

April 19, 2020

Lessons to Be Learned From COVID-19

The actual origin of COVID-19, perhaps better known as “Coronavirus,” is a bit difficult to pin point. Initially, many were saying it originated in a Wet Market in the Wuhan province of China and that it was transmitted from bats to humans. More and more, we are hearing that it was created in a laboratory near Wuhan. Suffice it to say, it is a flu-like virus, but much more contagious, so much so that from December, 2019 when it was first discovered, it has now spread throughout the world. It is the worst pandemic in the memory of any now living, the worst pandemic since the 1918 influenza pandemic which destroyed countless lives.

Regardless of who we are, or where we live, it seems that everyone has been, and is being, adversely affected by this virus. “Stay home,” and “safe distancing” orders have been issued nation wide. Churches, schools, and universities are largely closed. Restaurants, and countless other places of business have been largely shut down. Millions of people are out of work, a large percentage of whom are also missing a pay check. At Seffner, some of us are meeting one time a week for worship. Others, for safety and health reasons, are worshipping “online” in the safety of their homes. Fortunately, there are a number of local churches whose services are being livestreamed, enabling their members and numerous others to take good advantage of the sermons being preached and the Bible lessons being taught. However, notwithstanding people’s skills in technology, and the ingenuity being exercised to keep things as “normal” as possible, the fact remains that these times are anything but normal. Fear, even panic has engulfed multitudes as they face an uncertain future. Frustration in being told to “stay home,” or obey “curfew” rules, is becoming increasingly common. Moreover, our hearts go out to patients in hospitals, and those in rest homes and assisted living facilities, who long to see family members, friends, and loved ones, but are unable to see them because of “no visiting” orders — orders which are necessary for their own safety, and that of those in the medical profession. Important, but “non-essential” elective surgeries are being postponed, and many doctor “visits” are done on-line. All of this has resulted in increased depression, anxiety, alcohol consumption, and family problems. We long for, and we pray for, a quick solution to this pandemic. Perhaps many are wondering “can anything good come out of this pandemic?” The answer is “yes;” paradoxically, we often learn our greatest lessons during times of greatest adversity. We shall now note a few important lessons that can be learned because of the Corona Virus. A few such lessons are as follows:

1. **We are not in control!** A biblical example illustrating this fact is that of King Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful Babylonian ruler during much of the time when the Jews were in captivity. Nebuchadnezzar, at a time when he was at “rest” in his house, and “flourishing” in his palace, dreamed a dream which greatly troubled him. Daniel, being guided by the “*Spirit of the holy God*,” was enabled to make known to that powerful king the “*interpretation*” of his dream. Nebuchadnezzar was sadly informed that **he** was being likened to that huge “*tree*” in his dream, and that **he**, like the tree, was to be chopped down and forced to “*graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth*” until he could learn that “*the Most High rules in the kingdom of men*” (Dan. 4:4,9-10,14-15,32). Nebuchadnezzar, proud and powerful as he was, thought he was in control, but after he was “*driven from men*,” after he “*ate grass like oxen*,” after his “*body was wet with the dew of heaven*,” after his “*hair had grown like eagles’ feathers*,” and after “*his nails*” were like “*birds’ claws*,” was then moved to “*praise and extol and honor the King of heaven*,” declaring that **His** “*works are truth, and His ways justice*,” and that “*those who walk in pride He*

is able to put down” (Dan. 4:33,36-37). **God**, “*the Most High*,” not mere men, “*rules in the kingdom of men*” (Dan. 4:32).

2. We need God! Solomon, the wisest of the wise and the most powerful of the worldly powerful, sought to find the real meaning of life “*under the sun*.” He set his heart “*to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven*,” but he discovered that “*in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow*,” Eccl. 1:13,18). He increased his possessions, and he did not withhold his “*heart from any pleasure*,” but he learned that “*all was vanity and grasping for the wind*,” (Eccl. 2:7,10-11). He had the means, and he had the power, to seek happiness and satisfaction in every conceivable way, and finally concluded that “*the conclusion of the whole matter*” is to “*fear God and keep his commandments*,” for “*God will bring every work into judgment*” (Eccl. 12:13-14).

3. In God there is safety and security. “*Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning*” (Jas. 1:17). It is in God that “*we live and move and have our being*...” (Acts 17:28). “*With God all things are possible*” (Matt. 19:26), so it is to God that we must turn in humble submission and sincere obedience. “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*” (Ps. 46:1). We should be able to exclaim as did the Psalmist, that **God** “*is my rock and my salvation, He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved*” (Ps. 62:2).

3. We need each other! Christians, members of the church Jesus built (Matt.16:18), and purchased with His “*own blood*” (Acts 20:28), are so fortunate. They are a part of a huge family, the Lord’s family (Mark 20:28-30; I Tim. 3:15), and they must be ready to “*bear one another’s burdens*” (Gal. 6:2). This is one reason why it is so important that we never forsake “*the assembling of ourselves together*” (Heb. 10:25), and that we should fervently pray with one another and for one another, for there is power in prayer (Jas. 5:16). There is really no reason for a faithful Christian to believe, or to say to himself, “*I am alone in this world*.” We have each other, and also the Lord Who said to His disciples, that “***I am with you always to the end of the age***” (Matt. 28:20).

4. We should practice “social distancing.” I do not say we should avoid each other for God wants His people to “*come together*” (I Cor.11:20; Acts 20:7). But let us remember that “*Evil company corrupts good habits*” (I Cor. 15:33). We are known by the company we keep. There are some people we should not be “*hanging out*” with. The Lord taught the importance of “*social distancing*” long before anyone ever heard of COVID-19!

5. We should pray! Paul charged the saints at Thessalonica, saying “*pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*” (I Thess. 5:17-18). Instead of worrying ourselves sick over what might happen, we should obey I Peter 5:6-7: “*humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*.”

6. We should practice good hygiene. Nowadays we are constantly encouraged to “*wash your hands*,” do so for at least 20 seconds, and do it several times a day. This is well and proper, but good spiritual hygiene is even better. All true Christians have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19-22), and **if** we thereafter “*walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*” (I John 1:7).

7. “Get tested.” There is always the possibility of one having the corona virus and not knowing it; hence, we are advised to “*get tested*.” This is fine, but it is even more important to “*examine*” ourselves, whether we “*are in the faith*...” (2 Cor. 13:5). It is possible for one to

“think himself to be something, when he is nothing,” and thus deceive himself (Gal. 6:2). Hence, we should continually *“test”* ourselves in the light of the word of God.

8. One sneeze can change the world! One person with COVID-19 in Wuhan, China exposed others to the virus, and now we are experiencing a deadly world-wide pandemic. The misconduct of one member of a local church can destroy that church’s influence in a given community, and indirectly result in the loss of countless souls. Yes, it does make a difference in how you live your life!

9. Adversity often brings out the best in people! Paul said we *“glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope”* (Rom. 5:3-4). David said *“it is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn your statutes”* (Ps. 119:71). Throughout the world, while so many are suffering the effects of the Corona virus, countless people in the medical profession, and in other realms, are “stepping up to the plate,” working day and night, and even risking their own lives, to aid others who are adversely affected by this virus. Others are taking food to the shut-in, and providing much needed help for those unable to help themselves. Yes, adversity often proves to be a blessing in disguise!

Conclusion: There are many more lessons to be learned from COVID-19; we have only touched the “hem of the garment.” Difficult as it is, it is entirely possible that years from now many will look back and, in retrospect, thank God for this virus, for it may be the very thing that prompted them to turn to God, in Whom, and only in whom, there is lasting happiness and eternal salvation.

—Bobby Witherington