

## Faith, Fear, and Prudence!

Written by Ben Winslett

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In the Old Testament, God gave provision for dealing with plagues and illnesses. If one had leprosy or came in contact with a corpse (as well as a few other issues), he or she was ceremonially unclean and had to be separated from the camp of Israel. For leprosy, a person was quarantined until cleansed. For other infirmities, a person was quarantined for a week. This quarantine absolutely affected a person's ability to participate in corporate worship. But in this, we see that God not only accepts segregation in the event of a plague, He mandated it!

Recently, I've seen Psalm 91 cited as a very appropriate word of comfort in the midst of the COVID-19 threat. I am greatly encouraged by this Psalm, and we even used it during our scripture reading Sunday morning at Flint River. In it, we find great comfort that God is our refuge and deliverer. We learn that when we call, He answers us. And we even read that no plague shall "come nigh unto thy dwelling." If it is God's will, He can spare us from even a plague. Amen!

But I want to issue you a caution. Do you remember when Satan tried to tempt Jesus after His baptism? Of the three temptations, in one instance Satan carried Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple and said to cast Himself down. In each temptation, Satan cited scripture. The scripture he cited to Jesus at the pinnacle was none other than Psalm 91, and the statement "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Jesus reply is so very relevant to us today! "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

What's my point? What can we learn from this interaction? To be reckless in the face of a danger is to tempt God. He promises to hear us and protect us, but He also expects us to use wisdom and prudence when a plague abounds in the land. Satan tried to apply this Psalm beyond what was intended, and to do such is to tempt God. Meditate on that point.

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To be very clear, God has not given us the spirit of fear! We must not be afraid, and if we ARE afraid, we must cast that care on Christ (Psalm 56:3). But prudence and wisdom is not the same as fear. Discretion shall preserve thee (Prov 2:11). As Solomon wrote in Proverbs 22:3, "a prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." We must not be afraid, but we must be wise and prudent. Be careful (full of worry) for nothing! At the same time, use the common sense God gave us to stay healthy and prevent the risk, as His word instructs us in many places. I've seen this juxtaposed as "faith versus fear" and I believe that mischaracterizes this issue. We can be believing and wise at the same time. May the Lord bless you all.