

Hope Beyond Coronavirus?



by Roger Carswell

Who would have guessed that in the 2017 Asterix comic “Asterix and the Chariot Race” there would be a character called “Coronavirus”? Until recently very few of us had heard the word. Now, across the world, it is the most talked about virus.

Even the UK’s Prime Minister, in sober tones, has warned that some of our loved ones will die because of Coronavirus. And it is easy to fear that it may be us rather than our loved ones who will be struck down. Coronavirus is no respecter of persons: it can strike rich or poor, famous or unknown, globe-trotters as well as stay-at-homers.

Life has changed radically for the nations of the world and us as individuals. Things we have taken for granted – freedom of travel and of meeting together, supply of basic necessities, and the hope of a long life – have been threatened. Wars, epidemics, plagues and disease have seemed so distant for most of us, but now this unseen virus is acting like a secret agent turning upside down our security and lives. We much prefer our routines, or even our ruts, to being routed by a microscopically minute virus.

There is real concern for millions whose business and employment are affected.

When life comes crashing down around us, or we fear for our future, there is still hope and security, but it is not to be found in ourselves or our circumstances.

For years we have been taught survival of the fittest and the horrible idea that epidemics are simply ‘mother earth’ thinning its ranks. Whatever some may say, life is not “just dancing to one’s DNA.” That does not ring true now. We all know that life is very precious. The Bible teaches wonderfully that God cares, and that He can cope. Writing to Christians in trouble, one of Jesus’ disciples, Peter, wrote: “Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.”

Of course we want and need to act responsibly. Common sense listens to Government advice, keeps washing our hands, maintains a distance from possible infection and self-isolate where appropriate. But then what?

Sharpening our tools!

A farmer replied to the question, "What do you do when there is a storm?" saying, "I go inside and sharpen my tools!"

Once in a while that is a good thing to do. If we have to self-isolate, maybe we can rediscover the joy of life where we take time to read and not just to watch; where we learn again to appreciate and think of others; and start to rediscover a life not based on scurrying activity but taking stock and enjoying our own thoughts and company.

Now is a good time to read one of the Gospels in the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke or John – and let Jesus introduce Himself to you.

Of course, what we most fear is not the virus but death itself. Benjamin Franklin supposedly said that nothing is certain except taxes and death. The Bible goes further stating, "Each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment." The thought of giving account of all we have said and done to the God who gave us life – and really knows all about us – should send a shiver down our spines.

Then some people wonder if Coronavirus is an act of God. Is He judging us? When God sent plagues on the Egyptians at the time of Moses, pagan astrologers said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." "Sharpening our tools" should challenge nations and individuals to repent of turning our back on God and His commands, and lead to us turning to Him for forgiveness and help in our time of need.

For decades we have trampled on God's standards, ignored His commands and lived as if He were either dead, or changes His standards according to our whims. Despite that, our loving God sends wake up calls to point us back to His way. God has not forgotten us. He loves us, though our sin is abhorrent to Him. Human love is capable of great things, but God's love is so much deeper, higher and intense. Perhaps we should take Coronavirus as a loving warning to a rebellious world.

The Book of Psalms in the Bible is a great comfort in times of anxiety or worry. It is available to read online, to read one Psalm a day. Try it and see.

As yet there is no known cure for the Coronavirus invader. But there is a cure for our wrong. God does not want to leave us in a state of despair.

We don't know when the virus will subside, but we can know peace in the midst of trouble.

Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, calmed the storm at sea, fed the hungry, cast out demons, and cured the leprous, but His greatest work was to die. When He was crucified, He was taking on Himself our greatest enemies, sin and death. He suffered paying the penalty of the wrong of which we are guilty. Our sin was laid on Him so that if we trust Him, all His goodness could be laid on us.

The poet Cecil Frances Alexander once wrote:

*He died that we might be forgiven
He died to make us good;
That we might go at last to Heaven
Saved by His precious blood.*

Fear not

Jesus conquered death by rising again three days later. It is the living Jesus who says, "Fear not". You don't need to introduce yourself to God. He knows all about you. Ask Him to be your Lord and Saviour, your Forever Friend; He promises to take you through life, through death and into eternity with Him. No one need fear either death and meeting God as judge, or being condemned. Heaven is not a reward for doing good, but a gift which Jesus purchased and offers to those who will receive Him into their lives. We know the dangers, but we can know the certainty of God being with us every step of the way. When we are afraid, we are told in the Bible to trust in the Lord.

Read in the Bible [Psalm 103](#) and consider its timeless truths.

Centuries ago the Bible prophet Jeremiah saw his country and city destroyed, his temple burned to ashes, his people starving and death staring at him from the streets and houses he had known so well. Yet in the darkness of destruction he said, "The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in Him!' The Lord is good to those who depend on Him, to those who search for Him. So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord." [1]

Coronavirus is awful, but if we turn to the Lord we will find that God can make great and lasting good emerge from it.

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