**Faith and Fear in the Last Days**

Fear is a powerful emotion

Fear can cause us to make decisions that we wouldn’t make under other circumstances

Share my experience in college with being coerced to take a drink of alcohol

Share the experience of Peter denying Christ 3 times

We see fear gripping many people right now because of the current situation with the COVID-19 virus

Sometimes those decisions are commendable because it’s prudent to take precautions – wearing masks, avoiding close contact with those not of your household

But too often when faced with fear, many decisions are panic driven – hoarding toilet tissue, literally fighting over the last bottle of hand sanitizer in the store

Jesus said in **Luke 21:26** - *men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth…*

SOP - The nations are in unrest. Times of perplexity are upon us. Men’s hearts are failing them for fear of the things that are coming upon the earth. (**ST October 9, 1901, para.11**)

But can we see that even in these fearful times that God is using this as a time to wake up the world?

Why? Because He loves each and every person and He wants to give each one an opportunity to turn to Him before it is too late

It’s not that God creates the terrible things that are happening, but He uses them for His purposes

And sometimes it takes a crisis for people to have their attention directed away from their immediate selfish temporal interests

Hopefully as they look to Christ, they will see that He will carry them through **this** crisis and prepare them for a **time of greater trouble** that is soon to break upon the world (**explain Jesus doing this in mercy**)

**Jeremiah 12:5** - *If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses?*

SOP - The present is a time of overwhelming interest to all living. Rulers and statesmen, men who occupy positions of trust and authority, thinking men and women of all classes, have their attention fixed upon the events taking place about us. They are watching the relations that exist among the nations. They observe the intensity that is taking possession of every earthly element, and they recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place—that the world is on the verge of a stupendous crisis.

(**Prophets and Kings, p.537)**

Elaborate on the quote above – things are not the same as they were 20-30 years ago –

Moral depravity – thanks to the internet – pornography brings in more revenue than…

(which no doubt can be linked to the widespread increase of the sex trafficking trade)

Same gender attraction is not only tolerated, but is even lauded with “gay pride” parades in major cities (**qualify this statement**)

The increase of natural disasters throughout the world

So…not only can something like this COVID-19 virus be a wake-up call to those in the world – so it can be a wake-up call to those in the church

Those church attenders who have had nothing more than a nominal Christian experience hopefully will be awakened to their need to stop playing church and get serious about a connection to Jesus

Rehearse the parable of the 10 virgins in **Matthew 25** – 5 wise, 5 foolish - all 10 were sleeping

*And at midnight a cry was heard: “Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!”*(**v.6**)

**Elaborate on where the cry comes from**

A relationship with Jesus should be more desired than anything this world has to offer – nothing should hinder us from seeking to follow His will for our lives - **Elaborate**

Paul stated in **Philippians 3:7-8** - *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.****8****Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

The material possessions, the worldly pleasures – all of these are rubbish compared to what Christ has to offer – a peace that the world cannot offer

**John 14:27** - *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

**Elaborate on this peace** that we can have - **what good is that Lamborghini going to do you** (or whatever it is that distracts you from abiding in Christ day by day – the focal point) – what good is any of those things going to do you when the world is going berserk all around us, when every earthly support is cut off, when persecution comes upon God’s people

**Let me remind** you of the statement we read earlier - The nations are in unrest. Times of perplexity are upon us. Men’s hearts are failing them for fear of the things that are coming upon the earth. (**ST October 9, 1901, para.11**)

This is the next line in that statement -

But those who believe in God will hear His voice amid the storm, saying, “It is I; be not afraid.”

They have built their house upon the Rock, so when the winds of strife blow - when the world is collapsing - financially, morally; when everything is in chaos – they have peace because their hope is in God, **not in things**

Unfortunately, as things get worse in this world, many people who claim to be followers of God will allow their fear to cause them to make decisions that will deny Christ – though it may not seem so to them

Jesus said in **Matthew 10:28** - *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

SOP - The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. (**Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 5, p.81**)

Jesus’ experience in the Garden of Gethsemane is similar to what God’s people will go through in the last days of earth’s history

When James and John came to Jesus to request to sit on His right hand and His left hand in glory, remember what Jesus asked James and John – are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?

And what was their answer? – “We are able”

But they did not know what they were agreeing to

Jesus confirmed that they would drink the cup He was about to drink, but to sit on His right and left hand was not His to give

What was that cup? To suffer as Christ suffered

What was most trying for Christ in His suffering?

In the Garden of Gethsemane - His humanity was wrestling with the sense that His Father had abandoned Him

**Matthew 27:46** - “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Twice in the book Desire of Ages it brings out that Jesus experienced fear

SOP - As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He **feared** that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. (**Desire of Ages, p.686**)

SOP - Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father’s acceptance of the sacrifice. He **feared** that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. (**Desire of Ages, p.753**)

But as Jesus hung on the cross experiencing the wrath of God poured out upon Himself for all the sins of every human being that would ever live, note this comment on **page 756** –

SOP - Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father’s acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father’s favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor. (**Desire of Ages, p.756**)

By faith, Christ was victor. He didn’t allow His fear, His feelings to govern His decision

Explain that He could have made the decision in the Garden of Gethsemane to go back to Heaven…

In the book **Early Writings**, in the chapter Time of Trouble it gives a picture of God’s people and the experience they will need

Again, it is by faith and faith alone that they will be victorious – clinging to the promises of God’s word as their only hope

Read passages from **p.282-284 of Early Writings** and make comments

What was it that brought God’s people to be able to stand for Him even in the face of death?

They had developed an experience of trusting in God by taking His word into their hearts and living in obedience to “every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”

How does one acquire that kind of experience?

SOP - When we see Jesus, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, working to save the lost, slighted, scorned, derided, driven from city to city till His mission was accomplished; when we behold Him in Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood, and on the cross dying in agony,--when we see this, self will no longer clamor to be recognized. Looking unto Jesus, we shall be ashamed of our coldness, our lethargy, our self-seeking. We shall be willing to be anything or nothing, so that we may do heart service for the Master. We shall rejoice to bear the cross after Jesus, to endure trial, shame, or persecution for His dear sake. (**Desire of Ages p.439-440**)

And in essence, isn’t that what **2 Corinthians 3:18** is saying –

*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Elaborate on what that experience looks like in practical terms – example: the Spirit prompts you not to read that article, not to watch that video, not to hold on to that poor attitude towards that person, etc. – you obey…every time

**How do we get there?** Spend time with Jesus. Ask Him to help you see His goodness, His love, His Righteousness like you’ve never seen it before

Ask Him to put in your heart a hungering and thirsting for righteousness

Ask Him to put in your heart to love the things He loves and hate the things He hates

And what is the one thing He hates? – Sin

What a sad commentary for those who allowed the attraction of the world, the desire to please the flesh to silence the prompting of the Holy Spirit in their lives

SOP - I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of “refreshing” and the “latter rain” to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God. (**Early Writings, p.71**)

As Paul says in **Colossians 3:1-2** - *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.****2****Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

And like David (**Psalm 27:4-5**) –

One *thing* I have desired of the Lord,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And to inquire in His temple.
**5**For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.

**One thing** – may that be our focus

As the song says – Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of this world will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace

**Copies of the sermon notes by email**

Read **Psalm 91** regularly

May your faith conquer your fear

May each of us say as Job (**Job 13:15**) –

*“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”*