

# *FLOURISHING IN A PANDEMIC*

James 1:2-4

Woodland Park Church of Christ

23 May 2020

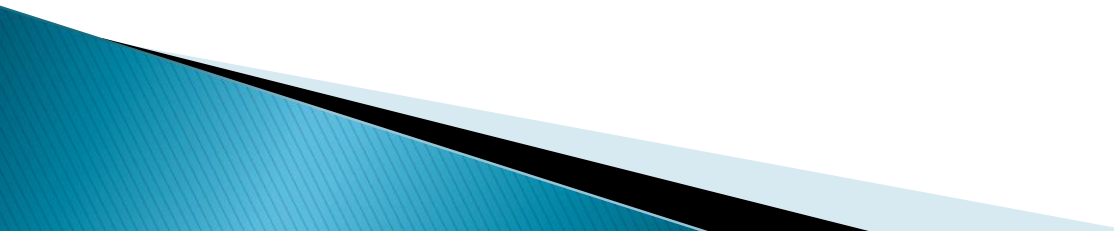


- ▶ God can use a pandemic to serve his purpose and strengthen His people.
- ▶ All things work together for good for God's people. See Romans 8:28
- ▶ *And not only that, but we glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our heart by the Holy Spirit . . . Romans 5:3-5*

# God's Gift of Struggle . . .

- ▶ Don't just GO THROUGH the difficulty, adversity and the storm – GROW THROUGH THEM!
  - Strength/Power
  - Endurance
  - Hope and Experience

# Even in the pandemic . . .

- ▶ **Stay Faithful**
  - ▶ **Stay Focused**
  - ▶ **Stay Engaged & Hungry**
  - ▶ **Stay Woke**
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# I. STAY FAITHFUL

As the Lord wrote to the church at Smyrna, *[b]e faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* Revelation 2:10

A life in the Lord does not exempt us from trouble, trials and tribulation. However, the Lord expects His to remain faithful.

As Paul concluded his First Missionary work, he and Barnabas resolved that “we must **through many tribulations** enter the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22

# One of Israel's Flaws

- ▶ Persistently doubting God when a little turbulence, challenge and trouble appeared – which demonstrated little faith!
- ▶ However, a **FAITHFUL LIFE** is demonstrated by **trusting in Him and living in eager and unwavering anticipation** of the Lord's deliverance.

## II. STAY FOCUSED

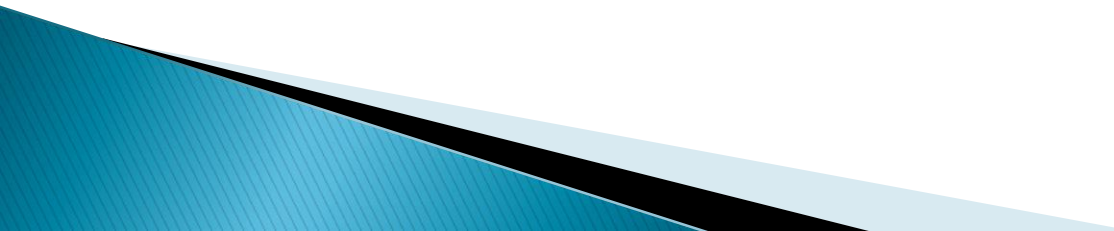
- ▶ Keep your eyes on the prize!!
- ▶ I woke up this morning with my mind, it was staid on Jesus!

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;*  
*<sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD,*  
*And **in His law he meditates** day and night.*  
*<sup>3</sup> He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. Psalm 1:1–3*

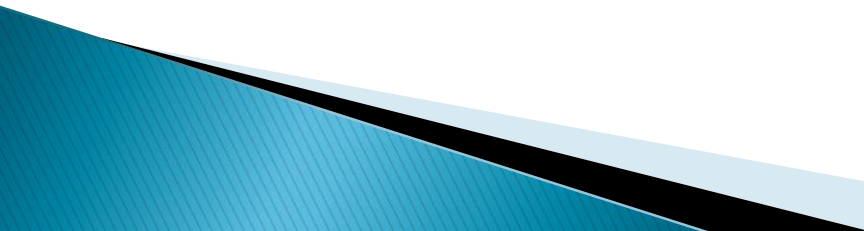
Our focus must be even more laser-like, one-track now.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made . . .* **Genesis 3:1**

In the midst of difficulty, struggle and pandemic even, Satan works to consume us in doubt, fear and worry and attempts to deceive us into thinking God has forsaken and does not care about us!





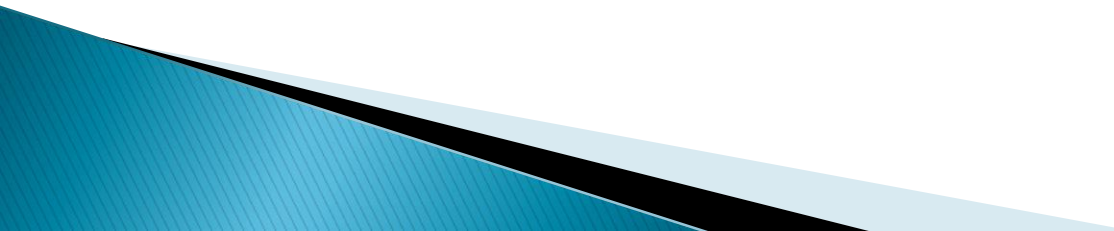
- ▶ Satan also tries to lead us into a downward spiral of hopelessness, stress and depression.
  - ▶ Liquor consumption is up during the pandemic; substance abuse experts are concerned.
  - ▶ **Prescriptions for anti-anxiety drugs have spiked more than one third because Americans are trying to find a way to cope with coronavirus pandemic.**  
**[MarketWatch.com/4.16.2020]**
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*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

I Peter 5:8 (NIV)

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6–7*

### III. STAY ENGAGED / HUNGRY

- ▶ This is especially for younger brothers and sisters, but it's good for us all.
  - ▶ Use this time to learn more and be focused
  - ▶ Complete your assignments; do not treat this as an extended summer break from school.
  - ▶ Parents demand that your children remain engaged – learning and growing!
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*But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.*

*<sup>14</sup> Therefore He says:*

*“Awake, you who sleep,  
Arise from the dead,  
And Christ will give you light.”*

*<sup>15</sup> **See then that you walk circumspectly,**  
not as fools but as wise, <sup>16</sup> **redeeming**  
**the time,** because the days are evil.*

**Ephesians 5:13–16**

## IV. Stay Woke

- ▶ Washington Irving wrote about a fellow who left the house one day after he felt his wife nagged him too much.
- ▶ He retreated to the Catskill mountains with his musket and his dog, Wolf.
- ▶ Sees a band of men and joins them in a round of drinking.
- ▶ He falls asleep.
- ▶ He awakens, with a rusty, dilapidated musket, Wolf was nowhere to be found, and his beard was snow white and 1.5 feet long.

- ▶ He ventures into town and doesn't recognize anyone or the surroundings.
- ▶ He tells the townfolks that he is forever loyal to King George III, which almost gets him hanged.
- ▶ An old lady recognizes him as the long-lost Rip Van Winkle.
- ▶ At one of his favorite hangouts, the portrait of King George III had been replaced by that of George Washington.
- ▶ Mr. Van Winkle had not only slept 20 years, he had literally slept through a revolution.

# MANY FEEL WE'RE WITNESSING A SOCIO-ECONOMIC REVOLUTION!

- ▶ Revolution: A forceable or unwelcomed overthrow of a government or social order, in favor of a new system
  - Companies doing with fewer employees
  - Social distancing becoming the norm
  - Technology taking a more prominent and permanent place in society – even when it comes to worship

# During this Period of Sheltering In Place

- ▶ We have to remain vigilant and resilient in our pursuits.
- ▶ Our spirit should be all the more determined to demonstrate *what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*. See Romans 12:2
- ▶ Wake up everyday with renewed energy and sense of purpose and belonging.
- ▶ Don't just go through the day (life) just hoping to hang on . . .



Again, let's not just go through  
this storm –

**LET'S GROW THROUGH IT!**

*But you are **a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people**, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light,*

**1 Peter 2:9**

# Lord's Invitation Extended to All

- ▶ **Be added to the Lord's body**

Hear the gospel (Acts 15:7; I  
Corinthians 15:1–4)

Believe (Acts 15:7; Rom. 10:17)

Repent (Acts 2:38)

Confess (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10)

Be baptized (Acts 2:38, 8:38)

# Lord's Invitation (cont'd)

- ▶ **Be reconciled unto the Lord (1 John 1:8–9); or**
- ▶ **Desire prayer (James 5:16).**