

PSALM 91 – SAFETY OF ABIDING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Before looking at this Psalm, I believe we need to consider the matter of what are correct principles we need to use in interpreting it. So let us examine how Jesus interpreted the Scriptures.

How Jesus interpreted God's written Word

Jesus is God. Therefore, He is the perfect interpreter of the Bible. Here are some of the principles Christ used in interpreting His written Word:

First, note Matthew 4:5-6 reveals Jesus and Satan interpreted the Bible by different methods. These verses record Satan interpreted passages of Scripture in *isolation* from other verses and passages on the same or related topics: ***“Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”***

Satan implied Psalm 91:11-12 contained a promise that God the Father would allow His power to be used for showing-off purposes. Satan was able to suggest this false interpretation because he took this verse in isolation from other verses of Scripture. But Jesus Christ showed all verses must be interpreted in agreement with the meaning of other verses of Scripture which can relate to the topic. He did this by answering Satan's false interpretation of Psalm 91:11-12 with Deuteronomy 6:16. Matthew 4:7 records Jesus saying: ***“Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, you shall not tempt the Lord your God.’”*** By quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, Jesus taught that Psalm 91:11-12 cannot be taken to mean we can force God to use His power just for show.

If Satan can wrongly interpret verses of Scripture by taking them in isolation, so can humans. In this example, the Lord Jesus revealed He regards two of the keys to interpreting verses of Scripture correctly are:

- not taking any verse in isolation.
- making sure that one's interpretation of this verse agrees with the wording of other verses on the same topic in other parts of the Bible.

We can only find the full counsel of God's attitudes to a particular matter by studying *all* of His commands and instructions on a specific topic. If we leave out one verse on the topic, we can make great errors. Then we need to consider any exception which God makes to these commands and instructions taken together. But we have no God-given right to make our own exceptions. As we will see later, to do so is a sin similar to that practiced by the Pharisees.

Secondly, He *did not* approve of any *man-made exceptions* to God's commands and instructions. The only exceptions Jesus Christ approved were those that God or Christ Himself specifically commanded. We see Jesus using these two interpretation principles in Matthew

15:3-10 and 23:16-22. In these passages, Christ attacks the Pharisees for making their own exceptions to God's commands.

In Matthew 12:5-8, Jesus taught that God's specific command in Numbers 28:9-10 was a God-approved exception to His Sabbath command. John 7:21-24 reveals that God's circumcision commands under the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants (see Genesis 17:10-14 and Leviticus 12:3) were a God-approved exception to His Sabbath commands.

Four wrong approaches to this Psalm

There are four wrong extreme approaches we can take to this Psalm:

1. The first is when we believe that God will rarely or never work miraculously in our lives to save and deliver us from dangers and catastrophes. Some Christians wrongly believe God wants them to experience nothing else but suffering, tragedies and problems.
2. The opposite wrong extreme is the idea that if we have enough faith and are committed to God enough, Psalm 91 promises that we will never experience suffering, problems, trials and difficulties. Such a false approach to Psalm 91 involves interpreting it contrary to many other verses in the Bible (see Psalm 34:19, Matthew 5:11-12, John 16:33, Acts 14:22, Romans 5:3, 8:18, 8:35, 12:12, 2 Corinthians 1:4-7, 7:4, Philippians 3:10, 1 Thessalonians 3:4, Hebrews 11:35-39, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7, 4:12-19, Revelation 1:9 and 2:9-10). Psalm 34:19 states: ***"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."***

In John 16:33, Jesus promised: ***"...In the world you will have tribulation..."*** James 1:2 declares: ***"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials."*** 1 Peter 1:6-7 says: ***"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."***

Job is an example of someone who was extremely committed to God but whom God permitted to suffer greatly and lose all of his prosperity for a limited period of time. Job 1:1-3 records: ***"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East."***

Job 1:9-12 seems to suggest God removed part of His protection from Job and permitted Satan to bring suffering and great problems upon Job in order to test whether Job served Him only because of His blessings and gift of prosperity.

All three of Job's friends – Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar had similar overgeneralised views of God's dealings with humans. They all believed that if a human was suffering poverty, sickness and/or various catastrophes or tragedies, this was always caused by his sin. While *some* of the things they said were *true* and good, much of their teachings are *over simplistic generalisations*. Job's three friends were *not heathens, pagans, atheists or agnostics*. They could not even be called believers in God in name only. They were like many believers today – people with some false simplistic overgeneralised attitudes to God.

James 5:10-11 infers that some of us may experience trials like Job did.

3. Another wrong approach claims God never prospers unbelievers or never permits unbelievers to prosper themselves through their own wicked schemes. Such an approach is contrary to 1 Kings 20:5 (Ahab and Jezebel were exceedingly wicked but prosperous), Psalm 10:1-11, 37:7, 37:16-17, 49:16-18, 73:1-16, Proverbs 11:16, Ecclesiastes 7:15, 8:14, Isaiah 2:6-8, Jeremiah 12:1-2, 44:15-23, Habakkuk 1:2-4, 1:12-17 and Malachi 3:13-15.

God prospered King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon when he was a wicked idol-worshipper (see Daniel 3:1-4:27).

Matthew 5:45 records God blesses unbelievers: *“that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* Luke 6:35 says: *“...For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.”*

In Acts 14:17, Paul and Barnabus said to wicked idol-worshippers: *“Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”*

Romans 2:4 reveals why God is good to unbelievers: *“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance.”*

4. A fourth wrong approach to Psalm 91 is to imagine it teaches God always blesses stronger believers more than weaker believers.

Note in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, Paul records that the Corinthian Christians had an *abundance of earthly prosperity* at the time the Macedonian Church – the Philippians and Thessalonians – were experiencing the *hardship of poverty*. This is even though the Corinthians were mostly relatively far more carnal, worldly and compromising with sin than the Christians at Philippi and Thessalonica. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Paul says: *“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?”*

In 2 Corinthians 12:20-21, Paul catalogues their sins: *“For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; and lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and licentiousness which they have practiced.”*

Many of the Corinthian Christians were constantly fighting, had little unity, permitted a church member to live in an open adulterous relationship with his step-mother, regarded Paul’s speaking as *“contemptible”* and his Biblical letters as *“weighty”* or burdensome, after initially receiving the true Gospel of Christ later received a false gospel and a false Christ and gladly welcomed false apostles in preference to Paul (see 1 Corinthians 1:11-13, 3:3, 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 10:10 and 11:1-21). Some Corinthian Christians were even getting drunk at communion (see 1 Corinthians 11:21).

By reading Paul’s comments on the Books of Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 2 Corinthians 8:1-3, we see that generally speaking, the Philippian and Thessalonian believers

were far more devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ than those at Corinth. Philippians 2:12 records how obedient the Philippians were to God. Philippians 4:10-18 reveals what very generous givers the Philippian believers were. In 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8, 3:6-7, 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 and 1:11, Paul emphasises what strong faith the believers at the Thessalonian church had. In 2 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul told them **“your faith grows exceedingly”**. Paul never told the Corinthians this. Also in 2 Corinthians 8:1-3, Paul said despite their deep poverty, how generous the churches of Philippi and Thessalonica had been towards the more needy believers in Judea.

God’s marvelous promises of earthly prosperity

In Philippians 4:19, God promises to supply all believers’ needs through Jesus Christ: **“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** In 1 Corinthians 16:2, God promises to prosper New Covenant believers: **“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper...”**

In Greek, the expression **“he may prosper”** is in the present tense, passive voice and subjunctive mood. The context relates to week by week. So the present tense refers to being prospered in an *ongoing* sense. The passive voice means another, in this case *God*, does the action of prospering the believer. In Greek, the subjective mood refers to *possibility*. In other words, Paul is saying there is *no definite nature* about the *measure* or *degree* God will prosper believers from week to week. The measure of prosperity will possibly change each week.

Acts 11:27-29 relates also to prosperous believers helping other believers who were in financial need: **“And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.”** In Greek, the expression **“his ability”** is a non-literal translation of a form of the verb “euporeo”. The specific form of the word “euporeo” used in Acts 11:29 literally means “was prospered”.¹ “Euporeo” itself means “to be well provided for, to prosper”² or “have plenty, be well off”³ or “to be in prosperous circumstances, enjoy plenty”.⁴

Acts 11:27-29 teaches that when compared with each other, the believers at Antioch had experienced *varying levels of prosperity* from God. This confirms what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 16:2.

By His undeserved mercy and grace, God can prosper believers by *different amounts* at *different times* according to what He knows is best for them.

In verses like Luke 6:38 and 2 Corinthians Chapters 8 and 9, God promises to bless those believers who are generous givers. But note because He is the Sovereign Lord, He can choose *when* and *in what measure* to fulfil such promises.

Even though God promises to bless generous believers, this does not mean that they receive such blessings as a fully merited reward. In Romans 11:35-36, Paul emphasised: **“Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”**

¹ Marshall, page 379 and Green, page 853.

² Vine, page 670.

³ Bauer, page 324.

⁴ Perschbacher, page 181.

Only Jesus Christ totally deserves to receive prosperity and blessings from God as fully merited rewards. This is because only He has perfectly obeyed God every moment of every day of His life and has never sinned (see Romans 5:19, Philippians 2:8, Hebrews 4:15, 5:8 and 7:26). All other humans owe God an eternal unpayable debt and deserve all the curses of the Mosaic Law because of their sins (see Deuteronomy 27:26 and 28:15-68).

In Galatians 3:10, Paul states: ***“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’”*** Everyone who does not perfectly obey all of the Mosaic Law every moment of every day deserve all of the curses of Deuteronomy 28. This is why believers only receive prosperity as undeserved gifts of God’s grace and mercy through Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:13-14 states: ***“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”*** The ***“blessing of Abraham”*** refers to the spiritual and natural blessings promised in the Abrahamic Covenant.

Paul’s example

Philippians 4:12-13 reveals the Apostle Paul experienced both *abundance* and a *lack* of material blessings: ***“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”***

Paul generally lived a very godly life after he was born-again (see 2 Corinthians 7:2 and 1 Thessalonians 2:10). Despite this, he still suffered various trials and great difficulties (see Acts 9:16, 20:23 and 2 Corinthians 11:23-27). But God blessed him greatly through the generous gifts of the Philippian Church (see Philippians 4:10-19).

Joseph

Joseph was under the wonderful grace-based Abrahamic Covenant which promised God’s blessings and prosperity (see Genesis 12:2-3, 18:18 and 22:16-18). He had a very strong faith and was devoted to God. But he was sold as a slave by his own brothers and was later sent for at least 2 years to a dreadful Egyptian gaol for refusing to commit adultery.

God prospered him as a slave and in goal (see Genesis 39:2-6 and 21-23). But this does not detract from the fact that living as a slave and in ancient disease-ridden Egyptian gaol were *great hardships*.

Referring to his earlier very difficult life, Joseph said in Genesis 50:20 to his brothers who had sold him as a slave: ***“But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”*** Joseph spoke similar words of *great faith* in Genesis 45:5-7. Can you and I say the same about the times of difficulties and hardships we have experienced in our lives?

Psalm 91's promises and Biblical exceptions to these

In Psalm 91:5-9 and 16, God promises to save us from various types of death and to give us long life. Such promises apply to most strong believers. But note the Bible does record exceptions:

- a) King Josiah was killed in battle at the age of only 39 years (see 2 Kings 22:1). This is despite the fact 2 Kings 23:25 records: *“Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.”*
King Manasseh, however, lived to the age of 67 years even though he led the Jews into terrible wickedness for a number of years (see 2 Chronicles 33:1-9).
- b) King Jotham was a very godly man of faith and obedience to God (see 2 Chronicles 27:2-6). But 2 Chronicles 27:1 and 8 reveal he died at the young age of 41 years.
- c) John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from when he was in his mother's womb (see Luke 1:15-17). He was the most righteous person in Old Testament times (see Matthew 11:11). But he was murdered at the age of 31 by wicked materially prosperous King Herod.

The Biblical balance in Hebrews 11:32-39

Hebrews 11:32-39 teaches the balance: *“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”* Here we see:

- a) many times, God miraculously saves believers from death and danger.
- b) at other times, He permitted some believers to suffer greatly, experience great lack or be killed for their faith.

Daniel, Roman Christians and lions

Daniel 6:1-23 records God saved Daniel from being eaten by lions. But note in Roman times, hundreds of godly Christians were eaten by lions in Roman arenas. Contrary to what one American writer claimed, the Roman Christian martyrs had strong faith in Jesus Christ.

The importance of faith and trusting God

The Bible often links God's miracles to our exercising of faith (see Matthew 9:22, 9:29, Mark 10:52, Luke 5:20-26, 7:9-10, 8:48, 17:19, Acts 3:16, 14:9, Hebrews 11:11, 11:29 and 11:30). In Matthew 21:22, Jesus said: ***“And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”*** Matthew 13:58 records: ***“And He did not do many mighty works because of their unbelief.”***

Matthew 17:14-20 reveals that the disciples could not cast a demon out of a boy because of their lack of faith. James 1:5-8 reveals that if we do not believe God will give us His wisdom, this will result in Him not giving it. In some situations, God will not perform a miracle unless we trust Him to do so. He does this to teach us to trust Him. But the Bible reveals that this is not how He always operates.

Psalms 91:1-2 refers to us trusting in God and making Him our refuge and fortress. To some extent, the promises of Psalm 91 are related to us exercising faith in God.

But this must be balanced out by the fact that Psalm 91:14 promises God will deliver us purely because He loves us and we know Him: ***“Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.”*** In the following, we will see Biblical examples of God working miraculously in the lives of people who were not trusting Him.

The Sovereignty of God

Another example of God performing miracles sovereignly when faith is not present can be seen in the life of Elijah. 1 Kings 19:1-8 records: ***“And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, ‘So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one them by tomorrow about this time.’ And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, ‘It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!’ Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, ‘Arise and eat.’ Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on the coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. Then the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, ‘Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.’ So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.”***

Here we see that Elijah was greatly *afraid* when he heard Queen Jezebel's death threats against him. According to many books about faith and miracles, fear prevents God from miraculously helping us. But in this situation, God sent His angel to miraculously provide Elijah with a cake and a jar of water. Elijah's fear did not stop God from helping him.

Not only was Elijah full of fear in this situation. 1 Kings 19:4 reveals that he became *very depressed*. Despite his negative attitudes, God still sovereignly performed a great miracle for him. This miracle was so marvellous that one cake strengthened Elijah for forty days and forty nights, enabling him to walk about 180 miles or 300 kilometres to Mount Horeb.

Yet another example of God sovereignly performing a miracle despite the person's fear and lack of faith can be seen in the life of Abraham. This event is recorded in Genesis 20:1-18. Abraham was afraid that the Philistines of the city of Gerar would kill him and then steal his wife Sarah (see Genesis 20:11). Because of this fear, Abraham told his wife to tell the people a half-truth. This was that she was his sister and not his wife (see Genesis 20:2). Sarah was in fact Abraham's half-sister. They had the same father, but different mothers (see Genesis 20:12).

As the result of the spreading of this half-truth, King Abimelech of Gerar took Sarah to become a part of his harem (see Genesis 20:2)

Despite the terrible mess that Abraham's fear and lack of faith had gotten him into, God sovereignly miraculously helped Abraham. God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and told him that he was as good as dead unless he returned Sarah to Abraham unmolested (see Genesis 20:3-7). Not only did God do this. He also miraculously closed the womb of every woman in Abimelech's household in order to reveal His displeasure at the king taking Sarah (see Genesis 20:17-18). Abraham had not asked God to do these things.

So despite Abraham's fear, lack of faith and resultant partial deceit, God still miraculously helped him and Sarah.

It is amazing but Abraham's son Isaac later did a similar thing. Because of fear, Isaac lied, telling the Philistines in the city of Gerar that Rebekah, his wife was only his sister. Genesis 26:7 records: ***“And the men of the place asked him about his wife. And he said, ‘She is my sister’; for he was afraid to say, ‘She is my wife,’ because he thought, lest the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold.”***

From the above two instances, we see that neither Abraham or Isaac had enough faith in God to entrust totally the time of their deaths into His hands.

“Where is your faith”

Another example of God *sovereignly* in *His great mercy and love* performing a miracle to help some people, even though at the time they were exercising no faith in Him at all, is recorded in Luke 8:22-24. In this instance, the Lord Jesus had spoken to them in a way which *revealed God the Father's will*. Remember, the Lord Jesus never did or said anything which was not the Father's will (see John 5:19).

Luke 8:22-24 records: ***“Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, ‘Let us go over to the other side of the lake.’ And they launched out. But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, ‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’ Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm.”*** These words showed the disciples that God wanted to get them to the other side of the lake. This Word from the Lord Jesus gave them the God-given right to be sure that His power would get them to the other side of the lake.

After sailing a while, a strong wind caused their boat to begin to fill with water. The natural human minds of the disciples ignored what Jesus had said was the Father's will and were filled with fear. Even though they had a promise from God the Father, through the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they would get to the other side of the lake, they *did not believe* Him. Jesus' Words to them in Luke 8:25 reveal their lack of faith in Him and in His promise to them. Jesus said to the disciples: ***“But He said to them, ‘Where is your faith?...’”***

But note the Lord Jesus in His sovereign mercy and love still performed a miracle to help them. He did this *despite their lack of faith*. They did not exercise faith through their words or actions, but this did not stop Him from miraculously helping them by commanding the wind and the stormy water to be still.

Peter walking on water

Matthew 14:22-23 records a third example of God miraculously helping someone even though the person was not believing Him to do so.

In this situation, the disciples were in a boat on the lake. Between three and six o'clock in the morning, the Lord Jesus began to walk on the water of the lake towards the boat. At first when they saw Him, the disciples were terrified, thinking He was a spirit.

After they recognised that it was Jesus, He said, "***Come***", to the Apostle Peter. This Word revealed that it was the Father's will for Peter to be given His miraculous power to be able to walk on water from the boat to where the Lord Jesus was.

At first, Peter trusted the Lord to give him power to do this. But note Matthew 14:30-31 says: "***But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'***"

These verses reveal that:

- because it was God the Father's will for Peter to walk on water⁵ and because at first, Peter trusted the Lord to give Him power to do so, miraculously the Lord helped him to do this.
- because Peter began to doubt that the Lord would continue to enable him to walk on the water, the Lord ceased enabling Peter to walk on the water.
- as soon as Peter cried out to the Lord for help, the Lord saved him from drowning. Peter was full of doubts in the Lord when he asked the Lord for help, but miraculously the Lord *still saved him*.

Even though Peter changed from believing the Lord to enable him to walk on water, to not trusting Him, the Lord did not say to Peter, "You are not trusting Me to help you. Since you are not exercising faith, I am not going to help you. I am going to let you drown." The Lord answered Peter's cry for help because of His *enormous love* and *sympathy*.

Miraculously, the Lord will often help us just like this, even when we are not exercising strong faith for Him to do so. In His *tremendous mercy*, the Lord sometimes helps us in spite of our feeble attempts to trust Him to do so.

In this example, the Lord answered Peter's request to help him. This does not mean that God helps us only when we or someone else asks Him to help us. There were probably many times that we were unaware of in our lives that miraculously He helped us or saved us from tragedy – keeping a poisonous spider away from us and so on.

Many times, the Lord waits for us to ask Him to help us, *so that we will recognise that He is the one Who is helping us*. Otherwise, we may think foolishly that the help we obtain when we are in desperate need is just luck or good fortune or fate – evil pagan ideas.

⁵ The Lord Jesus never did or said anything that was not the Father's will (see John 5:19, 8:28, 12:49 and 14:10).

There are some situations in which He will not help us miraculously unless we ask and trust Him to do so. These are the situations that He uses *to teach us to trust in and depend on Him more*. These are *important learning times* for us. For instance, the Lord in mercy saved Peter miraculously from drowning despite his lack of faith. But the Lord did not allow Peter to continue to walk on water when he began to doubt the Lord. This was to teach Peter the importance of trusting totally in Him.

PSALM 91 – SAFETY OF ABIDING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

1. Jesus – the perfect interpreter of the Scriptures
2. Jesus did not interpret verses contrary to other verses
3. Jesus only approved of God's exceptions to God's commands
4. Four wrong approaches to Psalm 91:
 - God rarely or never miraculously saves us from dangers and catastrophes
 - Psalm 91 promises we will never experience suffering, problems, trials and difficulties
 - God never prospers unbelievers and never permits them to prosper themselves through their own wicked schemes
 - God always blesses stronger believers more than weaker believers
5. Note God's marvelous promises of earthly prosperity in Philippians 4:19 and 1 Corinthians 16:2
6. Paul's example. Philippians 4:12-13 reveals the Apostle Paul experienced both *abundance* and *a lack*
7. The example of Joseph under the grace-based Abrahamic Covenant
8. Psalm 91's wonderful promises
9. Biblical exceptions to these promises:
 - a) Josiah
 - b) Jotham
 - c) John the Baptist
10. The Biblical balance in Hebrews 11:32-39
11. Daniel, Roman Christians and lions
12. The importance of trusting God (Matthew 21:22 and 13:58)
13. The Sovereignty of God:
 - a) Abraham
 - b) Elijah
 - c) Where is your faith?
 - d) Peter