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The Christian Perspective and our Response to the COVID-19 Virus Outbreak

Introduction

The beginning of the Chinese New Year was rocked with a fast spreading COVID19 virus outbreak and the World Health Organisation advised and warned that this deadly flu like virus can spread like wild fire beyond Wuhan, Hubei province if not contained properly and to other provinces and many other countries as well . At this point of writing, there have been more than 2000 deaths as a result of this outbreak, with an excess of 75,000 infected globally. It has spread to about 30 countries and Singapore has about 80 infected cases with 4 in a critical condition (and many have recovered) and we pray and trust God for the necessary and prudent measures taken to contain it both locally and abroad. Countries like Japan, HK, Taiwan, France and Philippines and others have reported fatalities in their countries. **It reminded us soberly of what happened in 2009-2010 with the HINI flu pandemic that spread globally and 17years ago, the deadly SARS incident which lasted 6 months where about 770 died and thousands were infected worldwide.**



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Sacred Duties of a Believer

Christians have a sacred duty to intercede for our leaders and our government and that of China (Wuhan in particular) and the medical staff in their efforts to contain and fight the spread of the virus and especially for the national leaders in China, their health officials and the global health care providers as they race against time to find a vaccine for a medical remedy In due time as the Lord leads.

We have to support the fight against the spread of this deadly virus in all possible means, and while we pray fervently and learn to trust fully God, and we need to take all possible precautionary measures.

With the coronavirus causing widespread panic in certain parts of the world, one may wonder how long more and when will all of this come to an end? There are no easy answers even from the medical experts and our hope and trust is in the Almighty God which is important as the cure for saving and calming souls and our worries is found in Christ alone and not in men. Be strong in the Lord and in his might for

nothing can separate us from the love of God and entrust your life to Christ who is our refuge and our strength.(Rom 8:35-39)



God knows your doubts and fears and He cares about us. (Ps 55:22) The Bible, God's words to us, says, "cast all your cares (or anxieties) on him, because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).The virus outbreak created much fear and great anxiety in many people, creating uncertainty and distress as many were fearful of the deadly outbreak. **To experience that lasting peace and serenity in your hearts , you first need to have a saving relationship**

with Christ as your personal and only Saviour and Lord .Have you trusted in Jesus and repented of your sins today?. Do it before it is too late today is the day of salvation (2Cor 6:2). God loves and cares for his own and that He sent Jesus Christ to save you from eternal separation from Him, providing a way for us to be with God forever with reconciliation with God through faith In the risen Saviour and the repentance of sins.(Rom 10:9,10)

It's also important that you protect yourself and others against this outbreak with responsibility and we have to do the needful with the precautions taken. At the same time, don't let also the morbid fear and extreme anxiety consume your life and render you ineffective for Christ. Remember our Lord says "And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to your life?" (Matthew 6:27) but we are to seek Him first and his righteousness and to pray and trust fully in Him .

Christians are to be spiritually and mentally prepared or pestilences, persecutions, trouble and suffering, but we can have the lasting peace in our hearts for we know that our future is safely in God's hands for he is our refuge and strength and he will never leave us nor forsake us.(Heb13:5)

Peril and Opportunity

In the Chinese language the word "crisis" is expressed with two characters: the first indicates something dangerous, while the second means opportunity.(ie wei ji)



In other words, in this dangerous season of the spreading of the deadly virus to different countries, it can also be an opportunity for Christians to pray, to reflect and to reach out to others with the gospel of salvation. For in this crisis we do not only think about danger and fear, but we know that it can be an opportunity for us to share the love and gospel of Christ as the only way, the truth and the life .To show them how to trust in the Lord and to continue to seek Christ alone as their personal Saviour and Lord and be saved from the wrath to come as we see the testimony of some In China doing this by the will of God .

The Purpose of Suffering and Disasters

James calls on believers to positively consider the different kinds (*divers*) of trials in their lives because God allows the trials to come to believers for a divine purpose. God allows trials in order to put our faith to the test (Jas 1:5-7). **The trials of life will prove whether we truly trust in Christ. In this context, James states that the testing of our faith will produce 'patience'. The word 'patience' literally means 'to remain under,' while under intense pressure, it remains intact. The Lord allows trials in our lives in order to build up our endurance, that is, to make us stronger and more effective Christians for his glory. For those who have died as a result of this virus ,(as we think of the Christian doctor In Wuhan, who warned us of it first and others) there is the eternal hope of the resurrection and we will not see those who are in Christ for the last time .(1Cor 15:57-58)**



It is also a seasonal time for us to examine our lives. God sometimes sends pestilence into our lives or to nations to awaken us, or when we have committed any transgressions of his law in our Christian lives. **Therefore, when we go through trials or a disaster, it is helpful to ask God to search our hearts and examine our lives for unconfessed sins and repent of them. Ask the Lord for his mercy and forgiveness (1Jn 1:9).** As wise King

Solomon told his people to seek God at the dedication of the temple which is applied aptly for us **today 2 Chr. 7:14-15 says: *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer.***

During these times, we are to pray fervently for one another and submit humbly to God. Job, in his severe affliction, responded to God with humble submission and faith. **If a Christian ever contracted this virus, he or she should not fear but seek medical treatment immediately and wait upon the mercies of God and patiently beseech the Lord for his or her recovery as he wills. Job was told that he had lost all that he had, he fell down upon the ground, and yet he did not curse God In this but trusted, blessed and worshipped God instead.** And he said, *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed by the name of the LORD (Job 1:21).* The Apostle Peter reminds us, *to humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may and acknowledge the sovereign will of God and trust in him fully.*

Disasters, diseases, economic failures or political or social unrest have been predicted by our Lord in the end times and it can affect people of all classes and all nations, including believers. (Mt 24:1-24) **This will sober us and humble all believers. James speaks to all believers affected by the nature of some trials and sufferings, dealing first with the attitude of the believer. Learn the lesson of patience and hope in suffering, and also rejoice in our spiritual position in Christ (1 Peter 1:3-6).** Physical trials or even social or economic deprivation

should not detract from our faith in God and the glorious inheritance to be received in the next life (Eph. 1:11-14).

These deadly virus outbreak and other trials remind us that our true dependency is on God and His grace, not in our privileged economic or social status or human wisdom. The humiliation of trials should drive us to our knees before the Creator will also remind us that our ability (or rather inability) and earthly riches are both



feeble and temporary; they fade away like grass and we are to number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom for the days are evil (Psa 90:12 and Eph 5:5-17). In the process of going through this pestilence, and other sufferings, trials, and persecutions we are humbled and yet protected by God, for without Christ, we can do nothing to save ourselves. **True faith teaches all believers to acknowledge our dependence on God and to wait patiently and trust in God, for all our grace and resources come from God. For those in quarantine and Leave Of Absence, it is an opportune time to read his word and wait upon him for recovery these 14 days.** We spend our time wisely and look up to him and we cannot do anything without Him. (Jn 15:5, 6)

God lovingly and faithfully uses suffering to develop faith, endurance, meekness, perseverance and maturity in our walk with Him ([1 Pet.1:5-11](#)). In this sense, suffering is designed for our personal well being and growth. It is a powerful tool that God uses to bring us to Himself so we will respond humbly to Him and His Word. It causes us to turn from relying on ourselves to living by faith in God's resources and his grace alone.

Suffering Draws us closer to God

There is a divine purpose for God to allow trials and testing. Consider Psa. 25:18 which says, "Look upon my afflictions and my pain". The painful circumstances of life invariably drew the psalmist closer to his God in much reliance and fervent prayer.

Sometimes the fear and the danger and pain of disease, sickness or bereavement brings us in a deeper communion with our God which otherwise would not have taken place.

There is soul prosperity in adversity as Gen 50:19, 20 says it well, "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

How should we respond as the redeemed people of God whose everlasting arms undergird us? Consider the following 4Fs for a Christian response:

1. Find out the facts

Do not be overly excited or even confused with unverified or untrue statements of information in the social and mass media that make us unduly worried or anxious, taking extreme measures. Search out the truth from the medical experts and be vigilant and do not be alarmed by those who spread rumours and half truths.

2. Face the crisis fearlessly

Be prepared to face this health crisis of the COVID 19 virus head on with much vigilance, discipline and determination, and without a sense of phobia or obsession, in the strength and grace of the Lord. There is no fleeing from the danger but we ought to confront it and resolve to act in the wisdom of the Lord. The virus outbreak has brought the best(and worst) in some men who bravely sacrificed their time and lives for the sake of others and some even witness for Christ with gospel tracts while giving out the masks to others as we see this happening in some parts of China

3. Fortify your faith and body.

There is also a duty to strengthen ourselves spiritually and physically as we are rooted and grounded in the faith and to build up our immune system in the midst of this season of the virus outbreak yet without obsessive fear and over reacting .We have a sacred duty to protect ourselves and families with necessary measures and may this lead you to pray before the throne of grace often with your children and loved ones and as a church in corporate intercessions

4. Fix your eyes on Christ

Who are you looking to today for deliverance from this? **Our focus and attention should not be on the problem only, rather our eyes should be fixed on our almighty Lord and our sovereign omnipotent God who is our Deliverer and Lord. (Isa 55;22)** We live our lives day by day looking and depending on the sovereign mercies of the Lord. Life should go on as normal as it is possible as we do the needful and trust in the Lord and commit our lives to him. (Ps 37:3-7)

Conclusion

Christ at the Olivet discourse predicted the presence of widespread pestilences in the last days (Mt. 24:1-24). There will be testing and trials for the people of God in the last days including possibly an epidemic or a virus outbreak and God has allowed this epidemic to happen to us. **We should learn to look to the Lord and to do our part dutifully in taking needful precautions and in waiting patiently upon God, trusting God humbly during seasons of great distress and suffering for His will to be done and for sovereign grace to grow and glow through it. May this seasonal time of grave danger awaken and revive our hearts and quicken our souls that we will return to the Lord and to seek Christ above all.** Let us continue to read , study and meditate on his word daily and intercede for one another and grow and shine for our God who ordained pain and suffering for our own good . **Let us emerge better, stronger, wiser, more equipped instruments of grace, when this testing is over and be more refined vessels fit for the Master's use one day and for his glory.**