

Beauty for Ashes—Daily Reading and Reflection—March 22nd, 2020

In light of the recent tornado in Tennessee and the outbreak of COVID -19, our communities are facing an unprecedented situation. How can we move forward in faith when we are told not to leave our homes? In this week's message, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mc-CDTJVu78>) Pastor Jacob invited us to pray Psalm 91 for the next 91 days. In your home this week, or through video conferencing with your Small Group, consider how this practice allows you to let go of fear and bring you the peace of God.

Daily Reading and Reflection

Each day this week, pray through Psalm 91 and close with this or your own prayer.

God, you have given promises of a great exchange when you will give us a crown of beauty in the place of our ashes, you will bring joy to our mourning. In these difficult days we are tempted to wear things that do not give us life. We are tempted to live in fear and place blame for condition. We are tempted to ignore the needs of others and live lives of scarcity. Free us from these things we put on and give us Your peace and truth for the days ahead. Amen.

Praying Psalms 91

What does it mean to pray Psalm 91? There is a difference between *reading* the Psalms and *praying* the Psalms. Reading the Psalms is great. But the Psalms were actually the early prayer book or song book of God's people. Praying the Psalms can give words to our deepest feelings. Jesus prayed the Psalms. Among his last words before death and resurrection were these... "Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God." He was quoting Psalm 31. He was praying Psalm 31.

So what does this mean for you as you set out to pray Psalm 91 every day?

Some things to consider:

- Are the words you're praying connecting to how you are feeling, or the longing of your heart?
- You may chose to pray one section of the prayer at a time and spend time reflecting on each.
- Write your own Psalm to God in the righthand column. Use Psalm 91 as a guide.
- Ask what these words mean for your life in your current situation.

Psalm 91 (New Living Translation)

Those who live in the shelter of the Most High
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

²This I declare about the Lord:

He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;
he is my God, and I trust him.

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- ³ For he will rescue you from every trap
and protect you from deadly disease.
- ⁴ He will cover you with his feathers.
He will shelter you with his wings.
His faithful promises are your armor and protection.
- ⁵ Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,
nor the arrow that flies in the day.
- ⁶ Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness,
nor the disaster that strikes at midday.
- ⁷ Though a thousand fall at your side,
though ten thousand are dying around you,
these evils will not touch you.
- ⁸ Just open your eyes,
and see how the wicked are punished.
- ⁹ If you make the Lord your refuge,
if you make the Most High your shelter,
- ¹⁰ no evil will conquer you;
no plague will come near your home.
- ¹¹ For he will order his angels
to protect you wherever you go.
- ¹² They will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.
- ¹³ You will trample upon lions and cobras;
you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet!
- ¹⁴ The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me.
I will protect those who trust in my name.
- ¹⁵ When they call on me, I will answer;
I will be with them in trouble.
I will rescue and honor them.
- ¹⁶ I will reward them with a long life
and give them my salvation."