

## LIVING GODLY IN THIS PRESENT AGE

In our lesson last week, we addressed assembling in these distressing times. My goal was to give us a little comfort while we are in a situation where we cannot come together as we normally do. I believe this is a circumstance where we strive to do the best we can – it is a matter of loving our neighbors, letting our light shine, and being respectful to governing authorities that, in this case, they are looking out for our good.

Today, I would like to talk about us as individual Christians as we deal with our “new normal” which includes staying home, “social distancing”, massive sanitizing, and electronic communications, etc. I briefly mentioned a few things toward the end our last week’s lesson, but I want to develop this a little more. I want to remind us of some Biblical principles that will help us to keep, and perhaps even strengthen our faith.

What we will talk about today are all subjects I have addressed from our pulpit in times past, and some fairly recently. So these things serve as reminders to many us, UNLESS this is your first time joining us in this study. And if so, welcome.

Just a reminder – all of our lessons are recorded and made available on our website, [www.roseavenue.org](http://www.roseavenue.org). There you can find audio, detailed outlines and presentations made with each lesson. And now, I am trying some new things as well – with video streaming.

### I. **How is your faith?**

- a. ***The life of a Christian is one of faith.*** That is something that is not always easy to explain, but it is crucial that we understand it.  
2 Peter 1:5-7 notes that faith is the foundation upon which we build everything that we are as Christians – our character (virtue), our knowledge, our discipline (self-control), our endurance (perseverance, patience, longsuffering), our holiness (godliness), our relationships (brotherly love) and our love (agape).  
But what exactly does it mean that ours is a life of faith? Let’s think about this a little.
- b. What is faith. Faith is defined as a trusting confidence and reliance on something or someone. Hebrews 11:1, describes what faith is, “the substance (assurance – NASB – the idea of the word being a guarantee) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction – NASB – proof) of things not seen”. This text in essence is saying that even though we have not seen God, we know He is there and we believe in Him because of what He has told us in His word (and we understand that this is not a blind faith as He has given us plenty of evidence to accept both His existence [Romans 1:20, Psalm 19:1-6], and His Word [cf. 2 Peter 1:19-20 – we have the prophetic word confirmed..., Hebrews 1:1-2, 4:2 – God has borne witness in various ways; evidence for the Bible being the word of God is highly established]).  
I often define the term faith as believing God (not simply believing IN God) and trusting Him completely.
- c. Romans 10:17 – it comes by hearing. Why can we trust God? Look at what He’s done in the past – that’s what we find in the Bible. We find the workings of God throughout time and what has been accomplished by Him. We find His instructions and what really IS best for us and this world. His pattern for the church is a pattern that cannot be improved upon and it

shows His manifold wisdom (Ephesians 3:10-11).

If we establish that the Bible is the word of God and thus truth (John 17:17), what it says gives us reason to believe Him and trust Him (the definition of faith).

And there's PLENTY of evidence to give us confidence in the Bible. We have the unfolding of God's plan for our salvation as it developed over thousands of years – something that only God could will and accomplish. We have the culmination of that plan through the coming of Jesus and His resurrection. Prove the resurrection and you prove God, the Bible and everything in it – and thus a reason to TRUST Him.

Friends, this is why we need to study God's word – it will increase our faith. Romans 1:16-17.

- d. This is a time of testing of our faith. How are we handling these times? Do we really trust God?

I want to encourage you to consider tests of faith in scripture. Look at how various individuals through faith acted. Hebrews 11 gives us a great list of such examples – Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, the Israelites, the conquest of Canaan with Rahab and Joshua, and so many others.

They faced great challenges and kept trusting in God.

Consider Abraham – Hebrews 11:8 – He left Ur of the Chaldeans (and Haran) and went to a land that God showed Him and promised to give to his descendants. He went out not knowing where he was going.

- He dwelt in that land as a stranger, all the while believing God's promise though it would not be totally fulfilled for more than 400 years (Hebrews 11:9-10). But he also knew that following God would result in something better (vs. 10, 13-16).

- At the age of 100, he gave birth to a son, Isaac, which God promised (Genesis 21:1-7)

- And finally, when God asked him to offer up his only begotten son, Isaac – he willingly obeyed God without question (Hebrews 11:17-19, Genesis 22:1-19).

When you study his life, you can see what it means to TRUST GOD! You see genuine and mature faith.

- e. **So, how is our faith?** It's easy to have faith when things are going well. But what about when things are NOT going so well? What about when faith means trusting God through uncertainty and difficult decisions? How about when our world has been turned upside down? Will we still believe God's word and His promises?

Consider Psalm 46:1 – *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.*

*Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling.*

This is just one of many great texts that remind us that God is in control and no matter what we are dealing with in this life, we must trust Him.

When you are dealing with uncertain times, let me encourage you to read the Bible and texts such as this. Let them give you comfort and strengthen your faith.

As Paul said in Romans 8:31, *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"* And read the rest of that chapter to see Paul's faith. (8:31-39)

- f. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says that *we walk by faith, and not by sight.* We may not physically view God with our 5 senses, but by faith we KNOW he's there, and we believe Him.

Let us determine that such is what we are going to do. And understand that the world is watching. This is a great time for us to show our family, friends and others what true faith is about.

- II. **Don't worry** – related to faith is dealing with the subject of worry.
- a. These are apprehensive times and they easily lend to worrisome lives. It is no secret this is something that I struggle with.
  - b. Worry is not a good thing. It means that we are letting the cares and troubles of this life consume us. It leads to all sorts of problems – physically, mentally and spiritually. Proverbs 12:25 says, *Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad.* Psalm 37:8 says, *Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—it only causes harm.*
  - c. Worry shows, at least to some degree, a lack of faith in God. Not necessarily a complete lack of faith, but to the degree we worry, our faith is weak. So we must learn to not worry.
  - d. Jesus addressed this subject in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 6:24-33.
    - i. Notice in that text begins with by saying we cannot serve 2 masters. Worry is about the things of this world – when we are holding on too tightly to them. Note that in vs. 25, it begins with the word, “therefore” tying to vs. 24. The NASB says, “For this reason I say to you...”
    - ii. He then proceeds to challenge us to not worry. 3 times in this text Jesus uses the expression, “**Do not worry**” (vs. 25, 31 and 34).
    - iii. And He also talks about worrying throughout noting the futility of worrying. He notes there are things you cannot change – so why worry about them? We might also address, what about things you can change? INSTEAD of worrying, step up and do what you can. This is WHY worry is futile and worldly.
    - iv. BUT Jesus also in this text addresses faith – trusting God. He notes:
      1. There are more important things than the cares of this life (including necessities) – vs. 25
      2. God takes care of His creation (vs. 26 – birds, lilies – vs. 28-29, and even grass – vs. 30)
      3. You are of MORE value than these creatures (vs. 26)
      4. God knows what you need (vs. 31) – if He can clothe His creation, He can take care of you.
      5. After these things the Gentiles seek (vs. 32) – the world does worry about these things. Can I say one word here – HOARDING?
      6. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and He will take care of you (vs. 33). In essence, Jesus is saying – TRUST GOD, when times are good AND when they are bad.
  - e. When our faith is what it ought to be, we won't worry. We will put it in God's hands and let it go. Image the peace of mind WHEN we do that. Consider Philippians 4:6-7, “*Be anxious for nothing...*” Notice when we are not anxious, the peace of God guards your hearts. Just this past week, I heard the following concerning this text, “Worry about nothing, Pray about everything, and think about the right things” (Marshall McDaniel).

- f. Difference between worry and concern. It is worthy of note here that worry and concern are two different things. We ought to be concerned from time to time, and about many things. When things are not right, we are concerned. But worry is about obsessing over distress, often about things you cannot control in the first place. That is where we are in danger of sinning. Don't let worry consume you!

III. **Keep God in your life** – what I would describe as the “spiritual indicators”.

We understand that Christianity is a way of life – it is 24/7/365. Even if times alter the way you serve Him, you must still serve Him. That is what letting our lights shine is about.

Romans 12:1-2 notes that we are to present ourselves as a living sacrifice to Him. We are transformed. Romans 6:15-18 describes how we are servants of righteousness.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 – Paul compares our lives to that of a soldier. You are “enlisted” in the “Lord’s army” and such you cannot let the affairs of this life keep you from serving. We have plenty of soldiers in the reserves who in the past few years have learned that.

As Christians, we need to give considerable time to godly activities. Spend time:

- a. Listening to Him – Bible study – 2 Timothy 2:15 – handle His word accurately...
- b. Talking to Him – prayer - 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 – pray without ceasing, with thanksgiving.
- c. Say something about Him to others – think of the blessings of our times – we are critical of many of the negatives of social media, and rightly so. We are seeing some ugliness now (but that is not unusual). But think of the good that can be accomplished now.

How did Christians communicate in their “present distress” in the first century? “Very snail mail”, extended travels to speak face to face (except within a community – and even that was very limited – no cars). We have phones, the internet, email, etc.

Use it for God’s glory – let others know of your faith. Again, that is what letting our lights shine is about – Philippians 2:15-16 – shining as lights, holding fast the word of life...

- d. Do something for someone else – this is a great time for us to serve others in whatever way you can – Galatians 6:9-10, let us not grow weary in doing good.  
1 Corinthians 9:9 – Paul made himself a servant to all, that he might win some.
- e. Do something to build yourself up spiritually – many now have a little extra time while they are home bound. Use some of that time to make yourself better spiritually.  
2 Corinthians 13:5 – examine yourself, test yourself  
1 Corinthians 9:27 – discipline your body and bring it into subjection  
Romans 12:3 – think soberly, etc.

Use this time to draw closer to God in some little way.

IV. **Count your blessings** – the final point I want to observe here is this – count your blessings.

- a. We can obsess about everything that is wrong and be miserable, and make others miserable with us (both in our homes and online, etc.)
- b. OR we can look at how truly blessed we are. There are so many blessings around us – most of us are in good health and have NOT contracted this virus.  
We have comfortable homes and plenty of food available to us.  
We have access to medical resources if needed  
We have ways to communicate with each other as brethren that were not available just a few decades ago.

We have so many ways to read and study God's word and even opportunities to build each other up.

We still have God who sees us and knows our hearts

*In Psalm 40:1-5, David said, I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth— Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man who makes the Lord his trust, And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works Which You have done; And Your thoughts toward us Cannot be recounted to You in order; If I would declare and speak of them, They are more than can be numbered.*

- c. As we have noted so often, it's about attitude. You may not be able to control the circumstances outside, but you can control how you respond to what is going on. Christians should always count their many blessings, naming them one by one, "and it will surprise you what the Lord has done."

These are a few things to consider as strive to live godly in these trying times. Of course, these things should ALWAYS be present in our lives. But, as we have seen, this virus, or anything else should not stop us from serving God. I close with a verse I alluded to earlier, Romans 8:35-39 which says, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 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.* Think about it and the lesson is yours.