

# Hope in Fearful Times

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] unite our hearts in reverent fear of you and satisfy our hearts in your steadfast love we ask and praise things in jesus name amen psalm 91 if we're honest think as we were reading that we attempt to think it just sounds too good to be true doesn't it no it almost reminds me of them a manifesto a political party might bring out the run-up to an election and you read these promises they they say they'll do if they're elected and you think no danger is that gonna happen now i wonder if you're the same response as you read the psalm you think it sounds too good to be true no danger is this gonna happen to me you see we read this and we know don't we that christians get cancer christians fight anxiety for some of us the thought of being left alone every night to our thoughts it just seems like torture so what are these promises then in the psalm is it just exaggeration exaggeration poetic license one of the guys on our launch team in charleston owen he was on his on his deathbed a few years ago he was he was waiting on a liver transplant by god's grace he got one he's he's uh he's doing well walking with the lord loving the lord and for him on his deathbed psalm 91 when everything to him how could that be when we read we read through it no harm will overtake you well what does that mean look at verse 6 know the the person that's that stalks in the darkness of the plague that destroys at midday here's a guy on his deathbed because of sickness how how did this psalm possibly help him it's a psalm like like some sort of spiritual spinach from popeye you know you're you're feeling fearful you you crack open the tin of spinach you read the psalm so to speak and that's it you're fine you have no fear you're able to carry on with whatever comes your way well of course you know that's not right see for all of us disaster will come harm will come disease will come terrors will come in order for us to understand this psalm what i think we need to do is to look at the psalm through the through the lenses of jesus see these these promises begin to make sense when we look at them through the lens of jesus and when we do that we will see why owen charleston was able to sing this on his deathbed i mean every single word of it so two points for us this evening first off a song for king jesus secondly promises for his people a song for king jesus promises for his people let's look at first point a song for king jesus now why do i say that well in the psalm just look in verse 3 how often you see the word you he will save you he will cover you you will not fear the things throughout the psalm this this you it's it's singular so who is the individual then that the psalm is talking about who's this individual who's going to receive these promises well like a good maths textbook at school will you flick to the back to see the answer

and let's do that now but let's turn to verse 14 of this um sorry pardon me i've got a bit of a cold just now first cold in a year i think so forgive me if my voice cracks a bit anyway verse 14 look at verse 14 where it says the lord says it's the one who loves me the one who calls on my name here is someone who clings to god wholeheartedly who honors god who god says to this person his promises will be fulfilled to this person i will rescue so who is this person who fulfills this criteria perhaps in your bible like mine you've got a footnote as well verse 14 that says at the bottom that is probably the king i think it's spot on that the you here that they're talking about is is the king god's king there's language in the psalm that that echoes language used by david there's there's warlike language in the psalm that that's usually applied to the king and in theory the king trusts god knows god follows god and his law you see verse 14 should describe god's king well we read the old testament and see how fell how far they fell short of that but when we come to the new testament the psalm is picked up on again and we see even clearer who is the recipient of this psalm for help of that we turn to i guess you could argue a master expositor the devil the devil is the the great deceiver that doesn't mean he's clueless when it comes to scripture i'm going to keep a finger in psalm 91 and turn ahead to luke chapter 4 and let me read for us where jesus has been tempted by satan let me read for us from verse 9 of luke chapter 4 it says this the devil led him that is jesus to

jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple if you are the son of god he said throw yourself down from here for it is written he will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone now question what did satan call jesus here did you notice that at the start if you are the son of god now that's a messianic title satan here isn't referring to jesus i don't think as the eternal son of god instead he's using the messianic title of god's promised king like like elsewhere in the songs why is he doing that here how do you know that well because of what satan goes on to quote he goes on to quote psalm 91 a psalm for god's king and satan says here to jesus doesn't he that if you are the son of god that is if you are god's king then psalm 91 is for you jesus he's right jesus doesn't tell him that he's wrong here let's follow satan's logic he says if you are god's king then psalm 91 is yours jesus so jump off this building and the angels will catch you so no harm comes to you god wouldn't let harm come to his king he's promised that in psalm 91 well satan might be spot on and psalm 91 is for god's king but he's wrong in how he uses a psalm see satan reads this to jesus and says don't go to the cross if god really loved you he wouldn't let you suffer look at his promises to you in psalm 91 that's the temptation for jesus don't go the way of the cross go the way of comfort and enjoy these promises now let's have a look at what his promises are for jesus in the psalm turn back to psalm 91 then our car insurance needed renewed recently and if you can afford it you don't go third party firing theft do you you go fully comp fully comprehensive that's what these promises are here they are fully comp all encompassing nearly every situation in life could throw at you look at the language of what of what jesus will receive from god the language of of of shelter shadow in first one god will be his his refuge his his fortress in verse two look in verse three some of the threats the king will face the foulest snare that the hidden sneaky threats traps laid by enemies deadly pestilence sickness that that risks overcoming him and didn't jesus face that the pharisees the scribes seeking to lay their traps for him the ill the sick coming to jesus yet god covered him protected him god's faithfulness to his king will be his shield and rampart look at verses five and six notice the the language of night and day and then the the darkness and midday he's saying that in the the stillness of the darkest night or the brightness of sunny midday the king need not fear and look at the things that are that could cause him to fear people firing arrows at you a plague like sickness which i guess we can relate to terrors at night all of these you need not fear god saves to his king psalmist goes on to describe god's judgments that the wicked will fall evil will be defeated and you'll see it all you'll see your enemies fall and jesus did the image continues doesn't it verses 10 onwards the angels they'll be like the king's security detail i guess in one sense they were for jesus weren't they the garden of gethsemane the night before he died on the cross in verse 13 you will trample the lion and the serpent god says to his king well what does that mean well i think when we get this it helps us really unlock the psalm see the psalm it's it finds its fulfillment in the death and resurrection of jesus and his return let me show you what i mean jesus faced traps for his enemies and he evaded them all god fulfilled that promise that is until it's time for him to be handed over to die on a cross jesus in the gospel like jesus is amazing you read the gospels and he's just unfazed by things he meets a legion of demons unfazed there's this massive storm unfazed that is until the night before he was due to die on the cross jesus enemies they they did fall because on the cross he defeated satan the serpent an image for the devil jesus crushed his head as he died on the cross you see jesus is the one who verse 14 has truly loved god he has always trusted god he was always in his favour he was he always put his refuge in god see verses 14 to 16 it's it's eight promises from god to his king and did god keep his word in them well at first glance it doesn't seem like it does it because he died you see the harm that came to jesus wasn't lasting and in fact it was in his harm that jesus trampled the serpent's head and god did rescue him jesus rose from the dead see all these promises we see in verses 14 to 16 come after the resurrection he gets these things after the resurrection that's when psalm 91 is fulfilled after the cross and resurrection not before as satan tempted jesus to do you see look down from verse 14 where we see these eight promises and hear god himself speaking these says verse 14 because the king clings to me in love i will rescue him i will protect him for he acknowledges my name the king he'll call on me and i will answer him i will be with him in trouble i will deliver him i will honor him with long life i will satisfy him and i will show him my salvation see god did come through he did answer these promises but it was on the far side of resurrection see jesus was rescued he was rescued from death he was always protected from his grip jesus is forever with the father he will always answer him jesus was delivered from death raised to life ascended into heaven and he's been honored honored with the name above every other name he has life eternal see jesus is the

one who is truly the recipients of these promises because he is the one who truly loves the father at all times through all things he is the one who is truly faithful to him see when our when our fears scream at us in our face or or eat us from the inside out we can be tempted to think if god really loves me then he won't let me suffer after all that's what psalm 91 says psalm 91 first and foremost isn't a promise for you and I it's a promise for jesus and to promise which he didn't receive straight away but said after his resurrection see we don't deserve these promises we aren't always faithful we're fitful and failing at times we don't qualify for them it's the amazing thing because jesus went to the cross bore the the punishment of the wicked bore our punishment that when we repent of our sin when we put our trust in jesus then the psalm becomes yours psalm becomes mine it means that

these incredible promises become ours some high friend Owen on his deathbed he was completely right to read to sing to pray psalm 91 because in christ these promises are his we've looked at how this is a song for king jesus now let's turn and look at some of these promises for his people i've been reading a book called rejoice and tremble by mike reese and he makes this fascinating observation i think he's right here he says that never in a society have we been more safe and yet never have we been more afraid when i asked on facebook what people feared there was one thing that didn't come up which should really really have come up see if we don't know jesus we should be terrified that satan has a hold of us terrified that we have an eternal judgment waiting us terrified that god is going to pour out his wrath upon us for all the wrong things that we do and the fear of those things should eclipse every other fear that we have but because of jesus we don't need to fear those things anymore that doesn't mean that fear is completely removed from our lives we find that for whatever reason god does sometimes he leads us to a place of helplessness when we are forced to realise that when we see that all we have is him we realise that we have all we need let's see how the psalmist describes god here have a look at verse one he's described as the most high no matter how big your fears are how much you fear people and what they think he is greater he is most high he's the most high he's the almighty no matter how strong your fears are he is more powerful he is stronger he's the most high he's the almighty he's the lord and capitals the covenant god yahweh this all great all powerful god is the god who makes promises and keeps them every time he is the god who knows his people who dwells with his people he is the god who will never let us down never let us go never give us up finally he is my god this god isn't some distant and different deity the most high the almighty the lord he is my god so what he says to me what he thinks about me should shape everything in my life look at the metaphors that accompany these names shelter shelter when life is chaos there is shelter protection shadow like the wings of an eagle over us providing rest from the burning sun a sense of sense of closeness with him refuge he's a place you can run to and know that we are safe a fortress think edinburgh castle on the hill strong and movable protecting everyone inside with walls as thick as I am tall this is my god and in him

[ 20 : 06 ] I trust see just think of that image from verse 4 of being surrounded by God's wings think of the mother hen and her chicks under her wing if heat is burning down the mother dies but the chicks live if wind is blowing and rain is pouring the mother freezes but the chicks live if a prayer to come she dies but the chicks live Jesus has taken the judgment the wrath should have come on us but he has protected us from us he has taken it so that we might live and how do we know that he did that that he took that punishment in full because he rose from the dead because Jesus is risen from the dead we can know that God is not punishing you for your sins when things come that make you fear

God is not punishing you just look at the end of verse 4 his faithfulness God's faithfulness not our faithfulness to him but his faithfulness will be our shield and rampart and he is always faithful he will protect you not from harm but through harm even through death itself see God is God is with us God is for us God has said that he'll be with us to the very end of the age and into the next and one day we'll be with him forever there'll be no more suffering no more sickness no more enemies no more tears no more fears so you remember on the on the cross Jesus crushed the serpent's head he defeated the devil the great lion prowling round as Peter calls him in his first letter but like Jesus these promises in Psalm 91 aren't going to be fulfilled on this side of death instead they help us persevere when we come face to face with death because we've seen the Psalm that God isn't going to keep us from trouble but he'll keep us through trouble he doesn't say no harm will come to you he says no harm will overtake you see this Psalm is not a promise that we won't get hurt it's a

promise that ultimately we won't be harmed because of the death and resurrection of Jesus you are never condemned never separated because God is for you so because of the death and resurrection of Jesus when we trust in him he looks at you and he says look down at verse 14 he says this to you he says because he loves me because she loves me says the Lord

I will rescue him I will protect him for he acknowledges my name he will call me and I will answer him I will be with him in trouble I will deliver him and honour him I with long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation his amazing promise for us so what do we do with these promises in the Psalm that we have in Christ well three things I think first off know know with confidence that God most high is greater than any fear and in him alone there is safety this Psalm reminds us to take our eyes off ourselves and to lift us up the great promises to come in Christ know who God is second this Psalm raises our affections and reminds us of God's amazing grace to us in Christ we don't deserve these promises but they're ours it's just stir up love in our hearts for Christ and all that he has given us in his grace but if you're listening and you aren't a Christian these promises aren't yours you should be scared of the judgement to come so trust in Christ turn from your sin and trust in him first off know who God is remember who he is secondly have your affections raised to Christ and what he's done for us and what we have in him and third

I think this Psalm should drive us to radical missionary endeavours now what do I mean by that Elizabeth Elliot wrote a book called The Shadow of the Almighty of course taking its title from verse 1 of the Psalm perhaps you've read the book it's a book about her husband Jim Elliot and four other men who on the 8th of January in 1956 tried to take the gospel to an Ecuadorian tribe for the very first time and they were killed if you call a story of missionary martyrdom the shadow of the Almighty I think you're saying something about Psalm 91 you're saying this Psalm does not mean that difficult things won't happen to Christians you're saying even death may come in the service of Jesus Christ and yet through that you remain in the shadow of the Almighty God remains with you see Jesus says something similar in Luke's gospel he's teaching his disciples in chapter 21 and he says this from verse 16 he says you will be betrayed even by parents brothers and sisters relatives and friends and they will put some of you to death everyone will hate you because of me but not a hair of your head will perish some of you will die

Jesus says but not a hair of your head will perish see as we follow Jesus yes there are times when we will get hurt but because of the resurrection of Jesus Psalm 91 reminds us that ultimately we will not be harmed so let's take risks for Jesus knowing that God is great at normal knowing that all that Jesus has done for us let's take risks for Jesus risks like inviting a work colleague to read John's gospel with you over your lunch break risks like telling your unbelieving spouse or parents perhaps tonight over tea what you heard at church today take risks for the gospel because the shadow of the almighty is over you that's why I'm so grateful that you as a church are behind church planting see we live in a culture of fear and we have the only message of hope and refuge so let's tell people let me close in prayer together let's pray our father we thank you for these amazing promises in the Lord Jesus

[ 27 : 47 ] Christ that we have in him father sorry for times we've become so focused on ourselves we forget how great you are and all the promises that we have in Christ father for those of us this evening who are suffering who are fearful may they know your love for them this evening that you are for them that you are with them even through death itself you will be there with them and these promises are for them there are any here who are doubting their salvation in Christ may they be strengthened this evening at all that they have in him knowing their sin has been forgiven and his promises are theirs father knowing that you are the most high the almighty knowing all that we've been given in Christ may you help us be bold with the gospel knowing that we live as people in the shadow of the almighty we thank you Lord

Jesus for the cross and it is in your name we pray amen my soul finds rest in God alone my rock and my salvation a fortress strong against my foes and I will not be shaken though lips may bless and hearts may curse and lies like arrows pierce me I'll fix my heart on righteousness I'll look to him who hears me oh praise my my delight and my reward everlasting never failing my redeemer my God find find rest my soul in God alone amidst the world's temptations when evil seeks to take a hold I'll cling to my salvation though riches come and riches go don't set your heart upon them the fields of hope in which I sow are harvested in heaven oh praise him hallelujah my delight my reward everlasting never failing my redeemer my

God I'll set my gaze on God alone and trust in him completely with every day pour out my soul and he will prove his mercy though life is but a fleeting breath a sigh too deep to measure my king has crushed the curse of death and I am his forever oh praise him hallelujah my delight and my reward everlasting never failing my redeemer my

God God is our refuge and our strength our ever present aid and therefore though the earth gives way we will not be afraid though mountains fall into the sea though waters foam and roar we will not fear though mountains quake as waves engulf the shore a river flows through streams delight the city of our

[ 33 : 52 ] God the holy place in which the Lord most high has his abode God is within his holy place the city will not yield for God will come at break of day to be her help and shield the nations are in disarray the kingdoms disappear God speaks and at his mighty voice the whole earth melts with fear the

Lord almighty is with us to strengthen and sustain for Jacob's God our strong defense and fortress will remain one pro Mode one improved and happens or anything is hurting and ■■ those know destined the pointsNT where they leave let powerpole backammen member afraidissy