

## KEYS US A CRISIS – FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

### INTRODUCTION

2020 is turning out to be a challenging year. Firstly, its passing at a rapid rate, some people are struggling to keep up. Secondly, we have already faced some severe weather as a result of global warming. Some of us have suffered damage. Thirdly, and probably most prominently, we have been monitoring the gradual spread of the Corona virus or Covid 19 around the globe, and this week, we had the first confirmed case in South Africa. When we listen to the news and follow social media, there is clearly much concern.

Early on Friday morning, I was struggling to sleep, so I got up and went to my study to spend some time with the Lord. I asked Him for wisdom regarding this health crisis we are facing. I believe that as Christians, we should not be hiding our heads in the sand hoping the virus won't touch us. Instead, I believe we should be leading in bringing peace, allaying anxiety and knowing what to do at a time like this. As I asked the Lord, it became clear to me that our approach to this crisis, and any other, should be based on FAITH, HOPE and LOVE.

By the Lord's grace, I will bring you both a Biblical, faith-based perspective as well as a physical / personal health-based perspective of what we need to do in a time such as this.

### MESSAGE

**1 Corinthians 13:13** (NKJV) And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

**1 Corinthians 13:13** (MSG) But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God (faith), hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

### FAITH

When the disciples were in the boat and thought the storm would sink them, they woke Jesus up, filled with fear and He rebuked them: **Mark 4:40** (NKJV) But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

A crisis like this strikes fear into the heart of man. The disciples experienced this same kind of fear and Jesus told them what they lacked in the situation.

- We have to meet our fears with faith!
- **2 Timothy 1:7** (NKJV) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

**2 Chronicles 20:2-9** (NKJV) Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which is En Gedi). 3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4 So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. 5 Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, 6 and said: "O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? 7 Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? 8 And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying, 9 'If disaster comes upon us—sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine—we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.'

- Jehoshaphat and his people faced a situation too great for them to cope with.
- Josehoshaphat feared – this thing scared him? Has the news of this virus scared you or resulted in anxiety?
- Jehoshaphat set himself to seek the Lord, and he called Judah together to seek the Lord – church, are you willing to come together to pray for breakthrough against this virus?
- He reminded God of what He had done for them in the past, and also about the Israelite people's commitment to come before Him and seek His face in times of disaster – this included pestilence!
- He declared their faith – "and you will hear and save"

We can call on the Lord too. Psalm 91 has the very words we can use:

**Psalm 91** (NKJV) 1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." 3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence. 4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. 5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. 7 A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. 8 Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked. 9 Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place, 10 No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; 11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. 12 In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone. 13 You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. 14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. 15 He shall call

upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation."

***Have you set your love on the Lord? Then meet your fears with faith! Call on Him, pray His word and trust in Him to save you and your loved ones. We serve a good God!***

## **HOPE**

When the people sinned in the desert and God sent fiery serpents among them, many were bitten and died, but then we read this: **Numbers 21:8** (NKJV) Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."

That serpent on a pole was a shadow, of a future event, Jesus on the Cross! We need to hope in Him, look to Him and trust Him. He is our Hope, He is our Healer, He is our Redeemer and He is our Saviour! **In both the Old, and the New Testaments, there are promises that God is our healer!**

Even if or one of our loved one contracts the virus and it claims their life? We still have hope!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-14** (NKJV) But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

**1 Corinthians 15:52-56** **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. **53** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. **54** So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." **55** "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" **56** The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. **57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

***We have to look to Jesus, our healer, He is our hope, but we must also have no fear of dying, for even then our hope is in Jesus. He is our forerunner, if He rose from the dead, so will we. And of course, we are also reminded of Paul's words this morning, "To live is Christ, to die is gain. We need to face this crisis with HOPE!***

## **LOVE**

We need to ask ourselves this question, "Will I still love the Lord if this thing touches me or one of my loved ones?"

Job said this: **Job 13:15** (NKJV) Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...

We don't always understand why God chooses to heal one and allow another to remain ill, but God, our creator, who gave us everything we have, even the very breath we breathe, is God. He exalts one and brings another down, He sends rain on the righteous and the wicked.

To trust God is to love Him! When we love Him, we open ourselves up to His protection : Psalm 91 which we have already read states this: 14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. 15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble;

Do you love God so much that you will keep loving Him even if the outcome is not what you want?

**John 13:35** (NKJV) By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

***If a loved one gets ill, are you willing to show love to them even if it's dangerous? God loved us so much that He sacrificed His own son for us!***

***What if it's a stranger like the example in the parable of the Good Samaritan? Are we willing to love according to God's standards?*** If this becomes a pandemic, we must know that this is the kind of love that will be tested! We need to ask the Lord to prepare our hearts so that we can walk in love in the midst of this crisis!

## **BE READY**

We can't walk in faith, hope and love if we are living carnal lives! We can walk in true faith, hope and love only if we have a genuine relationship with Jesus!

- It's hard to trust in a God that you only have a superficial relationship with.
- If you are backslidden, there may not be time to re-establish a relationship with Jesus if this crisis hits you – don't be like one of the foolish virgins who didn't have enough oil for their lamps.
- Get right with God and use this as an opportunity to speak to those loved ones who are not in the right place with the Lord.

**Psalm 139:23-24** (NKJV) Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

***Are you living a holy, consecrated life before God? Don't leave it, today is the day to get right with the Lord while there is still time!***

## PRACTICAL STEPS

Is it a declaration of lack of faith to protect oneself and our families as far as possible against contracting this virus? Of course not. It falls in the same category as putting in burglar bars and an alarm system in your house. It's not that you don't trust God, it's simply being aware of the times we live in and being wise. We read in the Bible that they built walls around cities, had trained armies, had watchmen on the walls and had ways of dealing with people with infectious diseases and even houses that were infected.

### What should we do to protect ourselves and those around us?

- Take precautions, wash hands regularly and properly and try not to touch your face (eyes, nose, mouth).
- Don't unnecessarily go to public places and be exposed to lots of people and germs – this applies for all illnesses that are contagious.
- Don't shake hands or kiss people on the lips until this has passed.
- Don't go to work, school, shops or even come to church if you are displaying flu symptoms. This is actually an act of love!
- Cover your cough if you are sick. Use tissues once only.
- Clean and disinfect work surfaces regularly.
- Corona virus hotline – 080 002 9999 – call them first before going to your doctor and spreading the virus to them & the people in the waiting room.

What if quarantine measures become necessary?

- Make sure you have at least 2 weeks supply of food at home.
- Stay in contact with your pastor and your church. We are here to support each other.
- If necessary, we will communicate via WhatsApp, the church website and Facebook site.
- If it gets to a point, where we are forced to suspend church services, we will try to do video feed of services, but if not, we will definitely put audio sermons onto our website.
- Have you connected with me on WhatsApp, do you know the website and Facebook pages? Do so!

## CONCLUSION

We need to face this crisis with faith, hope and love:

- FAITH - believe in Lord and trust He will protect us – face fears with faith.
- Look to Jesus in HOPE that He will rescue us and save our lives, and even if these physical bodies die, we have an eternity with Jesus – Paul said, to live is Christ, to die is gain!
- LOVE - love the Lord regardless, don't allow this to be a tool the enemy uses to separate you from God – **Romans 8:38-39** (NKJV) For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth,

nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." NOTHING can separate us from the love of God!

- Love those who are ill – pray for them, encourage them and don't treat them as outcasts!
- **BE READY - make sure you are living right before our holy God!**
- Take practical measures to ensure you keep yourself and your loved ones as safe as possible.