

4/13/20 Article 7

Greetings Again Brothers and Sisters from the Hyests

We hope you are all faring favorably under the present distress. Based on a number of phone conversations I am pretty certain that the isolation is beginning to take its toll. Even we as semi-recluses are beginning to feel it. Certainly some more pleasant weather would help mitigate the malaise of isolation, but that isn't going to happen this week. But, take heart, I am certain this unseasonal cold, wet weather cannot hang on much longer...I think...I hope. I keep myself grounded by observing presently or historically the much greater suffering that so many endure or have endured. I remind myself of the great and unimaginable suffering that Jesus Christ endured for us and that "we have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin (Heb. 12:4)." Although our battle is not expressly against sin, but against Covid 19 and its collateral damage, it is suffering nonetheless and it could be death. So we must continue on continuing on.

I sense a pressure building to explode out of our confinement. The urge to return to "normal" may be nearly overwhelming, but I would urge us all, and you should urge me, to be cautious and return to "normal" gradually. Once the country begins its return to work, the virus will still be out there. It will still be as communicable as before and just as deadly. We do not yet have a vaccine for it and will not for at least a year. We may have some remedial treatments, but they are not certain, at least not for everyone. The vulnerable will still be vulnerable and the disease will still be deadly. Calculated caution will be called for.

And prayer will still be needed. It is vital to continue steadfastly in prayer; now, tomorrow, and a long time thereafter. Perhaps we will become conditioned to recognize that our prayer life... and perhaps our conduct... should remain at a heightened level. It would be hard to make a case for praying too much.

It is hard to predict when we will be able to return to full normal. It is hard to predict if we will ever return to full normal. I think there is a good chance that we will, but it's not a sure thing. I certainly hope and pray that we will, but who knows. The greatest chance we have is to lead lives of righteousness so that our prayers will be very productive (Jas. 5:16). But we should also begin to prepare psychologically and spiritually for a life that will be forever altered. If this is the case we should use this historic challenge to mimic Paul. He wrote to the church at Corinth, "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need (Phil 4:12)."

Whatever our circumstances are or will be, we can be at peace. Jesus taught, "Let not your heart be troubled (Jn. 14:1)." The context was belief in God and Jesus. If we believe and follow the shepherd, he will lead us through this dark valley and grant us blessings along the way. Jesus's peace is not as the world's peace, but as genuine peace; a peace that only God can provide. Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (Jn. 14:27)." Sometimes I feel compelled to remind myself of the dangers, both present and future, to avoid complacency; then, when it disturbs me, remind myself of His divine care. There must be a balance between awareness of the real and present danger, which can produce fear, and God's providential care that can take it away.

I think we all would like our faith to grow and strengthen. We are in a unique situation where that can happen. We can, as it were, have our faith tested and purified with the fire Peter refers to (1Pet. 1:7). But, generally, we do not like it one bit. If we had our choice this virus and economic challenge would just go away. We would like merely to pray it away... and we might. That would be a good thing if we did, but it might be a better thing if we did not. What an irony!

So, what are we going to do? Probably what we have been doing and, if we can, do it better. We shall hang together. We are in a situation similar to the early colonists when Benjamin Franklin advised that they should all hang together or they would most certainly hang separately. Supporting and encouraging one another gave them a chance. Separating and looking out for one's own interests was a sure prescription for death. If we hang together, bolster one another, watch out for one another, pray ardently for one another, and follow the Lord sacrificially with one another, we will most certainly come through this dark valley, and better than when we entered it. If we retreat alone, take God's providential care presumptuously, wring our hands futilely, think of ourselves more than others, we will falter and, perhaps, even die... separately. I think we will choose the former as we have been.

Look forward with hope, the hope that is confirmed "by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18)." By His word and His oath we flee to Him for refuge and lay hold of the hope that is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil (Heb. 6:19)." There will be a tomorrow that will dawn bright once again.

God bless you, our brothers and sisters,

Jim and Sharon