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March , 2020

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DO NOT FEAR!

Rick Wagner, one of the columnists for our newspaper, The Daily Sentinel, had some thoughts about the way the news media is reporting on the coronavirus outbreak. He writes:

“We must take such things as this new flu virus seriously, but allowing ourselves to be flogged into frenzy for commercial and political purposes can easily be more dangerous than the disease itself. In some of the latest reporting, California medical experts indicated that around 80-85% of those contracting the new virus would either be asymptomatic or have very mild symptoms. To put it in perspective, in this flu season (2019-2020) in the U.S. there have been about 24 million cases diagnosed that have required 180,000 people to be hospitalized and resulted in 16,000 fatalities. (NOTE: This is the “normal” flu that we all get inoculations for, not the coronavirus.)

In the 2018-2019 flu season there were 18,000 deaths (attributable to the “normal” types of flu). At this point there have been only a few deaths associated with the novel coronavirus. Yet we have politicians and media types demanding for things to move at unsafe speeds to unknown destinations.”

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In thinking about the above, I became curious about death statistics in the U.S.:

- Average life expectancy in the U.S. - 78.6 years.
- In 2017, the last complete year, deaths from:
 - Heart disease - 648,000
 - Cancer - 600,000
 - Accidents - 169,000 (30 people are killed every day by drunk drivers)
- Flu & pneumonia - 55,672
- Deaths in the United States during 2017: 2,814,000

The prognosis for everybody, including you and me, of dying at some point for some reason:- - - 100%

A further thought about coronavirus: It seems that the media purposely tries to stir up fear and panic in the public. Remember that the word panic stems from the word Pan, which is that half-man, half-goat demon from mythology. But there is a demon of fear and panic, and we are not to fall prey to it. God exhorts us many times in his Word: “Do not fear!”

Yes, this is a serious viral outbreak, but it is not the Black Plague. Our over-hyped fears are casting the nation into a financial recession. I have a question: shouldn't we Christians who know God and have received the gift of eternal life act differently than people in the world? We talk about trusting God no matter what, and this may be one of those opportunities to show God that we truly trust Him. Remember that fear is an emotion but it is also a spirit. We have the responsibility to control our own emotions, and the name of Jesus Christ has given us authority over that spirit.

The fear of death is the deepest underlying fear that people have. Are you afraid to die? The Bible says that people are held in bondage by their fear of death. You might want to reflect on the following teaching:

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THE FEAR OF DEATH

Do you remember when you first realized that you were going to die? When my youngest grandson was in his early 20's, one of his close friends died of cancer. His friend had been suffering with cancer for a long time, but as he got weaker he gradually withdrew from his friends without telling them what was going on so that his death was a shock to them. My grandson had one of those revelatory moments and started asking questions about death.

Perhaps you had one of those moments because of the death of a grandparent or a close relative or when you attended a funeral. However it came, it

was unwelcome news and it took you a while to assimilate it. At least that was my experience.

Hebrews 2 speaks about the fear of death as follows: *He (Christ) shared in our humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives ere held in slavery by their fear of death.* This scripture tells us that (1) the devil holds the power of death. (2) Christ destroyed the devil and his power through His death on the cross. (3) Men are enslaved by their fear of death.

(4) Christ's death and resurrection have set us free from that slavery. Glory Hallelujah!

I believe that the fear of death has four parts:

FIRST: People are afraid of dying and leaving their loved ones, especially their spouse and children.

When someone is in the process of dying from cancer or some other disease it causes them suffering to realize they are going to leave their loved ones without their love and protection. Jesus must have felt this same concern about his mother as he died on the cross. Remember that among his final words he spoke to the Apostle John and to his mother at the foot of the cross: *Dear woman, here is your son, and to the disciple, Here is your mother. From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*

The model for us is to entrust our loved ones into the hands of someone who is trustworthy if there is such a one. In any case, we should entrust them into the hands of God. He is our Heavenly Father and their Heavenly Father and loves them more than we do. He can protect and provide for them when we cannot. Scripture says that He is *The God of peace, The God of hope, and The God of all comfort.*

SECOND: People are afraid that their loved ones, especially their children, are going to die.

During my years of ministry I have known a number of parents, especially mothers, who live in dread of something happening to their children. Sometimes this fear was born out of an earlier death experience - the death of a parent, a brother or sister, an infant, or a miscarriage or abortion. I have known of mothers who live in agony because of this fear, and they drive their children to distraction by

their fear and attempts to protect them from all the dangers out there in the world.

When someone has this morbid, paralyzing kind of fear, it is apparent that there is an underlying root and that they need ministry. They need to be healed of the fear, trauma and grief of a previous loss, or they need forgiveness and healing of the guilt and shame of an abortion. God is certainly able to set them free.

Let me remind you of something you already know: Ultimately, we cannot protect our children nor can we save them from death. What we can do, as best we can, is to pray for them, lead them to the Savior, and entrust them into the hands of a loving Heavenly Father. Friends, I remind you that *There is no fear in love!* God loves them. He is their Creator and Redeemer. The Bible says that *Fear has torment.* Guess who comes to torment us? So the Bible says, *Resist the devil, and draw near to God.* This is a spiritual fight. Stand up and fight!

THIRD: People are afraid of the pain, the suffering, and the process of death.

My sweet wife, Doris, was blessed with the kind of death that every one of us would choose if we had the choice. In November, 2002, eighteen years ago (although it does not seem possible), on a Saturday morning we went to the Prayer Rooms in downtown Grand Junction. Doris had not been feeling well and had been to the doctor, and on Saturday we drove to the Healing Rooms so that she could receive prayer from some of our friends. They prayed for her and she felt a touch from the Lord and said she felt much better. As we started home and had only driven a few blocks, she slumped over against the shoulder harness without a sound and was gone! I cried out to the Lord again and again and immediately drove back to the Healing Rooms. We called 911, the rescue squad arrived within two minutes, but there was never a response.

On the night before her funeral, one of my close friends had a dream that he later shared with me. He said he saw us driving down the road and suddenly the car was filled with a flash of light. Then an open door appeared up above our car, and Doris leaped through the door! Wow! How do you like that? She didn't say, "Glenn, I have just received an invitation. What do you think I should

do?” She didn’t say, “Glenn, I think I will be leaving now!” You would think that after 53 years of the blessing of being married to me (?) she would have been a little more polite. But, no, she took off like a bird let out of a cage.

That is the way we would all like to leave this life, but we don’t get a vote. Several years ago a friend from church, Bill, a man in his 60’s, got cancer of the lung, leg and spine. He didn’t have family nearby and I made myself a promise that I would visit and pray for him every week until he died. I visited him every Monday afternoon for about a year. He suffered horribly. There were days he was in such agony he couldn’t even talk to me. He was down to 100 lbs. and was taking 160 mg. of oxycodone daily, but it didn’t cover his pain. It was hard for me to find words of encouragement for him because, frankly, I don’t understand why God allows people to go through such suffering. We have to grit our teeth, remember that this earthly life is only temporary, and that because of Jesus we will soon be in a place where there is joy and peace and no more tears and pain.

Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade, died a few years ago of cystic fibrosis, an agonizing lung disease. When friends were expressing their sympathy to him, he said to them: “Don’t feel sorry for me. I have the best medical care available, I am surrounded by my family, and best of all I know the Lord.” He also said, “I have done my best to show people how to live for the Lord, now I want to show people how to die for the Lord.” We should all pray for such grace and courage. Amen?

FOURTH: People are afraid of dying and facing judgment.

The “world;” that is, people in media, entertainment, academia, etc, ridicules us hicks who believe in a judgment after this life and especially those of us who believe in a literal hell.

I confess that although I was a born again Christian and a pastor I had doubts about this matter until my experience of being delivered from demons in 1973. Since that awful experience there has never been a doubt in my mind that every person at the conclusion of his or her life will stand before the God who created us and give an account of every deed, every word, and even of the motivation of our hearts.

Jesus said in Matthew 12:46 - *But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak they will give account of it on the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.* Also, please read and reflect on the 20th chapter of Revelation which teaches about the Great White Throne judgment.

Hebrews 9:27 says that: *Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.* Jesus said in Mark 9:47, *It is better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.* Romans 1:18-20 says, *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

A friend told about a prayer experience she had following the terrible tsunami that occurred in Japan which took thousands of lives. She saw the videos of the waves rolling in from the ocean and sweeping people to their deaths, and she started weeping. She said, “Oh, God, those poor people! They were raised in a Buddhist country and never had a chance to know about You.” She heard a very clear and surprising word from God: “They knew!”

The fact that people know in their hearts that there is a God does not mean that they are thereby saved, James says that *Even the demons know there is a God, and they shudder!* It means that people have enough knowledge to start seeking God, and God promises in Jeremiah 29, *If you seek me with your whole heart, you will find me.* God has promised to make Himself known to anyone, anywhere, any time, who earnestly and diligently seeks Him!

The answer that God has provided for men who fear judgment and hell is Jesus Christ. *God our Savior wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.* (1 Tim. 2:3-5)

Friends, because of Jesus, when we go through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil. Because of Jesus, who destroyed the one who had the power of death, we have been set free from the fear of death. Blessed be the Lord!

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A MAN WHO DIDN'T BELIEVE THERE IS A GOD

In one of the churches I pastored over 40 years ago there was a couple who were spiritual opposites. She was a gentle person with a simple faith in God. She was an intercessor and a great witness. She talked about God to everyone. Her husband was hard, abusive, and an atheist. He said there was no God and he ridiculed and tormented his wife and argued with her about taking their children to church.

Their teen-aged son committed suicide. I don't know the details, but he hung himself while surrounded by pornography - that his father had brought into the home. The father started raging against God! He blamed God, and he cursed God for the death of his son. In a few months he literally kicked his wife out of their home and brought in a woman more to his liking. (A great blessing for his wife in my opinion.)

I thought it was revealing that his son's suicide brought to surface the reality that this man always knew there was a God, but he had chosen to reject God and to use "intellectual" arguments to show how brilliant he was. Proverbs 2:29 says, *They hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord.*

Psalms 14:1 says, *The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.* The definition of a fool in the Bible is a rebel against God and His laws.

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LOVE THAT SUFFERS WITH OUR SUFFERING

In his book, The Holy Wild, Mark Buchanan relates the following story from Dennis Ngien, a Vietnamese Christian:

When I was eight years old, I lost my father to cancer. A week after his burial, I became severely ill. I still remember how my mother,

newly widowed, cared for me. She instinctively took me into her arms, caressing my back with her gentle hands, reassuring me with words of comfort and love. I grew sicker. Since we lived in a remote village about ten miles from the hospital, my mother carried me there on her back, walking uphill and down. I was not a tiny baby, I was ten years old. With tears streaming down her cheek, she said, "Son, Daddy is not here. But Mommy is still here. Hold on to me. We will make it to the hospital soon."

This childhood experience confirmed for me that a love that does not suffer with the suffering of the beloved is not love at all. What consolation would it have been if my mother had remained aloof from my suffering."

We have a God, a loving heavenly Father, who did not remain aloof from our suffering:

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:9)

The cross tells us, declares to us in a clear, unmistakable way the incredible love that our God has for us.

Mark also writes about another mother who from her youngest days with her child, through his childhood, teens and into his middle age, has a habit: She gathers her sleeping son in her arms, no matter how big he has grown, cradles him to her side and sings over him, "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, as long as I'm living my baby you'll be."

This is how God loves you.

Do not fear....Do not let your hands hang limp. The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing. (Zeph. 3:16)

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I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.
If any of you want to receive tax credit for your financial contributions,
you may send them to:
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NOTICE: Pathway to Freedom classes on Wednesday nights will continue (since we have less than 250 in attendance). You are welcome to jump in even if you have not attended the first 3 classes.