them in trouble,  
    I will rescue them and honor them (vv. 1-4, 9-10,14-15 NRSV).

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As a child I was given a book of Christian-focused true stories, and one of them featured Psalm 91. The story was set in rural Lebanon in a time when some deadly and contagious disease was overwhelming the area and killing many children. According to the story, the women operating a Christian orphanage led the group in praying Psalm 91 daily, and because of their prayer no children in this orphanage got sick. “God will deliver you from the deadly pestilence,.... no scourge shall come near your tent” were the focal phrases of the psalm highlighted in the story.

I decided immediately that I did not like this story or this psalm. As a twelve-year old, I thought that the isolated location of the orphanage probably had much to do with the children's health, and that the story did not speak well for a God who let others die just because they hadn't recited this psalm. That story and Psalm 91 continued to haunt and trouble me for decades, well into my years of teaching at Princeton Seminary.

Finally one afternoon I took my concern to my dear friend and wise Old Testament colleague Prof. Patrick Miller, now of blessed memory, a world expert on the Psalms whom some readers may remember from his participation in the life of Nassau Church. Pat responded not with some academic theory, but by telling me the story of his uncle, whose favorite and most-beloved psalm was exactly Psalm 91. His uncle recited the psalm every day throughout his life, in sickness as well as in health; it was the psalm he turned to daily and asked others to read with him in his difficult last months of life; it was on his lips as he gave himself finally into God's everlasting arms. And through this new story I became able to experience Psalm 91 differently: *You who abide in the shadow of the Almighty; God is your refuge; you will not fear; God's angels will bear you up...* In life and also in death, I belong to God. And in that assurance I can cry out my laments when pestilence and scourge assail not just me but any of God's beloved children across this hurting globe.

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*Dear God, thank you that in life and in death you give refuge to every one of your beloved children under your protecting wings. Day by day help me to experience your care and to trust you more.*

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## **Kathie Sakenfeld**

Kathie retired in 2013 from teaching Old Testament at Princeton Seminary. She enjoys reading and classical music and has participated in the life of Nassau Church since 1970. In ordinary times you are likely to spot her in a back pew of the sanctuary, in the Early Bird women's Bible study group, and in adult education programs.



[Read the full scripture passage on Bible Gateway](#)

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