

## ***Where Will We Be When COVID Is Gone?***

COVID-19 has been an unwelcome intruder to human society in general, but to the church of the Lord in particular. We have significant challenges ahead recovering as a society, but churches will forever be affected by this trouble, too. We may not yet know all the ways the pandemic and our response to it may have affected us, but we can be sure that the Devil will see to it that it will harm us spiritually, if He can. We need to be thinking now of how we will recover what we have lost, and restore what has been lacking. Of course, we have learned some valuable lessons along the way about ourselves. Our strengths have been made obvious, but so have some weaknesses. Virtual meetings can never replace physical meetings. They are about as effective as a virtual doctor visit. It may get the job done somewhat, but there is nothing like the real thing. When this trouble has passed, where will you be? What effect will COVID have had on you spiritually? Trouble never leaves us where it finds us.

**- by Mark White**

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## ***"Better to go to the house of mourning ..."***

"Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, For that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise Than for a man to hear the song of fools. For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, So is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity." (Ecclesiastes 7:2-6)

In this passage, Solomon is telling us that one thing is better, more valuable than another. It would not seem so among men in the world today -- but it is better to go to a funeral than a party.

Solomon is not saying -- you should never go to the house of feasting; this is not a wholesale condemnation of all parties (though those involving sin should be shunned). But there is more personal value for us -- to attend a funeral!

The reason might be explained this way. I'll express this through a question: Typically, when we attend a party, do we go home and think about our spiritual lives, God and eternity? No -- typically, when we go to a party and have a good time; we come home tired, laughing and our stomachs are bloated.

However -- when we attend a funeral, that event tends to generate sobriety, not levity. A funeral brings us face to face with the reality of death and it is good to think about death! And a funeral is one of the few occasions where there is this sober focus on death. Can you imagine - having a few friends over to eat sandwiches and talk about death?

That's not what we do. It takes a funeral for us to take the time to contemplate where we are all headed, and hopefully think about whether we are ready to die. Solomon says here, "death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart." A funeral may leave us with a sad face - but the thoughts we must entertain about death MAY DO OUR HEARTS GOOD.

"The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure." Now - along this same line - Solomon wants us to know - there is something else that may be unpleasant, but can do us good: It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools!

At a funeral -- ideally -- you hear the rebuke of a wise man (take note, preachers!). At the party -- you hear the song of fools. Obviously -- the funeral is better for us than the party.

"Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools. This too is meaningless." I'm sure most of you will know what I mean, when I use the word "kindling." When you start a fire -- you gather up some dry twigs, and use them to get the fire going. What happens is, the kindling makes a loud popping noise or crackling sound... but it doesn't last very long. That's the way Solomon describes the laughter that is typical of parties -- LOUD AND ENTERTAINING, but TEMPORARY. Of course, there is more permanence and value in the funeral -- and the thoughts generated by the reality of death can do more for us than the laughter of fools. Let us take this to heart, and do what Solomon recommends at the end of this marvelous book: FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.

**-by Warren E. Berkley**

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### ***What would this church be like if:***

- The preacher missed services as often as I do?
- Everyone in the Bible classes studied and prepared like me?
- All the members contributed the way I do?
- The song leader was as tardy as me?
- Visitors were greeted by everyone in the same way I greet them

### ***What would this church be like if everyone in it was just like ME?***

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### ***You Think You Have It Hard?***

As we struggle with our daily walk, it is easy to start feeling sorry for ourselves. After all, we are trying to live pure lives in the midst of a very wicked world. There are temptations and trials on every hand. And, on top of that, if we take firm stands on moral or doctrinal principles some of our own brethren will likely brand us as 'fanatical' or 'extreme.' It's often hard to do what is right under such circumstances.

But, wait! As we read our Bibles we see that God's faithful people have always suffered for their convictions. The enemies of truth have consistently persecuted anyone who tried to do right. And, quite often, the strongest persecutions have come from people who claimed they were doing the will of God. Take a moment to recall how the prophets of the Old Testament were mistreated. Think about how the early Christians suffered for their faith. Recall the ultimate example — that of Jesus and how the Jewish leaders cried out to have Him brutally murdered.

Furthermore, we should take note of the fact that there are many places in the world today where people are severely persecuted for trying to serve God. In China, "the communist government has called for the eradication of the independent Christian movement . . . believers are arrested for holding prayer meetings, preaching and distributing Bibles." In Sudan, those who profess Christianity are being "crucified, kidnapped and often sold into slavery . . . Evidence suggests that entire male populations of villages have been crucified, including boys as young as nine years old." In Saudi Arabia, people endure "severe beatings and imprisonment for professing their faith." (all quotes via [\*Washington Watch\*](#), a publication of Family Research Council).

Yes, it's hard sometimes, but "ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:4). "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." (Deut. 31:6).

**- by Greg Gwin**