

What Does God's Word Say About... Boldness, Courage, and Faith During This Pandemic

With the writing of this article the world is experiencing a great trial due to the virus called COVID-19. This virus has caused much suffering and death throughout the world. The suffering offers great opportunities for faithful Christians to spread the gospel message. Now, more than ever, "the fields are white for the harvest" (John 4:35). In a letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote that those outside of Christ "have no hope and are without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). As the world seeks truth, we who are in Christ Jesus (Christians) seem to be paralyzed by fear just as the rest of humanity. This is the time for Christians to be bold, not fearful due to the presence of the virus. It is frustrating to watch Christians who say they have trust in the Lord lay down the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, for fear of becoming sick themselves. It is surprising that many of the Lord's churches have given up on Sunday morning Bible study, Sunday evening Bible study, as well as Wednesday night Bible study. It would be hard to believe that during the first century the apostles would have allowed suffering or persecution to hinder their work in spreading the gospel. Paul wrote that the gospel message had been taught to all of the world in approximately 30 years from the cross (Col. 1:5-6).

The apostles, and disciples of Christ, went through great persecution while spreading the gospel, something that we have not experienced in this nation. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...for consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb. 12:1-3). When Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica he said that the apostles suffered many things and had been mistreated but they had the boldness to teach the gospel of God amid much opposition (1 Thess. 2:1-3).

Christians have become like the unrighteous when we lack faith and trust in God that he will care for those who are His people (1 Peter 1:3-9; 2:9-10). There are many promises in the word of God that He cares for the righteous (Isaiah 41:10,13; Psalm 37:23-26; 91:1,4-10). However, without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Paul wrote many of his epistles from prison in Rome. While in prison he wrote, "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ, has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear...and that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ because that is very much better, yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake" (Phil. 1:12-14, 19-24).

During these hard times it seems as though Christians do not have the attitude that Paul had, and spiritually-speaking, some of us are weak and sick and have fallen asleep (1 Cor. 11:30).

The writer of Hebrews said, “we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:11-12). Paul wrote, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith...the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished” (2 Tim. 2:7, 17).

In conclusion, as Christians we need to ask ourselves, do we have this kind of faith and trust in the Lord during these difficult times knowing that the Lord will deliver us? We also need to educate ourselves as to the true nature of the COVID-19 virus. Paul as a Roman citizen knew his rights according to Roman law and he used this to his advantage in spreading the gospel (Acts 22:3,27-28). When threatened by the Jews, Paul knew a Roman citizen could appeal his case to the Emperor (Acts 25:25). Today our rights in America are established by the first amendment to the Constitution. As the founders of our Constitution wrote “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”. Christians should be cautious when accepting “science,” according to the wisdom of man and their models, predicting how many will die of this plague (1 Corinthians 1:20,27; Isaiah 55:8-9). Paul questioned the philosophers and great theologians of his day and called them ignorant (Acts 17:18,22-27). Paul and the apostles were blessed with God’s wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6-8,12-14). However, the noble-minded Bereans searched the scriptures to see whether Paul and Silas were preaching the truth (Acts 17:10-11). When science is given through the understanding of man, we as Christians should do our diligent homework to see if these things are so (Proverbs 11:14)! Let us as faithful servants of Jesus Christ open our Sunday morning, as well as Wednesday evening Bible classes, with boldness to encourage and edify the saints, and reach out to the lost with love and concern for their eternal fate!

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