

April 8, 2020 Article 6

Greetings Brothers and Sisters,

To the saints who are in and about Wheeling, WV, and in various parts hither and yon, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Obviously I have co-opted a line from Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus (Eph. 1:1-2). It seemed appropriate. Grace and peace to all.

We are continuing in our lock-down. I've lost track of how long it has been... four weeks? More? It seems like four months, does it not? Life has taken a dramatic turn. Not always, but at certain times and in certain situations, it seems eerie. As one isolated at home it seems even hard to believe. But we have to bear with it.

We are entering our worst period while at the same time observing some hopeful signs for the future. As predicted while the deaths are mounting at an increasing rate, hospitalizations are tapering downward. That is a sign that in some areas the virus has peaked and is coming down the other side of the slope. Let us thank and praise God.

But, let us **continue ardently to beseech Him** that it will continue as observed. And let us proceed with caution. We will have to be careful that once signs become increasingly favorable we do not let our guard down too quickly. The virus will still be out there with millions of us who have not any defenses against more than before. There is not yet a vaccine and will not be available for a long time. Once limitations on social gathering begin to lessen, we will still have to be careful and not rush into them simply because we have been bursting to get out of our homes. We will have to be cautious.

And we will still have to face the unknown economic impact. We have the potential for some tough times yet to come. **Therefore, continue steadfastly in prayer.** Let us not be tempting God as some Christians are doing. He expects us to use good sense as we serve the needs of one another and our neighbors. In my opinion Covid 19 and the isolation therefrom may have been spiritually a good thing for us; it may have brought God to our minds more vividly, intensely, and frequently than our customary assembling.

Question: Has this present danger and disruption of life turned you away from God, closer to Him, or has it had no effect?

If your heart is troubled, or from time to time is troubled, it is not unusual and nothing to be ashamed of. Neither is it necessarily a sign of weak faith. It may be that faith/trust is not truly known until the heart is challenged enough to be troubled. It is then that we can and must turn to Him; then that we can hear His voice most clearly from the pages of our Bibles. When we hear His voice in times of trouble, we can overcome our troubled hearts to trust Him. Then, we know we have faith.

A faith that is never tested is an unknown quantity. Unfortunately, troubles are needed in sufficient quantity and/or intensity to produce doubt, angst, or agony before we can have our

faith tested. [From my human perspective this seems like a wretched system, but God knows far better than I what is good and needed for man.] The one who never experiences any faith challenging troubles has either lived an incredibly charmed life or goes through it oblivious to reality.

For comfort I propose Psalm 91. I have been recently directed to this psalm by a new friend. I suggest that you read it... closely. Here is a portion of it:

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and **from the perilous pestilence.**

He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor the arrow that flies by day, **nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness**, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come near you.

I've highlighted portions that seem so very appropriate for us at this time. Later in the psalm we read, "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him." Let us set our love on Him and await His deliverance.

God bless you all. Sharon and I send our love.