

March 21, 2020

Hello Brethren,

Earlier this week I heard someone say they felt like they were living an episode of “The Twilight Zone”, and there is a lot of truth to that statement! I suppose some may not be familiar with that old TV series, but most episodes were about scenarios that were surreal, which is exactly how our current situation feels. I’ve told a number of you that if you’d told me two weeks ago this is where we would be, I would have thought you were joking – but the joke would have been on me.

In the midst of a thousand details we are all trying to work through this last week and a half or so, my mind keeps coming back to the basic question of what are the most important things in my life. Those are my brethren, my family, my children and grandchildren, and the single most important human being to me, my loving wife. But there is something that is even more important: my calling and my growing relationship with God.

During unsettled and uncertain times like right now, that focus is even more important! Many years ago a young man I knew proposed to the woman who was to become his wife by saying “I love you more than yesterday but less than tomorrow.” When I heard that I really wished I’d thought of it! But it has struck me over the years that this is also a good way to look at our relationship with God – but is it true for each of us?

The situation we currently find ourselves in certainly has played a major part in refining my focus this week, but there was another very special event last weekend that helped. Our youngest son, Daniel, talked with us several weeks ago and told us he had begun counseling for baptism with his pastor in Dallas, Mr. Andy Burnette. We were, of course, thrilled with this news! But he also said when he was done, he would like me to do the baptism. I was even more thrilled with that request!

So last Saturday night we began driving toward Texas. We got as far as Sherman, where we picked up a motel room for the night, and got out first thing Sunday to drive on down to the FI apartments. We all then went to the home where David and Ginger Hicks are staying. David works at Headquarters, and the home they are currently in has a pool and a “hot” tub. I put hot in quotation marks, because last Sunday morning it was definitely not hot! David really tried to heat it up, but this design allows the water to flow back and forth between the pool and the hot tub – and with all the rain they’ve had, it was so full that’s what was happening. He tried to add hot water, but it didn’t seem to make much difference. That being said, it is far from the coldest water I’ve ever baptized someone in!

It’s hard to describe the emotions one goes through to see a son (or daughter) come to the point of wanting to make the unalterable decision to put his “hand to the plow” (Luke 9:62) and submit fully, completely and without reservation to the lead and guidance of the Creator. Those emotions are even more intense if you happen to be the one doing the baptizing! I’ve now had the great honor of doing this for two of our children! Now our youngest son, who is still a son, is also a brother in Christ!

Daniel starts this new and most important chapter in his life at a unique time in history. He'll always be able to remember the weekend he was baptized – the very first Sabbath ever when all services everywhere in the US (and in many other parts of the world) were canceled because of a pandemic!

Like most of us, with God's help he has made the commitment to keep his relationship with his heavenly Father first and foremost in his life. Paul wrote: *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”* (I Corinthians 6:20).

We have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7), we are children of God (Romans 8:14; Galatians 3:26), and we are commanded now to endure to the end (Matthew 24:13), and keep our relationship with the Father growing ever stronger! If we do, we are given powerful promises for the future (Romans 2:7; II Timothy 4:7-8; Revelation 5:10 etc.).

Few if any of us could have foreseen how rapidly our world would change, and how drastically we would be affected by the outbreak of a new virus. Many countries, including Ghana, Nigeria and the US have closed their borders to people coming in. Here in the US the State Department issued a Level 4 warning, advising citizens not to travel outside the US right now. Anyone who does risks not being allowed back into the country for an indefinite period of time! This level of warning has never been issued before, and it shows the level of concern.

The world is seemingly turned upside down for the moment, and I think we need to understand that when this crisis passes, life will not go back to just like it was before. Our society and the entire world will have established a “new normal.” But within this new normal, whatever exactly that will look like, we still must be a people who reflect the nature and character of God the Father and Jesus Christ – people who are living their calling.

Change can be very unsettling and frankly distracting. So I think it is important for us to remember the things that are most important: our brethren, our families, and most importantly our calling and our growing relationship with God! Our arch-enemy, Satan the Devil, would love for us to be so distracted and unsettled that we do not prepare as we should to take the Passover.

No matter if we were baptized last weekend or more than 60 years ago, the most important things in life can never change. We want to be able to say sincerely to God “I love you more than yesterday, but less than tomorrow.”

Best regards,

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