

## Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am On-Line Sermon

### Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March – Psalm 91 “A Safe Place to Hide”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YPWkZ9ukUI&feature=youtu.be>

For the first time, one of the most precious gatherings has been taken away from us - the opportunity to meet together, face to face, to worship our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

However, although we may be physically absent, we are still joined spiritually together. Even though we may be in different locations, we are gathering together to one Saviour, who promises to be with us wherever we are.

**Psalm 91** – He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

<sup>2</sup> I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

**Please read the whole psalm before reading these notes.**

We have received lots of advice designed to keep us safe, but the question for us as Christians is how can we respond in a Christlike way to the current crisis? How can we deal with our fears and act to help others in whatever way they need help? Is there a safe place where we can hide? To help us fix our attention on the only source of comfort and help, God himself, we are going to look at Psalm 91.

#### **God – our safe place**

**Ps 91:1** He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty

- He is the Most High, Almighty God, ruling over everything in our lives and in the physical and spiritual realms. He has power over Covid19 and, if he wishes, can with just a word bring it to an end.
- The Psalmist is encouraging us to make this God our shelter, not just now in this time of trouble but continually. **Revelation 9** tells of a terrible plague but when the plague ends we find this:

<sup>20</sup> The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, <sup>21</sup> nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

- Many start to pray when faced with a crisis like this, though often not knowing who they are praying to. Yet when the crisis is over, people will return to their old lives, worshiping other gods of materialism, sport or leisure for example.

The Psalmist calls us to be continually making the Lord our dwelling place, looking for opportunities to have fellowship with him, praying and hearing him speak to us through the Bible. To dwell means to make that place our home, and the Psalmist calls us to make the shelter of the Lord our home, whether there is a plague or not.

When we make our dwelling under the shadow of the Almighty, we discover there are three promises.

- 1) **Promise of deliverance: Ps 91 v3** For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler  
and from the deadly pestilence.
  - God delivers his people from those who are out to entrap them – the snare of the fowler.
- 2) **Promise of protection: Ps 91:4** He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
  - As a mother bird hides her chicks under her wings, and a shield comes between you and danger, so we discover that the Almighty puts himself between us and whatever danger is facing us.
- 3) **Promise of confidence: Ps 91: 5-6** You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,<sup>6</sup> nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.
  - People who trust in God will not fear when they are threatened by enemies or plagues, because they know that he will deliver and protect them.

The psalm tells us that those who make God their continual dwelling place don't need to fear anything. Is that true? Will we be safe from Coronavirus? We know that people who trust in God have been caught and killed by enemies, or have caught viruses and died.

**How are we to make sense of this Psalm in the light of what we see God's people suffering?**

- Looking at v 2, and then ahead to the New Testament, we see that these promises were applied to Jesus. Jesus is the one who trusts implicitly in his heavenly Father, having lived a life of perfect faith.
- Yet he did not experience deliverance or have the protection of his Father. Caught by his enemies, he died on the cross and there suffered the full wrath of his Father, not his protection.

- 1) Psalm 91 doesn't seem to work for him or for us. To make sense of this, we need to understand what was happening to Jesus.
  - Our greatest problem is not physical but spiritual – coronavirus may lead to physical death, but the virus of sin leads to spiritual death and eternal separation from God under his just punishment for sin. We may catch coronavirus then live for many years afterwards, but unless we find the cure for sin, the only future is death in hell.
- 2) The only hope is for us to look to Jesus. The Bible shows us a God who loves humanity, and came himself, in the person of his Son Jesus Christ, so that we can be put right with God.
  - **In order that you and I could be delivered from Satan, Jesus wasn't delivered from the snare of his enemies.**
  - **In order that you and I can be protected from God's wrath, Jesus wasn't protected from God's wrath.**
- 3) When we trust in Jesus, we discover that he is a safe place to be. In Christ, God protects us from the spiritual dangers we face, and ultimately, one day, he will protect us from all danger including Coronavirus.
  - Jesus was raised to life after he died, and those who put their trust in him will also be raised to life even if Coronavirus has taken their lives.
  - Death will lead our soul into God's presence where there is fulness of joy, and when Jesus returns to this earth, our bodies will be raised to life to live in a world free from all enemies and plagues.

The message of this Psalm is real freedom:

**1) Freedom from fear.**

- Although there is much to make us afraid right now, when we know we are right with God, we have the assurance of eternal life. We may lose everything here on earth, but the Lord is our safe place and our eternal dwelling place and that dwelling place will never be taken from us.
- The right response is to lift our concerns to the one who has promised to deliver us and protect us, then to trust him that whatever happens is his perfect will for us.

**2) Freedom from fear means we have freedom to serve our neighbours.**

- Fear drives us to protect ourselves, but when we know God is protecting us, we can look outside ourselves to the needs of others.
- We have a great opportunity to serve our communities in practical ways, by shopping for our neighbours and sharing with those in need.

Above all, as we deal with our own fear by making God our safe place, we can tell a world in fear that there is a God who rules over everything. Our God has the power to protect us from Coronavirus if he chooses to do so, but crucially has the power to save our souls eternally.

**Psalm 91:2** can be our prayer, as we lift our fears and needs to the one who can give us assurance that he is sovereign over our lives and particularly over the salvation of our souls.

I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust"