

Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020



## THE CANDLESTICK

*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (Ps. 91:1)*

It is always helpful to explore the historical background to a psalm for it gives us insight as to what was happening to the psalmist. However, we are not sure who wrote this psalm, - it might have been David, or Moses, or ...? So, when we don't have the background, the safe option is to gently ease ourselves into how the author's experience relates to our own circumstances ... He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence (Ps. 91:1-3).

Obviously, the psalmist was living at a time when his nation had fallen into an awful predicament. He described their condition in two ways, - firstly, as having been caught in "the snare of the fowler". Exactly what kind of a trap or who laid it, we are not told ... but it was *extremely* dangerous! It would have been concealed along a well-trodden path, with no consideration given to anyone who might have accidentally or foolishly strayed upon it. ... It was intended to catch birds, but it was hazardous to anyone or anything ... Clearly, the person who set it had no regard for life or limb!



In fact, the word the psalmist used for 'snare' is found many times in Scripture, as for example in Ps. 119:110, The wicked have laid a *snare* for me. ... It reminds us how devious the enemy is for he 'prowls' like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and he tries to *ensnare* as many Christians as he can.

The second description the psalmist uses is the 'noisome pestilence'. The word for 'pestilence' is the same word translated as 'plague' in Ex. 9, verses 3 and 15. The psalmist adds how it is a '*noisome*' pestilence, - the word has nothing to do with noises or sounds, but it indicates the *deadliness* and the *destructiveness* of what was facing the people. ... They were frightening days for no one knew *if* they would be affected, or to *what* degree. ... Fearful times!

You have probably come across some who would describe the present coronavirus as a judgment from God. *Is it?* ... We cannot be sure? ... Does the world deserve

God's judgment? I believe that question is much easier to answer in the affirmative! ... We cannot be dogmatic if it is judgment or not, but we *can* be absolutely certain if God did not *send* it, He has *allowed* it! ... Or put it like this, if He would not have *allowed* it, it would not have *happened*!

What, though, does God's promise mean for us today, **Ps. 91:1** He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty ... **3** Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. ... If this is true, - and of course it is, - why is God allowing Christians to die of this virus? ... After all, the Hebrews in Egypt were untouched by the plagues in Egypt, but born-again Christians today are dying of the coronavirus ... *why, Lord?!* ... If we are abiding 'under the shadow of the Almighty', how are Christians not immune from this pandemic? ... And how are we to understand what the psalmist says in Ps. 91:10, There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. ... *What does that mean?!*

Let's 'back up a little', as our American friends would say. Nowhere in the Bible are we told Christians are exempt from the woes of the world. On the contrary, Jesus told His disciples, In the world ye shall have tribulation (Jn. 16:33). ... It is the hard fact, - you *will* have 'tribulation' for Christians are not exempt from heartache and trouble. ... Jesus explained *tribulation* and *testing* is inevitable! But then, He followed up with words of encouragement, In the world ye shall have tribulation: but *be of good cheer; I have overcome the world* (Jn. 16:33). ... It is the same as Paul declared, God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted [*tested*] above that ye are able; but will with the temptation [*testing, trials*] also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Cor. 10:13).

... And *that* is how the psalmist in Psalm 91 could confidently proclaim, He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty ... Surely *he shall deliver thee* from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence ... For the Christian, there is no contradiction for 'abiding under the shadow of the Almighty' is the guarantee of our deliverance!

Nothing this virus, - or cancer, stroke, heart attack, dementia, or any other condition ... *nothing* can rob the Christian of God's promises for we are *already* more than conquerors through Him (Rom. 8:37) ... Nothing *nowhere* and *never* can separate us from His love, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39)!

Spurgeon tells about the Asian cholera which devastated London in 1854. Many of his congregation died, and he wrote in his commentary on Ps. 91 (*The Treasury of David*), "The psalmist in these verses assures the man who dwells in God that he

shall be secure. Though faith claims no merit of its own, yet the Lord rewards it wherever he sees it. He who makes God his refuge shall find him a refuge; he who dwells in God shall find his dwelling protected. We must make the Lord our habitation by choosing him for our trust and rest ... The dwelling here intended by the original was only a tent, yet the frail covering would prove to be a sufficient shelter from harm of all sorts. It matters little whether our abode be a gypsy's hut or a monarch's palace if the soul has made the Most High its habitation ... It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord; the most crushing calamities can only shorten his journey and hasten him to his reward".

So, take heart and keep going on for you are privileged to have this precious confidence ...

When mine eyes shall close in death,  
 When I soar to worlds unknown,  
 See Thee on Thy judgment throne,  
 Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
 Let me hide myself in Thee.

**CHURCH WEBSITE ...** At <http://www.kirkcaldy-pathheadbaptist.co.uk/>, you will find links to our 'Coronavirus' page where there are sermons by various preachers for each Sunday.

In times like these you need a Saviour,  
 In times like these you need an anchor ...  
 I'm very sure, I'm very sure,  
 My Anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!

He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of  
 the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock (Ps. 40:2)