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The Coop Report...

Have you heard?

Conditions are Ripe for a Harvest

Our pastor, in a devotion-time message related to Paul's letter to the Philippians, reminded us that seemingly "bad" situations (i.e., Paul's imprisonment in Rome) became opportunities for good things to happen. The "good things" that happened during Paul's imprisonment were opportunities to witness…to evangelize. So it is with our COVID-19 pandemic. What an *opportunity* for present-day evangelism…spreading the Gospel message to those who do not know the Lord... those who have no hope...those who have come to the end of their rope...their search for help...for comfort...for support.

Visualize the scene in Paul's day…every 4-6 hours a Roman guard would enter the place where Paul was imprisoned to remove the chain from the previous guard's wrist and chain Paul to himself for the next 4-6 hour shift. Now we may look at this scene and say that Paul was chained to the guard, but wasn't it really the other way around? Who was really incarcerated…was it Paul or the Roman guard?

Consider the commission Jesus conferred upon Paul while on his walk to Damascus to arrest Jews who had accepted Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus first blinded him, rendering him truly dependent upon Him. Jesus then sent Paul to Damascus to one of His disciples...named, Ananias. There, as God had instructed Ananias, Paul's sight was restored and commissioned…

> *" 15 …to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."*

After his recovery from both his physical and spiritual blindness, Paul accepted his new found commission and began sharing the good news of the deity of Jesus and His atoning work on the cross. Everywhere he went, he delivered the good news that Jesus suffered and died on the cross to offer us opportunity for eternal life.

So, how does this story relate to the pandemic situation across the globe? Is the pandemic merely a "bad" situation that the world faces…or is there more to it than that? Can it be a God-given opportunity for us believers to fulfill our commission to also spread the good news (*Matthew 28:19-20*)? After all, the "Great Commission" is not a suggestion, it is a command. Will we accept it or reject it? Will we just fear the virus and flounder in its wake or become a "harvester of souls" for Christ? Will we hide the "lamp of good news" that God has provided us? Will we lose our "saltiness" (see *Matthew 5:13-16*)? I think it is both.

In **2 Peter 3:9,** the Holy Spirit tells us that…\

> *" 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."*

Is God waiting to see if we will accept *our* commission? Will He be disappointed? What will He do if we ignore this moment? Think about it…this is not just a regional pandemic…it is global. To me that means He is getting restless…His patience is about to run out. If we look back in history…

> *" 11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. 13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth."*
>
> ***Genesis 6:11-13 (NASB)***

Remember the deluge God sent to reset His creation?

We need another "Josiah Moment"

(see 2 Chronicles 34)

Long ago *(around 641-610 B.C.)* a young king *(about 20 years old)* of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) began to tear down the idols and places of idol worship that had been around the city of Jerusalem for at least 50 years. He also set his heart towards restoring the House of the Lord (i.e., the Temple) which had fallen into a state of disrepair and misuse during previous reigns. A priest named Hilkiah found the book of the

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law (i.e., the Torah), dusted it off and sent it to king Josiah by way of his Secretary of State, Shaphan. Before Josiah, Shaphan read the entire book.

> "14 *When they were bringing out the money which had been brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the LORD given by Moses.* 15 *Hilkiah responded and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan.* 16 *Then Shaphan brought the book to the king…*
>
> 18 *Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, "Hilkiah the priest gave me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.* 19 *When the king heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes.* 20 *Then the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying,* 21 *"Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book which has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book."*
>
> ***2 Chronicles 34:14-21 (NASB)***

As a result of this discovery, Josiah brought revival to the Southern Kingdom.

I think God is calling us to revival…a return to our Christian roots individually and nationally. I think we have two *action-items* from God. One is to fulfill <u>our</u> commission as Paul fulfilled his…

> "18 *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.* 19 *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,* 20 *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
>
> **Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)**

The second is to bring revival to America, if not throughout the world. We desperately need another great awakening. America has become like the divided kingdoms of antiquity. We have allowed our leaders to condone the removal of God from our nation. God's Word is no longer in our schools. God's Word is no longer the center-piece of our culture. God's Word has been "quarantined." God's Word has been ordered by our government to "shelter-in-place."

> " 36 *Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.* 37 *Then He *said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.* 38 *"Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."*
>
> **Matthew 9:36-38** (NASB)

We are together in Christ,

Brian

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