

March 28, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A message I had from last week was posted via Murphy's Law Monday of this week; hence, some of the current information relating to the coronavirus and our isolation was a bit outdated. Things are changing daily, even hourly. It's hard to keep current. I try to watch President Trump's and Governor Dewine's news conferences every day so that I can keep up with developments. I mentioned in the last message that the president is hoping that we can begin relaxing restrictions and getting people back to work by Easter Sunday. It no longer "is," but "was" his hope. Governor Dewine of Ohio announced late last week that based on Cleveland Clinic forecasts the virus would not peak in Ohio until early to mid-May. The President has moved the relaxation projection to that time, expecting the peak of the virus outbreak to occur maybe in mid-April. Whichever is the case, we will need to keep the distancing recommendations considerably longer than first anticipated.

Sharon and I, as are all of you, I think, healthy and reasonably comfortable; hence, it's hard sometimes to feel the sense of an international crisis. But we all must acknowledge the potential threat in order to keep our focus on what we must do to protect ourselves, each other, and our neighbors. The latest information is sobering.

1. The disease will not peak until early or mid-May according to the state of Ohio experts. At best mid-April to late-April by federal projections.
2. The number of new cases doubles every 4-6 days. Some reports suggest every 2 days.
3. The peak numbers of new cases are expected to be 6,000 to 10,000/day.
4. The medical community is laboring intensively to double hospital bed capacity or even triple it.
5. Nurses are being called in from many non-hospital services to assist.
6. Surgeons who cannot do elective surgeries are serving as nurses.
7. We should expect another run of outbreaks in the future, maybe two. When I do not know (Hopefully by then we will have an arsenal of remedial options).
8. Had mitigation standards not been implemented, 1.6 to 2.2 million deaths were projected.
9. Some models project even now 100,000 to 200,000 deaths.

How strictly we adhere to the guidelines will determine whether these projections can be reduced.

This should be enough information to reinforce the urgency of the moment. As related earlier, we have an additional threat on the horizon: severe economic consequences as a result of the national shut-down. The longer the isolation period, the more certain the negative consequences. The longer the nation cannot get back to normal, the more severe the consequences. Unquestionably the forecast is dismal and discouraging.

You may thinking, then, “This is not very uplifting.” Well, I have to agree. It is not. But it is factual and we need to face the facts. Realistic grasp of any difficult situation is power to deal with it. Facts lead to the proper response.

Our fundamental response remains as it has been from the beginning... prayer. Serious prayer. Focused prayer. The medical experts are trying to determine the worst case scenario they must face in order 1) to be prepared to meet it and 2) with good mitigation practices providing the needed time, to find medical treatments that will greatly reduce the worst case scenario. We have a medical community working feverishly to find a way to meet, minimize, and/or remediate the present distress. We have great minds and dedicated people working day and night to this end. But, there is one power that is greater than all of man’s efforts combined that could make certain that the worst case scenario can turn into the best case scenario. I don’t have to tell you what that resource is.

God can turn these dangerous times around. But, I am confident that He will act faster and more effectively if we diligently appeal to Him for it. Even when Israel affronted Him with the golden calf in the midst of the great works He had performed for Israel, Moses was able to intercede on their behalf and save them from utter destruction (Ex. 32). But Moses did not merely pray. His pleas were not casual, habitual, or perfunctory. He prayed earnestly; he laid out an argument for the reasonableness of sparing Israel, and he interceded for them “forty days and forty nights” in which he “neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin which [they] committed (Dt. 9:18).”

I am not suggesting that we do a forty day fast. I cannot imagine forty days and nights prostrated before the Lord without food or drink. But I can imagine focus, intensity, earnestness, solemnity, and reason. We can be praying earnestly for all the medical personnel who are on the frontlines, not the least of which include Shari, Ben, Jennie, and Matt (I hope I have not missed anyone who works the medical community), for all the industries that are ramping up and converting over to meet the immediate needs, for the leaders who have to make serious decisions, for the President who will be faced with deciding when to send the country back to work, for those who have contracted the disease, for those who have lost loved ones to the disease, for those who have been exposed to the disease, for those who have lost jobs, for those who still have them but have to go out to where they will be exposed, for those retirees who without jobs are being hurt by the circumstances, for the setting aside of politics as usual for the duration, for the health and well-being of our brothers and sisters here and throughout the world, for all our friends, neighbors, and communities, and for a multitude of unknown needs that probably abound in the background.

We have a unique opportunity to put the power of prayer into practice, not only for the benefit of ourselves, but for the well-being of others. Many of us are presently comfortable and secure. We are not called upon to go out and face the enemy. In this instance not only is praying the least we can do for the well-being of the world, but it is also the most. Make your case before God today, tomorrow, and the next day. “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (Jas. 5:17).”