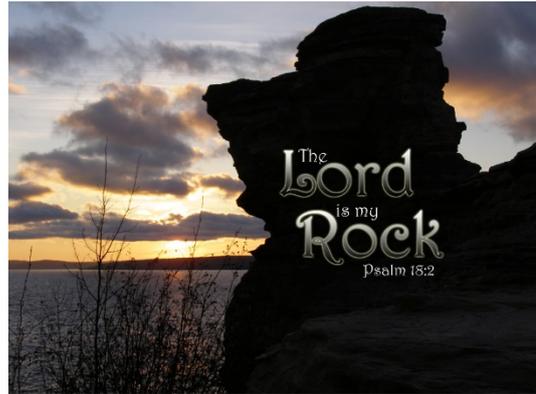


The unchanging God

based on reflections from John Piper (*Coronavirus and Christ*)

One thing that this pandemic could do is challenge our confidence in who God is. It can feel like we are standing on shifting sand, our lives, our jobs, the lives of those we love, the economy everything that seemingly our society is built on reveals itself to be sand. These things are temporary, good things, but temporary and not worth building our lives on, however until they are shaken we don't realise the depth of trust we put in them. Consequently, as these things are shaken so can our confidence in who God is.



Is he a good God? Is he righteous? Can we trust him? Will he be faithful and what does that faithfulness look like if it isn't a safe, healthy life, a good life for us, our families and friends?

The truth is in the midst of all this God the rock DOES NOT change. The coronavirus pandemic does not change who he is. Our trust, our hope, our faith isn't put to shame when we put it in the great 'I AM'.

God the Rock

In Isaiah 8:12–13, God said to Isaiah, ***“Do not fear what [this people] fears, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honour as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.”*** In other words, don't put God into the same group as all of your ordinary fears and dreads. Treat him as an utterly separate and unique— with a transcendent—fear and dread.

God is righteous, he is holy, he is good. Who He is does not change in the midst of the Coronavirus. His righteousness and goodness requires that he not simply give us an easy life but gives us opportunities to turn to Him and away from the things that draw us from him He is the great I AM, he is the Alpha and Omega, Creator of all.

The Sovereignty of God

God is all-governing and all-wise. He is sovereign over the coronavirus. This is good news—indeed, it is the key to experiencing the sweetness of God in his bitter providences. His sovereignty means that he can do, and in fact does do, all that he decisively wills to do.

The coronavirus therefore is not a surprise to God, in fact our God could stop it at any time, therefore He is allowing it. However He governs it, He will bring an end to it. It is a bitter season but again and again in the Word of God we read of men and women who lived through bitter seasons and drew closer to the Father. He uses all things for the good of those who love him. This is a time ordained by God. God governs it. He will end it. No part of it is outside his rule or reign. Life and death are not a game of chance they are in his hand.

Job did not sin with his lips (Job 1:22) when he said: ***Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*** (Job 1:21) The Lord gave. And the Lord took. The Lord took Job's ten children.



In the presence of God, no one has a right to life. Every breath we take is a gift of grace. Every heartbeat, undeserved. Life and death are finally in the hands of God:

Therefore, as we think of our future with the coronavirus—or any other life-threatening situation— be reassured, know peace as our future is in the hands of a holy, righteous, good God.

James tells us how to think and speak in this manner:

You ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” (James 4:15)

If he wills, we will live. If not, we won’t.

Your life, your destiny is not left up to chance. God has ordained every day of your life and this season is no surprise to him.

It reminds me of a song we used to sing with children at church – The wise man built his house upon the rock and the foolish man on the sand. When the storms came the house on the sand fell flat but the house on the rock stood firm. Let’s together build our lives on The Rock. Jehovah has not and does not change as seasons do. He is our refuge and our safe place.

Reflections

1. What image of God do you tend to hold in your mind?
2. When you picture God as the rock, what does this mean to you?
3. Think back to a time when you have experienced God as a place of refuge and safety.

Prayer

Pray for yourself and those around you feeling unsettled and uncertain in this season that they would know God as the Rock worth building a life on.