

Chaplains Corner – April 13, 2019

Rev. Rich Hines

A Message For This Special Time – Coronavirus COVID 19 and The Gospel

This message is primarily for those who call on the name of Jesus Christ as their own Lord and Savior from sin, and serve as a Chaplain or a gospel minister in a jail, prison or a follow-up ministry such as a rescue mission – in the United States.

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*ALL CAPITAL LETTERS or **bold faced words** are sometimes used to emphasize words in a text, or to make a comment about a biblical text, or emphasize words in a text, or to make a comment about a biblical text, or emphasize a statement.*

In my April 1st message in regard to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I ended by saying this new message would be my May 2020 message. However, in thinking about our situation, I want to get this to you all earlier, so this is my Mid-April message.

According to Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2, we are to OBEY the governing authority. Those that refuse to do so, disobey God (unless the governing authorities are demanding we turn from our faith in Christ Jesus and the propagation of His gospel), see Romans 13:2. So we need to obey the social distancing and stay home orders the governing authorities give us.

In times like these, because most of us are under a stay-at-home order, many have a sense of being under siege. During this pandemic that is upon the world we live in, there are many heavy concerns. Though the health threat is great, the financial threat effects even more people around us. And, this pandemic "COVID 19 Coronavirus" is a **great spiritual thermometer**, by which - I think God is testing everyone.

What is our true relationship to the one true God, TODAY? Could this calamity be **sent by God** to chasten or test some and wake up many?

I think, "**Yes, that's correct.**" God does more than to allow calamities, **He even sends them.** The God breathed-out Scripture, in numerous places makes this very clear. Leviticus 26:14-16 and Deuteronomy 28:15, 21-22 are just two passages that say so. Look at them.

Leviticus 26 -

14 'But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments,
15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, *but* break My covenant,
16 **I also will do this to you: I will even appoint** terror over you, **wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart.** And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.

Deuteronomy 28 -

15 "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: ...

21 The LORD **will make the plague** [pestilence] **cling to you** until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess.

22 The LORD will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish.

Even though we should interpret these passages as applying to ancient Israel that did not heed God's warning and turned away from their covenant God, the LORD (JHVH), there is a principle in them for us Gentiles. After all, the Scripture in Proverbs 14:34 does say,

"Righteousness **exalts a nation**, but **sin is a reproach to any people.**"

And there is no question that our nation - is a very sinful nation. Don't forget, this nation has "legally" murdered more innocent people than Nazi Germany (through abortion)!

Look at the purpose of God in sending calamity, in Isaiah 45:5-7 and 45:21b-22.

5 I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other; *there is* no God besides Me. I will gird you, **though you have not known Me**,

6 That they [the whole world] may know **from the rising of the sun to its setting** [in other words, from east to west] that *there is* none besides Me. I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other;

7 I form the light and create darkness, **I make peace and create calamity**; I, the LORD, do all these *things.*' ...

21 "... Who has declared this from ancient time? *Who* has told it from that time? *Have* not I, the LORD? And *there is* no other God besides Me, a just [righteous and fair] God **and a Savior**; ***there is* none besides Me.**"

22 "**Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth!** For I *am* God, and *there is* no other. ..."

We live in a sin cursed earth. Diseases are part of the curse that the first sin brought on humanity. But God is **incredibly patient** and merciful towards sinners.

"The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise [to judge the whole earth and its inhabitants], as some count slackness, but is **longsuffering toward us**, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9).

As I write this message, we still live in a time when sinners can hear and respond to the gospel of Christ which calls for true repentance toward God and true faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

For the saved, that is the Holy Spirit born of God, followers of Christ, the ultimate future is wonderful beyond all imagination. BUT, for the unsaved, who do not know God through the Lord Jesus Christ, this is a very hard time and unless they repent and believe the gospel before it is too late, their future is forever bad beyond all imagination.

So when you have a sense that people, because of this present calamity, are ready to listen and obey the gospel, I think you should begin with this passage from James 4:6-10.

6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He [God, in Proverbs 3:34 LXX translation] says: "**God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**"

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Verses 6 and 7 are the first steps of repentance - humble yourself, submit, which means, be ready to obey God, and then turn from serving Satan and his lies through human society - the

world system. Compare that third point to Acts 26:18, "... to turn them from darkness to light, and *from the power of Satan to God*, that they may receive forgiveness of sins ..."

Tell people that repentance means a change of mind about their sin, and a deep desire for a change of direction away from it. True repentance of heart always produces evidence in one's conduct, the "fruits ... of repentance," see Matthew 3:8.

These evident changes are accomplished by the power of God in the lives of those who deeply want that turning from sin and completely trust in Christ's death and resurrection to justify them before an all holy God.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. ...

Here in verse 8a, is where the gospel of Christ touches a life of a repentant soul. Explain this verse like this.

There is **NO WAY to draw near to God apart from who Jesus is and what He ALONE has done for the sinner**. Jesus said, "... no one comes to the Father **except through Me**." (John 14:6b ESV). The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Peter said in Acts 4:12 NASB - "And there is salvation **in no one else**; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Call men and women to come to God through Jesus Christ and Him alone. Accordingly, God will draw near to them. He will even be **IN THEM**. Show that from John 14:21-23 where Jesus said,

21 He who has My commandments [compare John 6:29 and 1 John 3:23] and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him and make Our home with him**."

At the end of James 4:8 it says, "... **Cleanse your hands**, you sinners; and **purify** [purify from defilement, infection] **your hearts**, you double-minded." [the double minded, literally 'two-souled' ones - were the religious, but unsaved people attending church meetings].

No one can be cleansed from sin apart from what Jesus did for them and their complete faith in it. It is His substitutionary death for those that truly believe. Show this from 1 John 1:7 copied with an explanation below.

7 But if we [true believers] walk in the light as He [God, the Father] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood [when used of Jesus Christ, 'blood' always refers to His death] of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Continuing in James 4:9-10 it reads,

9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

The right way to understand those directives from the Lord God, "Lament," "mourn" "weep" and "be turned" is to understand those verbs are imperative commands from God to the sinner. Verse 10 begins with yet another command -

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,

And that clause further explains the verbs - lament, mourn, weep and be turned to. All of these commands are to be done in the realization that the Lord God SEES and KNOWS YOUR SIN.

Therefore, we could paraphrase verse 9 as follows - "Lament and mourn and weep over your sin! Let your sinful and foolish laughing about it be turned to mourning and the delightful joy you have had in sinning, be turned to gloom, even to visible sorrow on your face!"

10 ... and He will lift you up.

God will lift up repentant believing in Christ sinners - out of their gloom and fear of God's judgment, even ultimately to be in heaven with Him - forever.

In closing, I want to remind you all that the prophet Habakkuk lived in a time of a **national calamity**. Yet at the end of what the LORD revealed to him, by faith he could sing this in Hab. 3:17-19 which has been called "the Song of Habakkuk."

To give some context, I have included verse 16.

16 When I heard, my body trembled; my lips quivered at *the* voice; rottenness entered my bones; and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble. When he [the Chaldean/Babylonian king] comes up to the people, he will invade them with his troops. [and then the prophet's song] ---

17 Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—

18 **YET I will rejoice** in the LORD, **I will joy in the God of my salvation.**

19 The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills. To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.

At this time none of us knows what the calamity of COVID 19 will do, and when it might end. Habakkuk and his nation were facing a 70 year sentence in captivity. Yet, knowing that, he could still rejoice in the **God of my [his] salvation**. And, so can all who through Christ Jesus are His.

Praying For Our Lord's Servants,

Rich Hines

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