

Let's turn in our Bibles to Psalm 140, reading from verse 1.

This is a Psalm about God's power and promise to protect us from harm, and keep us from violence.

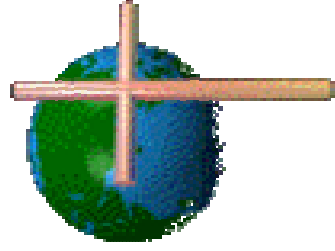
Power Point # 2 to 8

- 1 ¶ For the director of music. A psalm of David.  
Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men; protect me from these men of violence,
- 2 from these men who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war and violence every day.
- 3 They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's; the poison of vipers is on their lips.
- 4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; protect me from men of violence who plan to trip my feet.
- 5 Proud men have hidden a snare for me; they have spread out the cords of their net and have set traps for me along my path.
- 6 O LORD, I say to you, "You are my God." Hear, O LORD, my cry for mercy.
- 7 O Sovereign LORD, my strong deliverer, who shields my head in the day of battle—
- 8 ¶ do not grant the wicked their desires, O LORD; do not let their plans succeed, or they will become proud.
- 9 Let the heads of those who surround me be covered with the trouble their lips have caused.
- 10 Let burning coals fall upon them; may they be thrown into the fire, into miry pits, never to rise.
- 11 Let slanderers not be established in the land; may disaster hunt down men of violence.
- 12 I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.
- 13 Surely the righteous will praise your name and the upright will live before you.

Power Point # 1

A Taste of Heaven.

*What you always wanted to know,  
but were too afraid to ask!*



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David's prayer was one of trust in a God who has the power and the strength to protect His loved ones from pain and suffering.

Indeed, in my own life, I recall one morning over 14 years ago, when I was prompted by the Lord to fast and pray about an illegal 'half way house' that had been established in a neighboring property.

The residents of this house were a real threat to the safety of my wife and my family.

We had a neighborhood meeting where myself and other residents even considered selling our homes to escape the real threat of danger and violence.

And in an attempt to protect ourselves, Debbie and I bought a rather large guard dog and even installed a security system within our family home that backed onto the halfway house.

Members of this halfway house constantly played with knives within their section, urinated where ever they chose, used binoculars to look into the windows of neighboring houses and even stole over \$10,000 of items from a neighboring house, simply carrying them from our neighbors house into the boarding house.

And one Thursday morning, God prompted me to fast and pray for His protection and the closure of this house.

He led me to Psalm 11, and promised me that He would honor His Word and protect us from the threat of violence and wickedness from this house.

That instead of fleeing to the hills and running away from the problem, to stand firm, trust in God and His Word and He would deliver us from any harm.

Verse 6 of Psalm 11 tells us that God will rain fiery coals upon those who threaten God's servants, that He will send a scorching wind upon those who harm God's people.

So this is what I prayed for, fasted for and believed for.

I told Debbie nothing about this, until the next day when I read the local paper – the Western Leader.

#### Power Point # 9

What I am about to read to you, written in the newspaper 14 years ago, and kept safe in my Bible, is a testimony to the protecting power of God upon His loved ones.

#### **FIREMAN HURT**

*A fire man was taken to Auckland hospital with head injuries after he slipped down a bank at a boarding house late last night.*

*He was believed to have minor abrasions but was not seriously hurt. The occupants of the house escaped unharmed as the building went up in flames about 11:45 pm.*

Now, just to let you know that it wasn't me who set the boarding house on fire!

But rather, God had kept true to His Word and had stepped in to protect us, His loved ones,

from the real threat of violence and harm that threatened to destroy our lives!

Isn't God good!



*Allow me to share one more true story with you this morning, from a slightly different angle.*

The phone call to the 911 emergency center went something like this:

TEACHER: I am on the floor.

DISPATCHER: Okay. You've got the kids there?

TEACHER: I've got every student in this library on the floor! Stay on the floor!

Power Point # 10

TEACHER: (Gunshots in background) The gun is going off outside the door. I don't think I'm going to get out of here alive!



*Who knows the events that this emergency phone call was describing?*

That's right – the Columbine High School Shooting of April 20<sup>th</sup> 1999 where two disgruntled students opened fire on their school mates,

throwing home made nail bombs into packed classrooms, killing 13 students, a teacher and wounding over 25 other people.

Listen to this eye witness report, describing Rachel Scott who was just 17 years of age.

Power Point # 11

*I saw another armed student standing, glaring at Rachel. He had a loaded gun in his hand, and pressed it against her forehead. He only asked her one question; he said to Rachel; 'Do you believe in God?' Rachel paused for a minute, very upset and confused. Finally she answered. 'Yes – I believe in God.'*

*'Why?' asked her executioner.*

But he never gave her the chance to respond.

The teenage girl lay dead at his feet. One single gunshot, point blank, to her head.

**This morning we are going to answer the question that many Christians want to know, but have been to afraid to ask.**

You see, what we have already looked at, is a promise from God's Word that He will protect His loved ones from harm.

Indeed, I gave you a very real example of this from my own life, where God honored His Word and protected myself and my family from harm.

But then we have an horrific account of one of God's loved ones, a beautiful, precious 17 year old Christian, who in the face of danger, affirmed her belief in a loving and protecting God, and was killed, was murdered in the process.

Have you ever found yourself wondering about this inconsistency?



The feeling that one minute we are in the very presence of God, and then the next moment He is no where to be found!

#### Power Point # 12

Have you ever wondered why God miraculously and wonderfully heals one person with diabetes and yet another person, with just as much faith and trust in God, dies a horrible and painful death as a result of this disease?



Have you ever wondered why in some towns Jesus 'healed all those who came to Him' (Matthew 8:16) and yet at other times He 'withdrew from the crowds to the mountains' (Mark 6:31) and left many people sick and dying?

Have you ever wondered why Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead, but allowed His own cousin to be murdered in prison?

You see, these very questions will plague us all at one time or another.

**You see, I passionately believe in the power of God to heal, to deliver and to raise from the dead.**

**I believe in the gifts of the Spirit, - all of them – and not just the ones that can be used in the front of a church!**

And as I read my Bible, I see the power of God on one hand to open prison doors - to deliver and set free Peter and other disciples,

and then on the other hand I read historical accounts of their later imprisonment, torture, suffering and death – within the exact same prisons that they had been delivered from decades earlier.

I wonder how they felt the second time.

I wonder if they expected God to deliver them like He had done before.

I don't think they did.

I think they had matured in their faith, they had 'grown up' and could see the bigger picture of God's will and His ways – just as we need to mature and grow up in God too.

I think they fully accepted these things as part of God's plan for their lives.

They saw the bigger picture, and believed in God no matter what came their way.

They believed in a God who has the power to heal, the power to deliver and set free.

But a God who also has the power to strengthen and support people despite being sick, persecuted and facing hardships!

You see, I know what it's like to experience the power and victory of God, and at the same time, I know what it's like to feel disappointed with God.

To wonder why at times He might heal and deliver, and at other times He doesn't.

And I think if we were honest this morning, many of us would feel this way ourselves.

But what we need to realize, that there is a perfectly good answer to the question of *why God seems to allow both victory and defeat into our lives – often both at the same time!*

You may have heard about the story of a middle aged family man who went to a prayer and healing meeting to see if God would heal him of his terminal brain tumor.

God performed a miracle, and right before the eyes of the congregation, the preacher prayed for this man's healing, and the tumor, which was the size of a tennis ball on the side of the man's head, dissolved away.

This man left this meeting knowing the deliverance and healing of a miracle working God.

On his way home, he was involved in a tragic car accident and lost his life!

On the one hand we have the power of a miracle working God who tells us that, by His stripes we are healed!

We have magnificent Psalms like the one we read earlier, Psalm 140 that speaks of God's power to deliver us from violence and harm.

And then we have the reality that sometimes bad things happen to good people – even Christians!

Even the Apostle Paul who knew the deliverance and healing power of the risen Christ - was told by the Spirit through Ananias how much he would have to suffer and endure for the sake of Christ. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:12:

Even this Paul whose handkerchief was carried across the country and used to heal many people, whose shadow falling across your body would bring instant healing,

Even Paul knew what it was like to have a lingering illness, an eye disease, who also told his disciple Timothy to take a little wine, a little medicine for his stomach illness. 1 Timothy 5:23

Why would this great man of God raise people from the dead in one passage, and then tell his main disciple to take medicine for a stomach illness in another?

You see, there is a 'creative tension' between on the one hand being healed and protected by God, and on the other hand still suffering sickness, violence and death.

Now most people in the church today *cannot* hold both these concepts in balance.

***It takes a lot of maturity, both spiritual and emotional maturity to do this!***

You will find that most churches, most Christians believe either one or the other, but not both at the same time.

Churches either go for the extreme of *not praying* for anyone for healing at all, and rejecting all the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Through to the other extreme of expecting everyone to be healed, not allowing people to be sick or dying in the church, or blaming their sickness on un-forgiveness, sin, or demonic activity.

But I firmly believe that God is calling His church today - to a balance, to a middle ground.

We must believe in, and pray for our healing, but we must also realize that God also allows, comforts and supports people *within* their illnesses.

This really is a message that is long overdue in the church world wide today.

Finally, I want to share with you a story that will help you understand this tension between being healed or not being healed, being protected by God on one hand, and suffering violence on the other.

It is a story that I have used before, but I believe it is time to hear it again, especially where other churches have experienced much trouble over this very issue throughout this last year.

You see, basically, what we have today in our lives, is a foretaste of heaven, a glimpse of what awaits us in heaven, an intermittent experience of victorious kingdom living.

In theological terms, it is known as 'Realized Eschatology'.

*You see - Despite living with a chronic, permanent illness, I believe in the power of God to heal, to deliver and to set us free.*

At times I have prayed for people who are on their death bed, and they have recovered, yet I live with a major chronic illness that has required major surgery and much ongoing medication!

I do believe that the devil is totally disarmed at the cross, the curse is reversed - and that perfect victory and prosperity are our inheritance.

But like all inheritances, I don't believe we will *fully* experience this until we have died and gone to heaven.

What we experience today is simply a small glimpse of true kingdom living that awaits us in eternity.

How many of us have heard of John Wimber?

#### Power Point # 13

John Wimber, founder of the music band The Righteous Brothers, and who was known as having one of the greatest healing ministries of this generation, founding the Vineyard churches, died from a massive brain hemorrhage resulting from terminal cancer.

You see, again, it's the paradox of life and death, of healing others, but dying of a terminal illness yourself.

I guess the reality of it is, *that life is terminal*, we will all die at one time or another.

But let me share with you the story that I promised, that will help us understand how the war over sin and death has been won, but yet the battle continues, and why evil still haunts and affects us all.

One the one hand, we know that Christ is 'the only Ruler, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15).

#### Power Point # 14

But for a time, until the 'Day of the Lord' is completed at the second coming, we must live under two kingdoms, the kingdom of Satan, and the kingdom of God.

Our situation is much like the Allies in World War II.

The decisive battle, that broke the back of the Nazi army, was fought and won by the Allies on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944.

This day is known as what?

*D-Day. (Operation Overload.)*

But even though the war was won, the battle continued for another eleven months until V-E Day (Victory in Europe), 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945, when Hitler committed suicide, and Germany surrendered.

The frightening thing about this, is that more lives were lost between D-Day and V-E Day, during this eleven month period, than during the entire WWII.

The war had been won, but the battle continued!

#### Power Point # 15



For this world, the battle began in the garden of Eden, it was won on the Cross, and it will finish at the second coming of Christ.

For Christians, our D-Day is Easter.

The Bible tells us in Col 2:15 that; **having disarmed the powers and authorities, Christ made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.**

That was the day of victory, D-Day for God's people!

But although the War is won, and Jesus is the victor, the battle continues, and our V-E-Day (Victory in Eternity!) will not happen until Christ's second coming.

Just as it was for World War II, with more casualties between D-Day and V-E-Day, so it is for Christians.

Between our D-Day when Jesus rose from the dead, and our V-E-Day when He returns, we will have battles and casualties, we will have sickness and violence.

But also, we will have intermittent moments of victory, when the enemies of sin and sickness are overcome.

We must stand together and believe in a God who heals and delivers, but we must also hold in our other hand the reality of death and decay.

Power Point # 16

And we need to let our faith and trust in God grow and mature.

Where as God wants us to have the faith of a child, He wants us to grow up in our understanding of life and faith, and become mature adults.

So - let us have faith in a God who heals, but let us also continue having faith in a God who at times does not heal our mortal bodies or deliver us from harm!

Let us rejoice with the thousands of people who have believed in God for a miracle healing and have received it.

But let us rejoice as well, with those people who have prayed and asked God in faith for a healing, who haven't received it, and yet remain rock solid in their trust of God.

To me, that's a much greater faith!

Let's pray as the musicians come forward.

