

Lions, Bears, and Giants

Much has changed in our world in the last few weeks, and we are all facing things that we have never faced before. There is much confusion, misinformation, finger pointing in blaming individuals and groups, and some outright lies being spread abroad. The “talking heads” on the news programs present news that is not factual, but is mostly speculation or some so called expert’s opinion on how long this pandemic will last, how many will be infected or die, and what we all need to do to make things better. The fact of the matter is that this is all new to the entire world, the facts are continuously changing, and God only knows what is going to be the final result.

One of the things that I pray for every day is that God will keep me from taking anyone or anything for granted. I have to confess that I should have been more specific in that prayer. I never thought that I would see the day that I could not go to church and gather together with my church family, but I can’t do that now. I never thought that I would see the day that I could not go to the grocery store without standing in a long line waiting to get in and then finding most of the shelves bare, but that day has arrived. There are many other things that have changed as well, that all of you know about without having to list them here. We are all facing many uncertainties in our daily lives. I would like to offer you some encouragement with the words of David when he was told by Saul that he could not go against Goliath.

And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

-I Samuel 17:33-36

Now David knew that it was God that had brought him through his encounter with the lion and the bear. I’m sure that most of you, like me, have encountered some “lions” and some “bears” in your lives. As I think back over my life, I can see those “lions” and “bears” much more clearly now than when I was encountering them. Some of those happened before I was saved, but I have no doubt today that it was the Lord who brought me through them. He had mercy on me when I took very little thought of Him. I can tell you for a fact that some of those “lions” and “bears” were big ones. If not for God’s protecting hand upon me, I know that I would not be here today. The Lord has brought me through several “lions” and “bears” since He saved me, and I know that the prayers that all of you offered up on my behalf had a great deal to do with the grace and mercy that the Lord has bestowed upon me. So, again, thank you for being so faithful to pray for me and Janice!

I know that some of you may be dealing with some “lions” and “bears” in your life even today, and now, all of us are facing a giant, a Goliath, in this coronavirus pandemic. It is a “giant” that we have never faced before, and it is BIG! Only our Almighty God knows what the outcome will be. My answer to you concerning your “lions”, “bears”, and now this “giant” is David’s statement in the very next verse.

David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee. -I Samuel 17:37

It was the Lord that delivered David, and it will be the Lord that delivers all of us. We don’t know all of the hows, the whys, the bumps in the road between here and there, or how long it will take; but we can be assured that it will be the Lord that brings us through it.

We have come to a time in our lives when the whole world has been stirred up. The very foundation of our society has been shaken, and I can guarantee you that no one on this earth has all of the answers. I have read and heard people say that this pandemic is God's judgment on the earth, or they have asked that question. I've read that others say that it is a lesson from God. Yet, we don't find many in authority or the "talking heads" on the news advising us to seek God for help during this crisis. There have been a few that have acknowledged God and encouraged people to pray, but not very many. Well, did God cause this viral pandemic and rain it down upon the earth? I don't claim to be a great theologian or Bible scholar, or to know any more than anyone else about anything; but my answer is "no". There are several accounts in the Old Testament where God rained down fire from heaven, and sent plagues, pestilence, famine, and other judgements upon the earth; but to the best of my knowledge, there are no accounts of that in the New Testament. There are prophesies of judgement upon the earth in the Book of Revelation, but those will occur after the rapture of the Church. So, is this viral pandemic God's judgement upon the earth? We can all speculate, but my answer is that only God knows the answer to that question.

While I believe that God did not cause this viral pandemic to happen, we can all be absolutely certain that He did allow it to happen. The question that we need to ask ourselves is "why would He allow something like this to happen?". Again, we can all speculate, but my answer is "to get our attention". I'm not just talking about the unsaved people in the world. I believe that God does want to get their attention in order for them to seek His forgiveness, but I think He wants to get the attention of the Church, all of us that are saved. I think that many Christians today have become complacent in their service for the Lord. Please don't misunderstand me, I am not pointing fingers. I am probably more guilty than anyone that reads this lesson (or whatever it actually is). Perhaps many need to wake up, reevaluate, reassess, and possibly rededicate to be certain that we are doing our very best for the cause of Christ.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. –I Corinthians 4:1-2

I know that during this time of battling a giant, emotions tend to go on a roller coaster ride for some folks. There is anger, confusion, frustration, depression, worry, and many others. I could give you a verse for each one of them, but won't for time's sake, but will sum it up with a couple of verses that God has made real in my life in times of trouble. Bro. Eric used them in one of his devotions last week. God has told us again and again in His Word to "fear not". All that He tells us is important, but when He repeats it multiple times, we need to heed and apply His direction to our life.

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. –Isaiah 41:10, 13

Anytime the Bible refers to "the right hand of His righteousness or His right hand", it is referring to Jesus Christ. Our hope and the peace that we need as we battle "lions, bears, and giants" is found only in Him. Yes, we are in a situation that is different than any we have ever experienced and frightening in many ways, but thanks to God, we can have peace in the middle of the battle.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. –Philippians 4:6-7