

March 20, 2020

Hello Brothers and Sisters,

[This is my first venture into social media... and maybe my last???... or maybe it will catch on???)

Sharon and I have been thinking about you and praying that the Lord may grant to all safe passage through this valley of uncertainty and invisible danger. Perhaps more than most Sharon and I are used to and comfortable with living somewhat in isolation (that, perhaps is something of an oddity of ours, but I won't get into that now), but maybe for many of you it is difficult to live in such a way. When we see the news reports or go to the grocery store where we observe as never before empty shelves, little traffic, vacant parking lots at the mall and eateries, talk with family or brethren, and observe the effects on the economy, it is then that we, too, feel that life has taken on a particularly surreal aspect. We are certainly living in an uncertain time that has overwhelmed us unexpectedly and rapidly; living in a situation that none of us has experienced before. Perhaps it has caused some measurable angst. But, be assured that God will see us through this challenge; that one day the sun will shine again and life will seem normal.

At this time I want to convey a few thoughts to you. First, I want to thank the shepherds for the wisdom of closing the assemblies and encourage them to maintain that position as long as the government guidelines call for it. When I heard the decision announced to close the assemblies, my first thought was "God be praised." My second thought was, "I'll bet there will be some who will not agree with it." I have heard since that there are some who do not agree with it. Which brings me to my second point today.

The body has an opportunity with the present crisis to be good Samaritans all at the same time, and we do this, in a sense, by doing nothing. Now that is a blessing, is it not? To do the work of God by doing nothing... or, at least, nothing more than simply putting up with staying at home. When we stay at home rather than assembling or running around somewhere in the community, we are reducing the risk of being infected or infecting others with a disease that has been shown to be up to 10 times more virulent than other flu outbreaks. To ignore such a circumstance reveals several imprudent and unchristian things:

1. We tempt God. Rather than using good judgment with the brain that God gave us to help us to take care of ourselves and others, we tempt God to intervene with some sort of miracle protection so that we can continue with

assemblies or running around through the community or, in other words, doing what “I” wants to do (see Mt. 4:5-7).

2. We ignore government directives. Government was instituted by God for the benefit of man (see Romans 13). Christians should be the most agreeable and cooperative of citizens in so far as the laws of God allow. Following government guidelines by staying at home and away from people for a short while is being a good Christian citizen.
3. We act with indifference, perhaps even depraved indifference, to the needs of our brethren and our fellow man. In law when a person acts in a way that it should be reasonably expected to bring harm, even death, to another even if there was no personal motive to cause harm or death of anyone in particular, that is depraved indifference. Depraved indifference can make one legally guilty of murder even without motive. Christians should always have the well-being of others as their primary concern.

We live in a peculiar moment in which, if viewed properly, can help us to put life in a more godly perspective. There are a number of lessons that can be learned or reinforced about which I would like to express some thoughts. But, since we may be stuck in this situation for a while, perhaps it would be good to come back to them at another time. For now I will close with a prayer that God will bless us all with secure health and an encouragement to read your Bibles (you certainly have the time now), take some time on your knees in prayer (for those who can still get up afterwards... the rest will have to find another position), keep in contact with someone(s), and keep the faith. Love to you all.