

Religion in a time of pestilence

21 short prescriptions during the Covid-19 pandemic



By Dr Krab

Part 1

In chapter 12 (Of the uses of adversity) of his book, *The imitation of Christ*, Thomas A Kempis writes:

“It is good for us that we sometimes have sorrows and adversities, for they often make a man lay to heart that he is only a stranger and sojourner, and may not put his trust in any worldly thing.

Therefore, ought a man to rest wholly upon God, so that he needeth not seek much comfort at the hand of men.”

Unless you’re in dire need of professional help, nobody enjoys ill health. Nor does God send physical or emotional ills on us to supposedly test our faith. Pain and suffering are however part and parcel of being a resident of this planet. Our response is what counts.

Most of us tend to (initially) resort to the “why me?” line of thought. I am often reminded of the Bishop who on his death bed expressed his surprise to his chaplain at this unwanted turn of events: “I always thought that in my case, the Lord would make an exception.”

Sadly, even very nice people can suffer pain and illness and ultimately die together with the wicked – who often do not have the grace to die prematurely or badly.

The psalmist asks this question (Psalm 73:3): “*For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*”

In Psalm 91, he reassures himself as follows:

- 1 *Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty*
- 2 *I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.”*
- 3 *Surely he will save you
from the fowler’s snare
and from the deadly pestilence.*
- 4 *He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*
- 5 *You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.*

7 *A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.*

8 *You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.*

9 *If you say, "The Lord is my refuge,"
and you make the Most High your dwelling,*

10 *no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.*

11 *For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;*

12 *they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.*

13 *You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.*

14 *"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.*

15 *He will call on me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honour him.*

16 *With long life I will satisfy him.*

The Covid-19 virus is affecting all of us. While the often-deadly symptoms are bestowed on the affected, the financial and social impact affect us all. Nobody escapes the pandemic's scourge.

Some smokers may have to resort to picking up discarded *stompies* and those who enjoy a drink have to stockpile their favourite tippie or go on the wagon. You can't even walk your dog.

Stuck inside and isolated, why not turn to the Lord and spend some profitable time with His Word?

Then, when the virus has been conquered, we can say we have grown in the knowledge of our Father and His Son and pray together:

"The Lord saved my life from destruction and crowns me with mercy and loving kindness. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

*"Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."*

The opening verse of the psalm tells us where to find shelter and rest: with God.

Wanting to dwell with God is a deliberate act of free choice.

In John 14:2, Jesus says: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe in Me as well. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?"*

That's good news – not only is there room for us there where God is, Jesus also promises to be there to make us feel welcome. That sense of being in God's presence, sharing His space, begins in the here and now. This sense of being with Jesus where God is, is not only for the life to come, it starts here.

Being in that holy and privileged space, should have a profound effect on how we think and how we behave. It should set us apart from the behaviour and thought patterns of those who have no desire to dwell in the shelter of the Most High.

Therefore, with an untroubled heart, find shelter and rest in the shadow of the Almighty, virus or no virus.