

Detailed Notes: COV002

COVID-19 pandemic and spiritual warfare 8.5.20

Dear brethren,

This is my 2nd recorded audio sharing during this period of COVID-19 pandemic. I will be sharing on the topic:
COVID-19 pandemic and spiritual warfare.

I would like to share with you **some reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic and some parallels in the spiritual realm.**

Interestingly, many have referred to the virus as an invisible enemy – public enemy number one – not just the enemy of some people or one or two countries – but public enemy number one for the whole world.

Many are using the metaphor of warfare – we are in a war – we must fight and overcome the enemy.

The Scriptures tells us we have a formidable invisible enemy in the spiritual realm – actively at work throughout the world – the evil one. The apostle Paul refers to him as ‘the god of this world’ – who has ‘blinded the minds of the unbelieving’ (**2 Cor. 4:4**). The apostle John tells us ‘the whole world lies in the power of the evil one’ (**1 John 5:19**).

We are in the midst of spiritual warfare and must fight the good fight of faith and overcome the evil one

- as we seek to contribute our part in the advancement of God's kingdom and setting the captives free.

As we reflect on the fight against the virus, it is **good if we can become more deeply impressed with some important truths in spiritual warfare:**

1. **Not recognising or acknowledging** the seriousness of the pandemic or **ignorance**, and not taking any steps to safeguard ourselves, does not mean the negative implications will not take place
 - actually it will be worse.

We see this unfolding on the world stage – with tragic consequences – many more thousands fall ill and many dying – where the governing authorities fail to take needful steps to contain the spread of the virus.

This is true also in spiritual warfare.

Whether we recognise the works of the forces of darkness, they will be actively at work. Failure to counter the attacks of the evil one or to reject his working in our lives results in negative effects and damage to our lives and the Lord's work.

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2. We **must not be complacent, careless**, oblivious to what is going on.

True for both virus pandemic and spiritual warfare

- the adverse consequences can be far-reaching and tragic.

3. On the other hand, **fear, worry and anxiety is not helpful** but harmful – also true for both.

4. **Helpful to understand** how the virus works – accurate understanding of the truth - **and appropriate steps taken** important for good outcome.

Careful studies by health authorities and scientists and work in the lab. important.

True also for **spiritual warfare** – sound understanding of spiritual warfare, being discerning and knowing what steps to take to counter and overcome - and responding accordingly important - general understanding of the subject and the specific context.

5. There are **various issues** concerning the virus pandemic that are **still not so clear**. It is a **difficult and complex subject**.

There is a lot of info circulating including **strong but erroneous assertions** and also much **fake news** circulating. Some are sincere errors; some are irresponsible/foolish confident assertions without proper basis and some put forward views because of personal agenda.

There is much **confusion** on this subject and there are confident erroneous assertions and wrong understanding that result in significant adverse consequences for many people and even whole countries.

A **proper, responsible approach** requires great care before concluding on issues that have far-reaching implications. Where there are **insufficient evidence/grounds** to make a conclusion, there should only be **tentative views** - which may be needful for decisions that needs to be made – and **modifying as fresh evidence emerges**.

There is also **much controversy and confusion on the subject of spiritual warfare and the activities of the forces of darkness**, spiritual bondage and the principles involved in overcoming the forces of darkness – including strong but erroneous views and teaching on the subject that are dangerous and can be very detrimental to the well-being of those who act on them. This is an area we **need to tread carefully**. At the same time, we need to be clear that **God's provisions for believers and what is revealed in the Scriptures are adequate to equip believers** to stand firm and overcome the evil one.

Let us **humbly look to the Lord to guide and teach us** – that we may **continually make progress** in our understanding of spiritual warfare and how to fight the good fight of faith. Never become overconfident or presumptuous.

6. Understanding the virus and how to overcome it is important but **preoccupation with it is not helpful**

- preoccupation with the pandemic → looms too large, can become overwhelming

→ neglect of and unable to properly attend to other important issues of life.

True also for spiritual warfare – should not be preoccupied with spiritual warfare and what the forces of darkness are doing and how to overcome them – our focus and concentration must be on God and our walk with God – and the things that God wants us to concentrate on – spiritual warfare is only one aspect of our walk with God.

7. The **adverse consequences** flowing forth from the pandemic are **very serious and far-reaching**

- many infected, die, far-reaching adverse social and economic implications.

Even more so for spiritual warfare and the works of the evil one and the forces of darkness at work throughout the world

- very destructive
- lives of individuals and whole country/region
- many in spiritual bondage of different sorts
- non-believers and believers.

The evil one promotes pride, envy, jealousy, strife, confusion, deception, hinder and block the advancement of God's kingdom.

8. There will be many casualties.

True for both – COVID-19 pandemic and spiritual warfare.

Many thousands have fallen ill because of infection by the virus and many thousands have succumbed

- and many more thousands are likely to continue to succumb in the days ahead.

The forces of darkness have destroyed many lives

- and many will continue to go astray.

9. The health care workers who come into close contact and treatment of those infected with the virus – often referred to as those in the front line of the battle – have to be carefully protected with effective, personal protective equipment from top to toe.

In contexts where such protective gear is inadequate, many health care workers themselves become infected

- and not a few have died.

In spiritual warfare, Paul tells us the importance of **putting on the full armour of God** – so that we will be able to stand firm and overcome - rather than succumb to the schemes and attacks of the forces of darkness (**Eph. 6:11**).

Our armour is not of the material/physical kind – but moral and spiritual (**Eph. 6:10-18**) – the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses (**2 Cor. 10:4**).

10. They say the virus is very smart and has many tricks up his sleeve.

That may be a figurative expression in relation to the virus, but the evil one is literally **very crafty** (**Gen. 3:1**).

Paul tells us it is important not to be ignorant of the **schemes/wiles** of the evil one so that no advantage would be taken of us by him (**2 Cor. 2:11**).

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11. Importance of vigilance – to combat the virus.

Believers need to be prayerful, alert and vigilant and not succumb to the wiles of the evil one

- there are many pitfalls
- it is easy to falter and fail
- many different ways the evil one attacks believers
- often without their being aware they are taking place.

If we are not aware of his attacks, how can we counter them?

12. The physical health and level of immunity of the individual is helpful for overcoming the virus. The elderly with significant underlying health issues are more likely to succumb to the virus.

The virus will **'look for' weaknesses** in the society that they can exploit.

Likewise, in spiritual warfare, the **spiritual health and maturity of the believer** help him to stand firm, discern, counter and overcome the attacks of the evil one.

The evil one will **exploit the weaknesses** of the believer in his attacks on the believer – we need to look to the Lord to help us resolve our weaknesses and to be strong in the Lord. Those with significant weaknesses are more likely to succumb to the attacks of the evil one.

In attacking a group or congregation, the evil one will look for weaknesses in the group he can exploit.

13. When there is refusal to cooperate with and flouting of appropriate precautionary measures against the virus e.g. disregarding safe distancing and careless coughing - or reckless travelling to countries where many are infected

- it can result in significant problems for the individual as well as the whole group/city/country.

Likewise, those who **give ground for the evil one to attack** may suffer significant personal problems - and also significant problems for the whole group/congregation.

14. Importance of cooperation and unity in this war

against the virus – at country level and the whole world

- we are constantly reminded of the importance of each one and all doing our part – e.g. stay home – unless good reason to go out – and when we go out, abide by precautionary measures – for the good of all.

In spiritual warfare, if we want to overcome the evil one and the forces of darkness, it is important to learn to **fight as an army – as one united army** – each one learning to fulfil the part God desires of us in the body of Christ – the proper functioning of each individual part

- in submission to Christ - the head of the body.

Merging of reflections on COVID-19 pandemic and spiritual warfare

Beyond reflecting on what we can learn from the pandemic on the subject of spiritual warfare, it is important to remember the **dimension of spiritual warfare in the midst of the pandemic and how we should respond.**

The evil one is actively at work in and through the

pandemic – to promote as much destruction, pain and suffering as he can – in the lives of believer and non-believers

- including furthering his own agenda in opposition to the fulfilment of God's purposes.

The evil one is promoting major health problems with far-reaching economic and social implications

- many thousands infected, dying, many unemployed/underemployed, many feeling hopeless, helpless, miserable, mentally and emotionally stressed.

Lockdowns, social distancing and stay home directives means life cannot carry on as usual – many gatherings have to be postponed or cancelled – including believers unable to gather for worship, fellowship...

- many businesses and companies cannot carry on without massive aid
- economies of various countries are going downhill significantly – and may even collapse.

In the midst of the chaotic situation promoted by the evil one, he is also actively promoting worry, fear, anxiety, sense of helplessness, hopelessness and misery.

As believers go through this period, we need to bear in mind the spiritual warfare dimension – the need to pray for protection and counter the works of the evil one – and for God to have the freedom to manifest His power and glory and the fulfilment of God's purposes – the freedom for God to work deeply in the hearts of men – non-believers and believers.

Concluding remarks

Our fight against the **virus** may not be a short one - but likely its severity can be significantly reduced/nullified with time

- but **spiritual warfare** continues throughout our time on earth
- likely to intensify as we approach the Second Coming of Christ.

Thankfully, we are **assured** in the book of Revelation, there will be **final victory over the evil one** and all the forces of darkness. They will be nullified - and **spiritual warfare will cease** - in the kingdom of God in eternity.

In the **meantime**, learning to fight the good fight of faith can be **very helpful for our learning and spiritual growth**,

deepening in our appreciation, understanding and application of spiritual truths and principles,
our relationship with God and faith in Him,
our relationship and fellowship with the brethren - as we learn to fight together – as one body, one united army

- under the headship/kingship of Christ
- and God's provisions for us.

Let us continue to **pray** that the Lord will grant **wisdom** to the **governing and health authorities** in **understanding** the COVID-19 pandemic – and **take appropriate steps** to bring it under control - with the cooperation of the population.

Let us **pray that the Lord will protect, guide and enable us to fight the good fight of faith and overcome** the enemy in spiritual warfare

- at the **personal** level and **together** in church life
- as part of the process in the fulfilment of God's purposes and the advancement of God's kingdom.

One final comment – beyond the reality of spiritual warfare and fighting the good fight of faith:

The truths and the moral and spiritual principles revealed in the Scriptures are real

- whether we recognise them or not.

Let us **set our hearts on seeking the Lord and deepening our relationship with Him – and look to Him to guide and enable us to have spiritual insight and conviction** of what the Lord wants to communicate and teach us through **the Scriptures**

- **absorb the truths and align our hearts with God's heart and live out our lives in the way He desires of us.**

This is the way to a blessed and fruitful life

- all that God intends for us in Christ
- at the **personal level** and **together** in the outworking of church life.

The resources are available for you to move well towards the goal.

In fellowship,
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