

# A Special Crisis Message from Pastor Marv

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning everyone, and as tradition would dictate, ladies first, so here's my sweet wife Marie. Hi everybody, just wanted to say that we miss you, look forward to seeing you soon.

Anyway, we know God's plan for us can't be improved upon, so we're just resting in His timing and care. Anyway, we couldn't be in better hands, and we just are rejoicing in that.

Anyway, we miss you and look forward to seeing you soon. Call us anytime or email, and we will go from there. So love you, bye.

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Well, these words certainly aren't original with me, but they did seem appropriate to quote.

First off, Marie and I want you to know how much we do miss the Fellowship of Grace people. Even though our separation has not been long, it surely seems longer, no doubt due to the unusual reason for our separation.

[ 1 : 14 ] We all know we have never faced anything quite like this before. And a number are asking, understandably so, Is this a sign of the end?

Well, I do understand the seriousness of their question. After all, this worldwide crisis does have an end times kind of ring to it, does it not?

But I have no interest and no ability to proclaim what we are facing as proof of the last days of planet Earth as we know it.

My standard answer remains one that you have probably heard me give before, and it's the only safe answer I can come up with. And that answer is, This coronavirus epidemic has already reached significant, alarming numbers.

And while we give it a scientific handle like coronavirus or COVID-19, the Bible simply uses the word plague.

[ 2 : 29 ] It's a term found in Scripture dozens of times and has afflicted humanity throughout the ages. The word plague is found 12 times in the book of Revelation alone, in reference to the coming time of tribulation, also known as the 70th week of Daniel.

In Europe's Middle Ages, several million died from what was described as the Black Plague, or sometimes called the Bubonic Plague.

And they had no idea what caused it then, but much later learned it was carried by rodents. We are blessed today, via medical science, to not only be able to identify the source, but can in time devise treatment to survive it, and perhaps even an antivirus to prevent it.

Because of that, our medical personnel and researchers continue to be today's heroes, along with law enforcement and firefighters. So you ought to keep that in mind, and any time you can show your appreciation to these extraordinary men and women for what they do, and the risks they take, you should surely do so.

They need and deserve all the encouragement and recognition that you can give them. As regards the length of this international crisis, there remains too many unknowns to set dates, so we can only depend upon the updates provided by our best scientists and researchers as to when we can return to what we call normal.

[ 4 : 15 ] And even then, it will be a process until we can really call it normal. We still have to admit that we do not know what we don't know, and nothing makes seeing the future more difficult than that.

In the meanwhile, common sense calls for heeding the advice of the authorities who know a lot more about this than we do. There are ongoing needs to avoid crowds, and when we do encounter others, pay attention to the distance separating you.

And I would be the first to admit, this sounds weird, and it is weird, but it is important nonetheless. So we need to avoid the hugs and the handshakes.

And if you must venture out as to the grocery, try and select times when there will likely be fewer shoppers, and try to think ahead about multiple things needed so as to avoid additional trips.

Also, as frequently mentioned, the young are at risk, presumably due to immune systems not being fully developed, and the elderly, we are told 65 and older, are at risk due to previously developed and normal immune systems having become diminished due to the aging process.

[ 5 : 49 ] So, it is great to keep in contact with the elderly because their abilities tend to be lessened, but do them a favor and avoid contact with them except at a distance.

A common sense rule to follow is, if in doubt, don't go out. And in that vein, don't allow yourself to presume upon the Lord by making risky decisions.

What I mean by that is, it isn't spiritual to say, well, I'm just going to exercise faith in the Lord that He will protect me from the virus when I wade through a crowd of people.

That is not faith. It's presumption. And it's the same kind of warped logic that the snake handlers use when they run the risk of being bitten while handling a poisonous rattler.

Is there anything, in any way, that Romans 8, 28 works into this? Of course there is.

[ 6 : 58 ] Is there any way that Satan, the adversary of God and man, works into this current international crisis we are facing that is of unparalleled scope?

Of course there is. And along that line, I have some questions that I'd like to ask you and just mull these over in your mind, if you will.

What is the origin of harmful virus like this one, labeled the coronavirus? It's inconceivable that this microscopic agent of disease and death could have been created by God because viruses, germs, and the like could never have been a part of the original creation described by God at the end of the creative week in Genesis chapter 1.

That you will recall he described and was pleased with it saying that it was very good. Agents that are harmful to the health and welfare of humans could not be described as very good any more than the arrival of thorns and thistles.

And their origin as well as other negative things we cannot assign to God's having created them. So that leaves no other avenue of origin but that of the satanic.

[ 8 : 30 ] And yet there's a problem with that. Because while we do not think of Satan as having the ability to create living things of any kind, he does seem to have power over what we call the natural elements of earth.

Namely, wind, water, and fire. And two of those, wind and fire, are mentioned as satanic generated calamities in the book of Job, chapter 1.

And the great wind that was so destructive and deadly sounds very much like the description of a tornado. And lest we think Satan is not capable of such activities, be reminded that our Lord himself acknowledged Satan to be the prince of this world.

in John's gospel, and he did so three times in chapters 12, 14, and 16. And be reminded, the apostle Peter tells us that in his first letter, Satan walks about the earth like a roaring lion seeking someone whom he may devour.

And that makes it sound like he has kind of a free reign. Still, despite what ability Satan does have, his ability to implement it is governed by God himself.

[ 9 : 52 ] And you've heard me in the past liken Satan to a mad dog on a leash with God holding the end of the leash allowing Satan to go no further than God is willing to let him go.

This principle, too, was invoked in Job, chapters 1 and 2 when God told Satan he could afflict Job with whatever losses he wished. but God forbade Satan to take Job's life.

Now, in our finite humanity, we naturally ask the question, why does God even give Satan any latitude or destructive power at all?

Why doesn't God just eliminate him if he has the ability to do so? Well, the Bible makes it very clear that he will do exactly that but only in accord with his own timetable, not ours.

Admittedly, this reason does not set well with most of us humans at all because in our human arrogance and supposed wisdom, many are bold to tell God not only what he should do but when he should do it.

[ 11 : 05 ] when we can be thankful that God is not put off nor offended by man's telling him how to run his universe, God just kindly ignores us with all of our supposed superior advice and he pursues his own good will and counsel including his timetable.

And by the way, speaking of human arrogance, don't even attempt to inject the idea of Satan the adversary in any conversation you may have with unbelievers because most would ridicule and scorn the very idea of the devil even being responsible for anything and for that matter, many regard the devil as a mere superstitious hangover in the minds of people that they think should know better.

You know, those Bible thumperers. But, it is us Bible thumpers who are compelled to respect the person, the wisdom, and the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we see him as the ultimate in authority, far above all the collective geniuses of humanity and all the scientific knowledge and advances.

So we stand unapologetically, and unequivocally, upon the record of holy writ with truths like Colossians 2.3, which reminds us that Christ is the one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[ 12 : 44 ] Now, that is either a true or an untrue assessment. The consequences of whichever you believe to be the case is enormous and eternal.

So, like I've often said, the issue is authority, always has been, always will be. Jesus made it ever so clear that Satan not only exists, but he himself confronted him in his time of 40 days temptation in the wilderness, and that's found in the early chapters of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

And in regard to what is actually responsible for this coronavirus, we are not dogmatically saying, of course, that the virus is all of the devil, evil.

But neither are we prepared to say he has nothing to do with it, because it may well have his fingerprints all over it, even though our best scientists, of course, are not able to see that in the microscope.

And the same may have been true of the bubonic plague that killed millions centuries ago. Those at Grace who attend our monthly breakfast Bible study just began the series involving the cosmic conflict presently taking place between God and Satan and good and evil.

[ 14 : 12 ] And having just gotten it underway, we do plan to resume it with a new kind of, well, I guess we would say a newfound enthusiasm and justification when returning to Grace becomes feasible.

And ordinarily, we meet at nine o'clock on the last Tuesday of each month. In the meanwhile, there are lots of good places providing excellent spiritual content online.

I know most of you are familiar with RZIM Ministries, and that stands for Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, RZIM, and it's one of my favorites along with Les Feldick and David Jeremiah, plus several others.

And also, I would encourage you to engage in some serious reading. Tons of material. It's available in print and online. And if you happen to be one that does not enjoy reading, then enjoy listening.

Because again, so very much is available with the potential of being life-changing. And it's a great time for families to actually become reacquainted in a different kind of way.

[ 15 : 30 ] try laying aside the cell phones and break out the table games for some fun and some good laughs. And remember, there is a bright side to everything that enters our life just because of who is really at the center of it all.

Merely by virtue of being a believer in Christ, we are in a win-win situation no matter the circumstances.

because even death itself is a positive promotion for the child of God. And one who ought to know put it this way, when he said, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us.

So I've got, just by way of suggestion, a couple of biblical exercises for you to consider, and I think you would find these very profitable and uplifting.

In fact, I gave them to our weekly prayer meeting group just last Wednesday, or a week ago last Wednesday, and the first suggested assignment has to do with John's gospel, and it's 21 chapters.

[ 16 : 49 ] And here's what I would urge you to do. Start with chapter 1, and make a count. I don't know if you want to underline your Bible or make notes or write in the margins or whatever you want to do, but there ought to be some way that you can keep track of it, even if you write it on a separate sheet, makes no difference, but make a count of every time there is a reference to Jesus either having been sent from heaven, having been sent from the Father, having come from the Father, or having come from heaven, or having been sent from heaven, and phrases that relate that same truth.

And just note, if you will, how many times you find that expression in John's Gospel alone. And then let me know your answer, and we'll compare notes, and I won't tell you the total I came up with until I hear yours, and we'll compare notes and see, but you will be amazed at the frequency of occurrence.

And here's another suggestion. this too was kind of like an assignment or a challenge for a Wednesday evening group. Begin with the book of Acts, chapter 1, and read through chapter 13.

And here is what I would urge you to look for. Try to find any expression in those 13 chapters of the book of Acts of Christ having been the substitution for the sins of humanity.

Now, I'm not speaking of the death of Christ or the crucifixion of Christ. I'm talking about the reason for it being, of course, Christ was God's sacrificial lamb for the sins of the world.

[ 18 : 41 ] Try to find that expression anywhere in those 13 chapters of the book of Acts. Now, remember, I'm not speaking of Jesus being the Messiah or the Son of God, not speaking of the Father giving up his Son, not speaking of his resurrection.

It is specifically and limited to this. Find a reference that says why Jesus died on the cross. Not that he died, but why he died.

Can you find that in the 13 chapters of the book of Acts? And if you find even one, let me know. I'll have to come up with some special kind of an award for you.

And I'm asking you this because I could not find one. And I'm thinking, maybe you would find one that I overlooked. So the reason for it all will be explained later.

And in bringing this different kind of a message to a close, and indeed it is a message unlike any ever brought before at Grace in the past almost 50 years, let us assure you that Marie and I are doing just fine.

[ 19 : 58 ] We, like you, suffer only from the mild inconveniences that we all share due to the current crisis. this. And we do want to know if you have particular needs that are not being addressed, and whether it is something with which we can be of help.

So if that's the case, don't hesitate to let us know. Our landline is 937-399-2668.

And my cell number is 937-207-0853. You may email us if you wish, and our email addresses are in the church directory, which you all probably have copies of.

Again, we do not know when regular services at Grace will resume, but when that time comes, believe me, you will be the first to know.

So unless something urgent occurs, we plan to provide a follow-up message to this at the same time next Sunday, March 29 at 1015.

[ 21 : 15 ] And that, as you know, is the usual time of our Sunday morning service. And I just thought something about this whole matter ought to remain the same, since nothing else is.

So I chose 1015 Sunday morning. Tune in next week, if you may. And love to you all. This is Pastor Marv and Marie. We'll be in touch.

God bless you.