

Proper basis for a true sense of well-being and security

Dear brethren,

As we go through this period of COVID-19 pandemic, we may ask ourselves and reflect over the following questions:

Should we be satisfied if we manage not to be fearful, anxious, worried, learn to keep ourselves occupied, keep ourselves healthy, survive this pandemic?

What is vital, essential for personal spiritual health, well-being and a life truly pleasing to God?

What is vital, essential for spiritual health, well-being of the congregation?

Does Covid19 pandemic threaten personal spiritual health, well-being?

Why?

Should it be this way?

Does Covid19 pandemic threaten spiritual health, well-being of church life?

Why?

Should it be this way?

How can we be ready for whatever may come our way – personal and church life?

What I have been sharing with you during this period, including this sharing, can help us see what ought to be the answers to these questions

- on the basis of what God has revealed in the Scriptures
- and live our lives accordingly.

It is feasible to have a true sense of well-being and security
- as we go through this pandemic and what lies ahead.

God does not want us to live in fear, worry and anxiety.
At the same time, He warns us against having a false sense of well-being and security.

It is important we live our lives with a true sense of well-being and security – firmly grounded in what God says to us in the Scriptures.

Having a good, wholesome understanding of these issues has become more urgent and significant as we go through the COVID-19 pandemic and as we approach the nearness of the Second Coming of Christ.

What I am sharing is relevant for our own lives, and can also help us understand and discern what is going on, and how to pray meaningfully for others.

The underlying principles are relevant to different ones in different ways.

Let us now reflect upon and hearken to the words of the Lord Jesus to the church in Laodicea:

Revelation 3:14–22

14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

16 ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

17 ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

20 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

22 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' "

v.15: deeds, but neither cold nor hot

- **lukewarm: v.16** – spiritually complacent, half-hearted
- no true zeal and earnestness for the truth, the Lord and His kingdom
- even if there are various outward forms and activities or even fleshly zeal

v.16: will spit you out of My mouth

- unusually harsh words of the Lord
- very serious matter

yet say 'I am rich...wealthy, and have need of nothing' **v.17**

- false sense of assurance all is well
- false sense of spiritual well-being
- likely because of outward appearance of things
- outward forms, activities, actions
- but in reality and in the eyes of the Lord they are wretched, miserable, poor and blind.

The solution, what is needful – come to the Lord: **v.18**

- the source of true riches, righteousness and insight

Note:

Spiritual life and reality must come from the Lord and true fellowship with Him in outworking of our lives.

Apart from Him we can attain nothing, see nothing, do nothing - that is of any value

- from the perspective of God's eternal kingdom.

v.19-22: words of encouragement from the Lord

- the Lord may reprove and discipline us
- it may be painful and difficult
- but do not despair
- we should be thankful
- He reproves and disciplines us because He loves us.

If we hearken to His voice, repent and open up our lives to Him we can dine with Him

- sweet fellowship, abundant and fruitful life.

Note:

This false sense that all is well when in reality it is not so

- when there is significant lack of spiritual health, life and vitality
- is an issue of deep concern in the last days and as we approach the Coming again of the Lord Jesus
- that many may be in this category
- including believers and those who think they are believers.

We must ensure it does not happen to us

- personally and as a congregation
- by ensuring our concentration, concern is not on outward appearance but reality

- beginning with our own lives
- and then, having a positive impact on others
- through prayer and life.

Many may harbour a false sense of confidence and expectation in looking forward to the future and eternity because they regard themselves as God's people, God's children and they do observe the outward forms of Christian conduct and practices.

Ponder over what we've considered in my 3rd audio recording (COV003) of the people in Amos' time and the Lord's words through Amos to them in Amos 5.

I now want to draw your attention to 2 other verses in Amos:

Amos 3:1–2

1 Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt:

2 “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

There is an important principle relevant to those who regard themselves as God's people

- not exempted from God's judgement and His penetrating evaluation of our lives.

The apostle Paul tells us: we will all have to appear before the judgement seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Many professing Christians do not pay much attention to and are not very conscious of the content and implications of this verse.

What will be the Lord's verdict? On our lives?

The Lord Jesus Himself tells us not all who calls Him Lord will enter the kingdom of God – profession of lips and many who say they prophesy in His name, cast out demons and perform many miracles in His name - service will be rejected by Him:

Matthew 7:21–24

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

22 “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’

23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’

24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. (*context: Sermon on the Mount*)

Paul mentions the possibility of the believer being disqualified/rejected, failing the test:

1 Corinthians 9:27

27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

The word translated ‘disqualified’ in **1Cor 9:27** is translated ‘rejected’ in **2Tim 3:8** and translated ‘fail the test’ in **2Cor 13:5,6**.

It is a sobering thought:

What is unthinkable to many may happen

- we’ve seen it happen to the Israelites.

There will be those the Lord Jesus will pronounce lukewarm and spit out of His mouth.

And there will be those He will commend
'well done good and faithful slave enter into the joy of your master':

Matthew 25:21

"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

Those who overcome will receive all that the Lord promises to those who overcome in **Rev. 2 and 3**

Summarise what ought to be our response, attitude, approach:

- **how we can ensure that we'll be ready to meet the Lord**
- **how we can have a true sense of well-being and security**

Let us **set our hearts** (not half-hearted or mere profession of lips) to learn to **love** the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbour as ourselves, **worship and serve God only** and **live** by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Paul describes to us true peace and spiritual well-being
- in the kingdom of God, in the Holy Spirit:

Romans 14:17-19

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19 So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

Rom. 14:17: for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit

Learn to serve Christ in the way acceptable to God: **v.18**

- what Paul was explaining in **Rom. 14.**

Consistent with this approach to life:

Rom 14:19: So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

We must pay heed the exhortations of **the Lord Jesus:**

- in the context of His Coming again
- to **be alert, faithful and sensible**
- and not to be presumptuous, careless, negligent

Matthew 24:42,45

42 “Therefore be on the alert,

for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

45 “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?”

Luke 21:34–36

34 “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;

35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.

36 “But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things (*tribulation*) that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”
(‘have strength’: alt. reading/translation: able, be considered worthy)

We've seen the apostle **Paul** exhorts us to be awake and sober,

- rather than asleep, complacent

1 Thessalonians 5:6

so then let us not sleep as others do,
but let us be alert and sober.

We've also seen **the Lord Jesus** told the church in Sardis to wake up:

Revelation 3:2

'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.

Believers need to wake up - if they have been complacent or life not pleasing to God yet still think they are alright.

Make sure we do not have the approach to life and the spirit and attitude portrayed in

Luke 17:26-30

eating, drinking, marrying, buying, selling, planting, building....

- pre-occupation with the affairs of this life and pursuit of worldly ambitions
- influenced by the spirit of the world

and not rich towards God

- worldly, temporal perspective
- just like the parable of the rich man in **Luke 12:13-21**

Instead, we need to adopt the correct spirit, attitude, and approach to life **Paul** exhorts us in:

1 Corinthians 7:29–32,35

29 But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none;

30 and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess;

31 and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

32 But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;

35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

The apostle Paul exhorts us to

maintain an undistracted devotion to the Lord

- to have an eternal perspective and spirit consistent with being citizens of heaven while living in this fallen world.

This passage complements and is the answer to the undesirable state of affairs portrayed by the Lord Jesus in **Luke 17:26-30**.

Instead of being over-impressed with outward appearance of things and accomplishments and many activities without life

- 'you have a name that you are alive but you are dead'
- words of Jesus to church in Sardis:

bear in mind:

1 Corinthians 3:11–15

11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Build upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones - and not wood, hay, straw

- what will stand the test of fire.
- what will not be burned up: **v.15**

How?

John 15:4–5

4 “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

5 “I am the vine, you are the branches;

he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Vital: God’s life and enabling

How can we experience much of God’s life?

- He must have freedom to work in and through our lives.

How?

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus:

Luke 18:8:

when the Son of Man comes, will He find **faith** on the earth?”

Matt 24:12: most people's **love** will grow cold.

His rebuke of the church in Ephesus:

- that they have left their 1st love

Need to nurture our faith and love.

Paul sums up in:

1Tim 1:5: But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Love: is not just something to talk about, profess, nor primarily emotion, nor a state we find ourselves in and cannot do anything about it.

Loving others is a commitment to the well-being, true joy and meaning in the lives of others in the context of truth and moral principles - well-being in the kingdom of God

- we can choose to be committed to such a life
- by God's grace.

Commitment to love is commitment to truth and well-being in God's kingdom – love builds up, edifies: **1 Cor. 8:1**

- how we love our neighbour as ourselves.

We need to nurture true **faith**:

- trusting God and deepening relationship with God
- in the context of love from a pure heart and a good conscience
- this is primary.

Then → outward manifestations

- rather than concentration on, being over-impressed with and false confidence in outward forms, actions and accomplishments.

Helpful concluding passage:

2 Peter 1:2–11

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,

6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,

7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (*we will receive a warm welcome*)

Nurture inward qualities: character, moral and spiritual qualities → will not be useless or unfruitful.

Concluding note

Contribution to God's kingdom cannot be measured by outward, visible activities and accomplishments but positive impact on lives and the spiritual realm.

If spiritual life healthy and walking faithfully and in fellowship with God, positive impact can take place

- spontaneously wherever we may be,
- whatever circumstances we may be in
- including during this pandemic
- whatever may lie ahead

- even without the person being conscious of it
- lives touched, influenced positively

- true witness - even beyond immediate or direct contact
- apart from positive contribution through prayer and more concentrated attention and labour
- the life truly pleasing to God.

In fellowship,
Kou