



LUMP OF KOHL

Faith and the Corona Crisis

I have been steeped in biblical Christianity for so long now that I wonder how I would be handling the current crisis if I was a secularist. I imagine the fear knocking at my door would sound much louder and dreadful. But as a person of faith in the Word from God, I find that my some of my fears are alleviated. Please notice, I said “alleviated,” not “eliminated.” I certainly have my concerns. I have not perfected anything I write about in this article. I hope each of you will find something in this article to help you through these strange and surreal days.

First, out of love for my neighbor, we should fulfil the social responsibilities our political and medical officials are calling upon us to practice. It is our duty to obey those in authority and to remember them in our prayers as they navigate us through these uncharted waters (Romans 13:1-6: 1 Timothy 2:1-4). That advise frequent hand washing, keeping our hands away from our faces, sneezing and coughing into our elbows, keeping our distance away from all who are sick, staying home when we are sick, and, hardest of all, social distancing. In this way, we show love for our neighbors, which is the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39).

Second, no matter what is going on in the world, we should always aspire to live out the greatest commandment, to love the Lord with our whole beings (Matthew 22:37-38). We were created by Christ and for His purposes (Colossians 1:16). Let us always press on to take hold of the purposes for which Christ Jesus took hold of our lives (Philippians 3:12). Isaiah’s prayer in Isaiah 23:3 means so much to me: *You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are firmly fixed on you.*

Third, having assurance of salvation tempers our fear of death. In his letter to the Philippians, the imprisoned Apostle Paul updated his readers on his legal and emotional status to alleviate some of their concerns for him (1:12-26). He was confident that he would soon be released from prison, but he

also knew his execution was a possibility. He wanted Philippian believers to know that he was fine whichever way his trial went. If executed, he looked forward to being with Christ in heaven which is far better than anything the earth has to offer. If freed, he would rejoice over continued opportunities to make more disciples of Christ.

I'm not jumping up and down begging for death to strike me. I also want to bear more fruit for the Lord. God willing, I'd like to cross a few more things off my bucket list and see my grandchildren become young adults. But being with Christ will be so vastly superior to anything the earth has to offer that we will not even miss the things of this world.

It is a wonderful thing to know Christ as Savior, to have all our trust for salvation in Him. His salvation is certainly not based on anything we have done to gain His acceptance. All our righteousness amounts to nothing more than a pile of filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). *Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Galatians 6:14).

Fourth, God has a plan and a purpose for our lives. The timing of our deaths is in His hands (Psalm 31:15). Death cannot take us until we age out, fulfill God's purposes for our existence, or exhaust His patience. As I age, I often find myself praying a prayer that has really provided me with a lot of strength these days: "Lord, I know I will one day die. Help me to graciously accept both the nature and the timing of my death." I also aspire to say from the heart: "Even though I walk through the valley in which death's shadow is hanging over me, I will not be afraid because You are with me and You comfort me. Surely, Your goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and then I will dwell Your house forever."

Fifth, we can also find comfort in knowing that God is able to bring much good out of bad circumstances (Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20-21). When this storm passes over, it could potentially reshape our lives in many positive ways. It could reshape our priorities, families, friendships, churches, jobs, schools, finances, relationship with God, and so forth. People have often turned back to God in terrible times. People who don't even believe in God start to pray! I'm praying that God will use this time to cause a great turning toward Him in our land. I can't help but think of 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 under such circumstances. In it, the Lord says, *At times I might shut up the heavens so that no rain falls, or command grasshoppers*

to devour your crops, or send plagues among you. Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to every prayer made in this place.

Finally, we can take advantage of this opportunity to show love to our neighbors. Between 250 and 270 A.D. a horrific plague ravaged the Roman Empire. Roughly, five thousand people died every day in the city of Rome alone. The plague took place at the same time as an empire-wide persecution of Christians was underway. The emperor blamed the plague on Christians. His claim was undermined by two facts: First, Christians died from the plague just like everybody else. Second, the Christians didn't flee from the plagued cities like many of their leading citizens and civil leaders. Instead, they stayed behind to indiscriminately care for their fellow Christians and pagan neighbors who fell prey to the plague. It is generally accepted that the love of Christians toward their neighbors contributed greatly to the growth of the Christian church. If we can't avert the plague, may the same love of Christ be shown here in Boylston.

May the peace of God, which surpasses understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

