

## AN EXAMINATION OF CHRISTIAN SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF PSALM 91

Akinwumi, Olatunji Samuel (Ph.D)

Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology,  
Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State

E-MAIL: [akinwumi.olatunji@bouesti.edu.ng](mailto:akinwumi.olatunji@bouesti.edu.ng)

Orcid Number: 0000-0003-2830-5060

### Abstract

*The basic problem confronting the vast majority of people in the world today is insecurity. The search for security is therefore a perennial preoccupation of the human heart. Man at all time wants to be secured and protected. It is in view of this that the paper examines the problem of insecurity from the Psalmist's purview. Being a historical study, the paper employs historical method in its analysis. The findings of this work however reveal that man has been created for companionship with God and until this fellowship of spirit is established, he is restless and insecure. The ever-present security of God can be enjoyed by Christians, according to the Psalmist, when they put their absolute trust in God.*

**Key words:** *Insecurity, Spiritual, Problem, Psalmist, Companionship, Fellowship.*

### Introduction

Human beings irrespective of status, race and tribe value security, peaceful and harmonious co-existence. Christians just like adherents of other religions want safety within the community and defense against external aggression such that threatens the community. It must be noted that even though security is a global phenomenon, it is not completely the same in every religion, especially in Christianity. This does not imply that security in Christianity runs a parallel line to the security of the nation, because Christians and other adherents make up the citizenry of the nation. The thrust of this paper therefore, is to emphasize the view and understanding of Christians in respect of security and how this can compliment national security. This paper seeks to examine security in the understanding of Christians within the context of Psalm 91 and its relevance to national security. To achieve this objective, definition of relevant concepts, theological exposition of the book of Psalm 91 and its relevance to Christian security and national growth and development shall be elucidated.

### Conceptual clarification

## **Security**

The word: “Security” is a complex concept that defies any single definition due to its broadness emanating from scholars' ideologies and timeframe being addressed, as well as the focus of their analyses (Dawood, 2016). The word: “Security” is a popular word regularly used by many people to describe the situation or a situation of a person, plan and so on (Okoko, 2006). According to Collins, Security refers to all the Strategies that are put in place to protect a place or to ensure that only people with permission enter it or leave it. It is freedom from or resilience against potential harm (or other unwanted coercive change) caused by others (wikipedia.org, n.d). Security refers to measures taken to guard against espionage or sabotage, crime, attack or escape (Merriam-Webster.com). Dopamu (2006) defines security as a protection against law-breaking, violence, external aggression, danger, risk, attack, want, poverty, insufficiency, unemployment, environmental degradation, disease, oppression, suppression, inhumanity, natural disaster and the like.

### **Christian Security**

Christian Security refers to security based on God’s protection from moral evil, it is the security that trusts God for protection against spiritual evil. It seeks to provide and disseminate love of God and love of fellow human beings.

Christian Security implies using instrumentality of the words of God to protect lives from spiritual attack. It is the security derived and obtained from God as a result of Christian total and absolute dependence and trust in God. Christian Security is an unfailing protection from evil, calamity and attack through prayer.

### **National Security**

Dawood (2016), defines National Security as requirement to maintain the survival of the nation state through the use of economic, military and political power and the exercise of diplomacy.

As submitted by Okeke (2016), national security should not simply be defined in term of a nation’s armed forces ability to wage war or her ability to defend herself against foreign aggressors and internal rebellion. According to him, there can be no true security for a nation when the state apparatus that should help in the provision of the good life is failing or has failed. It is not enough for a nation’s order to be secured, the citizens should be protected and have access to the abundant life. National Security is not idolizing the state at the expense of the masses. National security refers to a nation’s ability to defend itself, promote its cherished values and interests, eliminate corruption, enhance genuine developmental progress and growth and improve the welfare and wellbeing and quality of life of the citizenry.

The Theological Exposition of Psalm 91

The book has no title, author and date of composition. In the Jewish tradition, when the author's name is not mentioned, it is always ascribed to the last name of the writer. In view of this, Moses has been suggested to be the writer of the book. It is also obvious that many expressions used are similar to that of Moses in Deuteronomy. Internal evidence, from the peculiar idioms, also shows him as the composer.

Charles (n.d.), maintains that the continued lives of Joshua and Caleb, who followed the Lord fully, make remarkably apt illustrations of this Psalm, due to Moses nearness to the Lord and spectacular roles he played among the Israelites, the book might probably be ascribed to him. It is however probable that the book was composed by him during the journey through the wilderness shortly after the plague of the fiery serpents; when the children of Israel received God's favour after they had been punished for their disobedience (*Wesley, n.d.*). Besides political enemies, the children of Israel in the wilderness had other evils in great numbers to encounter, from the nature and diseases of the climate which exposed them to "sun smitting" during the damp of the night. This made them sought miraculous "canopy of the cloud" which hung over them in the former season and the miraculous flame of fire that purified them in the latter (*Wesley n.d.*).

The Israelites in their journey through the wilderness were exposed to "insidious attacks of the savage, monsters and reptiles". This experience probably made the author of this Psalm use the imagery as contained in the book. In the whole chapter most especially in Psalm 91: 6-13, where we have a clear and graphic description of these evils.

Psalm 91 is so unique and important that many people had described it as the Psalm of soldiers. It is very interesting to know that it is printed on camouflage handkerchiefs. The bearer strongly believes in its efficacy so they take it everywhere. Psalm 91 goes beyond literal language; it is a song that attracts good energy. It is believed that the song transmits a very powerful protection and care to people and their homes. Since the universe is full of energy in the suns, planets and celestial objects that move by the will of God, many people had described psalm 91 as a special psalm that has the potency and in-built power to protect. During the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic for instance, the psalm was shared in a special way on social media and many people testified to its miraculous power. Throughout humanity, the Psalm has shown that it has cosmic energy that protects from evil.

"He that dwells in the secret place of the most high" (Psalm 91:1), "the secret place" here implies a place of refuge from the storms of life under the secret of his providence. This means that God will shield all those who dwell and abide in him because abiding in him "brings with it special immunity". The Almighty himself is where his shadow is, hence, those who dwell in his secret place are shielded by him.

“Under the shadow of the Almighty”, this is an expression which implies great nearness (*Wesley, n.d.*). The verse can be interpreted as a mystic symbol of the ark which carried the presence of God. The presence of the Almighty will constantly remove fear and anxiety.

“I will say of the lord, He is my refuge and my fortress” (Psalm 91:2). Refuge is a quiet retreat from a pursuing enemy. It provides and serves as an escape route for those that are being pursued by the enemies. God is a tower of defense. He is strong and ever ready to meet the needs of his people. As observed by Wesley (n.d.); fortress is where no harm can reach Christians, no attack can injure them. This might probably be the reason why the Psalmist exclaims: “My God”. He reflects on the refuge and strength which the Lord has always been to him, words fail him and hence, the exclamation :“My God”.

“Surely, he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler” (Psalm 91:3). Here, the Psalmist presents man like a “beast” who must escape from the fowler. Man is likened to a beast because of his weak nature. The fowlers according to Wesley (n.d.), are “the worst, the most wicked, the cleverest and the cruelest”. The fowlers are those who quietly attack their victims.

“Surely he shall deliver thee from the noisome pestilence” (verse 3). The Psalmist reminds the believers that no subtle plot of the enemy can succeed against anyone that is under the protection of God since he (God) has remained his defense. Though man is weak and foolish just like poor little bird yet, God will ensure that the most skilful enemy shall not entrap him as long as he abides in the Lord.

“He shall cover thee with thy feathers and under his wings shall thou trust” (Verse 4). As a hen covers her chickens, so the Lord protects his children from enemies. Hawks in the sky and snares in the field are harmless when the chickens are with the mother. As long as Christians and believers nestle so near the Lord, their safety is guaranteed.

“Thou shall not be afraid for the terror by night” (Verse 5). As a result of the frail nature of man, he is exposed to danger both day and night. He is in perpetual bondage of fear. The only way out is to seek solace in God. The Psalmist acknowledges that plague is terrible to nature and then by man’s trusting divine protection, he is secure. He shall not fear the evil which would otherwise make human nature quail; nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. “Famine may starve or bloody war devours, earthquake may overturn and tempest may smite but amidst all, the man who has sought the mercy of God will remain unmovable”. The Psalmist seems to affirm here that the only true antidote and cure for tormenting fear is faith in God.

“Nor for the arrow that flieth by day” (verse 5). The ‘arrow’ in this passage implies that it rages at noon. It refers to all the negative energy and evil thoughts that we are subjected to everyday. It means the calamity and all the prejudice, envy and negativity that we are immersed in our day to day activities. It is however obvious that the day has its perils as well as night, the Psalmist teaches that man will always be a victim unless he finds both shield and buckler in God. In times of great danger, those who have made the Lord their refuge will be protected.

“Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness” (Verse 6). The cause of this pestilence is shredded in mystery; it is invisible but slays with hidden weapons; yet those who dwell and abide in God shall live above fear because days of horror and nights of terror are for unbelievers. Believers shall enjoy God’s perfect peace every time because this peace knows no bound. It doesn’t depend on times and seasons; it doesn’t rise and set with the sun nor depend upon the healthiness of the atmosphere of the security of the country. Upon the believers according to this Psalm, pestilence has no destroying power and calamity no wasting influence because pestilence walks in darkness, they (Believers) dwell in light; destruction wastes at noonday, the beams of the sun that shines during the day bring restoration.

“A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand.” (Verse 7). The Psalmist emphasizes that the plague among men may be so terrible to the extent that mortality rate becomes so high and continue to grow ten times heavier yet, believers that put their trust in the living God shall survive. The verse is a pointer to the fact that one can develop strength, immunity and protection against all kinds of evil as long as one is under the shield of God.

“Only with thine eyes shall thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.” (Verse 8). God assures his people as long as they put their trust in him, they will not only escape the evil in the world but be opportune to see the untold hardship that would befall the believers. The wicked shall be rewarded with the measure of evil they had committed while the believers will be given the privilege to see the calamity coming upon the wicked.

“Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the most high, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.” (Verses 9-10). The Psalmist in these verses assures man who dwells in God that he shall enjoy all-round security. A three-fold preservation can be identified in these verses: From dangers, In dangers and By dangers. From dangers implies that when there are dangers and evil around the man “Whatever happens, nothing shall hurt the believers. Though troubles and afflictions may come on their ways, they shall surely overcome. (Matthew, n.d.)” God shall prevent the evil and dangers from coming upon him.

In dangers means that when he has been immersed in troubles and evil, God will bring him out of the trouble without being harmed. It is in view of this that Job asserts: “He shall deliver thee in six troubles yea in seven, there shall no evil touch thee. In famine, He shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword” (Job 5: 19-20). By danger implies that Providence knows how to make an antidote and proffer enduring solution. For instance, Jonah was swallowed by a whale, and by that danger kept alive. We can therefore infer from this Psalm that he who makes God a refuge shall find him a refuge; he who dwells in God shall find his dwelling protected. No evil in the strict sense of the word can happen to him, he is secure where others are in peril, he lives where others die.

“For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” (Verse 11). According to the Psalmist, the angels will act as bodyguards having received commission from the Lord to watch carefully over the interests of the faithful. The angels are given divine mandate to ensure that the elects are secured. The protection and security provided by the angels has no limit, it is exceedingly broad and has no bound.

“They shall bear thee up in their hands lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (Verse 12). The angels that can be described as the topmost beings in creation, the radiant, the great and the powerful are presented in this verse as servants who are specifically instructed by God to carry the believers in their hands most especially when dangers are imminent. This rare privilege explains how precious Christians are in the hands of God though “he made him (man) a little lower than the angels” (Psalm 8:5). God does not compromise the security of his people. No other creatures on earth enjoy this kind of opportunity given to his people. This awareness might probably be the major reason why some Christians hold the belief that this portion of the Bible is special.

“Thou shall tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shall thou trample under feet.” (Verse 13). Lion and adder in this verse are used symbolically to represent the enemies. The verse however implies that Christians who have made God their refuge will intentionally not accidentally march victoriously over bold opponents and treacherous adversaries. They shall conquer the strongest foe in power and the most mysterious. Just as the disciples of Jesus Christ demonstrated their dominion over the powers of darkness by declaring that the devils were subject unto them through God’s word, true Christians will always be victorious over their enemies.

### Magical Use of Psalms

It is popularly believed that Psalms generally possess magical and secret power that man can always tap to solve his ever-present problems. It has also been argued that Psalms possess inherent secret power that can cause energy to shift in the highest dimensions. Some of the ways Psalms can be used magically include:

- Reading psalm 1 three times while purple candle is lit every morning and night. It is believed that this process will cause the enemy to lose power and the desire to harm will dwindle.
- Reciting Psalm 119 in the middle of the night to invoke academic success.
- Reading of Psalm 124 seven times in the middle of the road while travelling to prevent accidents.
- Reading of Psalm 104 to invite the presence of angels.
- Concentrating on Psalm 58 to overcome the fear of animals. This particular Psalm must be read seven times in the night for seven days. The process will cancel the fear of animals.



- Reading and memorizing Psalm 53 to break ill luck.
- Special reading of Psalm 71 or 79 in the night to facilitate the release of any individual who has been unjustly imprisoned.
- Persistent recitation of Psalm 35, 75, 82 or 40 in the middle of the night for success in lawsuits.
- Reading of Psalm 64 for the protection of livestock and after life threats.

As earlier said in this work, there is no part of the Bible that is not important.

*“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3: 16-17).*

God is not a magician. His words cannot therefore be used to perform magic. It is honestly misleading to abuse the words of God.

#### The Relevance of Psalm 91 to National Security

There is a close connection between Religion and National Security since most national leaders belong to one religion or the other. National Security can not be possible until leaders and every level of governance is ready to be positively involved. The security operatives of any nation cannot do it alone; for national security to be a reality, all hands must be on deck. It is the collective responsibility of the citizenry that will make it achievable.

The first verse of Psalm 91 as we have discussed above emphasizes the “secret place” of the Almighty. The security of the people is only possible according to the writer only when they are ready to dwell in the Lord’s “secret place”. The secret place can be interpreted as the “hiding place” that is, one’s mind, the inner self. National security will remain an illusion, a mirage until both the leaders and followers change their mindsets and perception. The wrong perception of people about security of lives and properties must change. They should stop thinking it is only the federal and state governments that can handle security challenges.

Psalm 91:2 stresses ‘trust’ . “In him will I trust”. The trust and confidence Christians have in God makes the Psalm work like magic. God is not ready at any time to betray the trust his people have in him. For genuine progress, growth and development to be enhanced, there should be high degree of trust at every level. Citizens should have absolute trust in their leaders at the local, state and national levels while, the leaders must ensure that the trust and confidence the citizens repose in them is not betrayed.

The author of this Psalm assures the believers in verse 3- that God is not only interested in their spiritual well-being; the physical well-being is also his concern. This might probably be one of the reasons why some Christians during the outbreak of Covid-19 opened their Bibles to this Psalm only, to be placed under their pillows during the night. Some even engraved this Psalm on

their handkerchiefs and tied them around their heads. Governments at all levels should increase their involvement in the provision of health to people at affordable charges. Many are also denied of access to basic food simply because of their inability to afford it. Religious institutions can make free food available to the poor and highly deprived people on a daily basis. Religious institutions should make it a point of duty to feed the hungry and if possible cloth the naked.

### Conclusion

It has been established in this paper that security is a major concern of everyone irrespective of status. Christian security is a bi-polar phenomenon; Christians, according to Psalm 91, have roles to play while, God on the other hand is ever ready to secure his people as long as “they dwell in his secret place”. Psalm 91 should not be seen or used as a magical book, there is no part of the Bible that is not important. “All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”. Though the contents of Psalm 91 appear to be more relevant to man’s security challenges, notwithstanding, it should not be given special consideration. Christians can however use this Psalm to pray just like all other passages of the scripture, it will be absurd for anybody to extract certain portion of the Bible only to be used magically to solve problems.

In a nutshell, just as the Psalmist emphasizes “the secret place of the Almighty” which is interpreted as one’s inner self, the expected security will be a mere illusion until the mindset is changed.

### References

1. Africa Study Bible: New King James living Translation (2016). Jean V. (Original work published in 2016).
2. Bunni, P. (n.d.). Psalm 91 – *True Safety Found in the Secret Place* <https://christianengaged.org>. Psalm 91
3. Charles, H.S. (n.d.) Treasury of David. Christianity.com <https://www.christianity.com.bible>
4. David, A.A (1997). *The concept of Security Review of International Studies* (23) 5-26.
5. Dawood, O.E. (2016). *An Instrument for Enhancing National Security and Harmonious Existence in Nigeria. Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion* (20) 14-23.
6. Dopamu, A.P. (2006). *African Religion and National Security. The Yoruba Perspective in Folorunsho M.A; Oyenye, I.O and Adebayo, R.I.(Eds) Journal of National Association for the Study of Religions and Education (NASRED)*. (1) 1-13.
7. Matthew, H. (n-d.). Commentary on Psalm 91. <https://www.blueletterbible.org.psalms91>.
8. Merriam-webster(n.d.). Explanatory notes and Quaint Sayings. [https://www.christianity.com/about\\_christianity.html](https://www.christianity.com/about_christianity.html)
9. Okoko, G.O (2006). *The Concept of Security in Christianity in Folorunsho, M.A; Oyenye, I.O and Adebayo, R.I. (Eds). Journal of National Association for the Study of Religions and Education(NASRED)* (1) 1-74.



10. Success Bible: King James Version (2021) Bible Society of Nigeria (original work published in 2021.)
11. The Expositor's Study Bible: King James Version (2013) Jimmy and Baton (original work published in 2005.)
12. Wesley, J. (n.d.). Commentary on Psalm 91. <https://www.christianity.com/about.christianity.html>.
13. EasyEnglish Bible (n.d.). Psalm 91: Free Bible Commentary in Easy English. <https://www.easyenglishbible-psalm 91>