

## **Heart for the Poor - Holding on to the promises of God or doing his will?**

**Richard Barter March 2 2010**

Last Wednesday night's Bible Study was at our home which was a cunning plan on behalf of my wife to get me to show up! We looked at that remarkable Psalm 91, sometimes called the "Soldiers Psalm". Those well know promises are a great source of comfort to those going through difficult times.

Psa 91:1 Whoever goes to the LORD for safety, whoever remains under the protection of the Almighty, can say to him, "You are my defender and protector. You are my God; in you I trust." He will keep you safe from all hidden dangers and from all deadly diseases. He will cover you with his wings; you will be safe in his care; his faithfulness will protect and defend you. You need not fear any dangers at night or sudden attacks during the day...

This speaks of God as the Protector of those who trust in Him, promising that while many will suffer, those who went to him for safety will be delivered. All good stuff, but, this Psalm also raises the thorny question of unanswered prayer. How do we deal with this? At the risk of sounding ungrateful, not everyone will be reassured that we are guaranteed freedom from suffering in heaven, but not on planet earth.

I know there are among you listeners those who could elegantly answer this dilemma, my usual response is to examine the way Jesus may have responded to this situation. Satan quoted Psalm 91 to Jesus during his temptation in the wilderness. Jesus' response was simply to not to put God to the test, forgive me if I am missing the obvious, this doesn't answer our problem. But if we examine the ministry of Jesus, we find it was all about what he did for others, rather than what others might have done for/or against him. I am reminded of a poster I saw in a UNHCR office in Abidjan in the Ivory Coast; speaking on behalf refugees it simply said in large black and white letters "They wish they had your problems". For the majority of us in a blessed country like New Zealand the risks highlighted in the Psalm, plagues and attacks are just not going to happen... and I don't want to hear that wining the cricket against Australia proves God promises to give us victory over our enemies.

So where am I going with this, rather than struggling with why does God not deliver on our prayers, I believe there is much to be gained by us delivering on God's commands to serve others.

This morning at TEAR Fund devotions a member of an Auckland church reported back to us on his visit to one of TEAR Fund's partners, Africa Cooperative Action Trust in Kwazulu Natal, South Africa. We heard about how the poor are helping the poor creating food security through establishing vegetable gardens, community funds to give loans for small enterprises, awareness of AIDs and the sharing of a clear message that real change happens only when one takes on board the teaching and Lordship of Jesus. Here are desperately poor people being equipped and trained to serve their neighbours creating sustainable communities. While they hang on the promises of God that he will protect them, they are actively out there ensuring their neighbours will survive.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for your example. Even during trial and tribulation, knowing fully your father could pluck you to safety any moment, you thought only of others. Let the example of the courageous poor in Kwazulu helping their neighbours be an inspiration to us to be a blessing to those in need around us. Amen