

CORONAVIRUS

How Christians Must Respond to Covid-19?

INTRODUCTION:

Never before in my lifetime have I witnessed the whole world suffering from one pandemic, which is Covid-19. **What is Covid-19?**

- ⇒ CO – Corona, VI – Virus, D – Disease, 19 – 2019
(Hence, the WHO gave the abbreviation Covid-19)
- ⇒ Among the family of Coronaviruses (large group of viruses), **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome** (*SARS, first identified in China in 2003*) and **Middle East Respiratory Syndrome** (*MERS, first identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012*), COVID-19 is a new disease that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans.
 - The first case was reported in Wuhan, China on December 31, 2019.
 - This virus seems to have emerged from an animal source (not sure) and began spreading person-to-person.
 - So far, this virus has affected 185 countries (195 countries in the world). Many countries are shut down completely due to this pandemic disease.
- ⇒ Common symptoms of Covid-19 include fever, cough, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, and difficulty in breathing. While most cases are mild, some cases are severe and leads to death.
- ⇒ These symptoms appear on the surface not immediately. It takes between 2 and 14 days, with an average of 5 days.
- ⇒ This infection typically spreads from one person to another via respiratory droplets produced during coughing and sneezing.
 - A single cough can produce up to 3,000 droplets (a small of liquid)
- ⇒ There is currently no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19.
- ⇒ Till March 21, 2020, more than two hundred and seventy thousand people affected globally and more than 11,000 people died (the numbers are increasing every day). There may be many infected people who might not have gone for diagnosis.

Why people are afraid of coronavirus? Because of physical pain, isolation, and in some cases death. This disease is extremely infectious, contagious.

How Christians must respond to Covid-19? Should our response be different from how non-Christians respond? 8 RESPONSES TO SHARE.

RESPONSE 1—KNOW THE WHOLE CREATION IS IN PAIN BECAUSE OF ORIGINAL SIN

- ❖ **Romans 8:22**, For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Note: Man's sin and rebellion against God in Genesis 3 brought curse on the entire creation (i.e. natural disasters like earthquake, flood, famine, plagues like coronaviruses)

⇒ We are living in a fallen world tainted with sin and suffering.

Tim Keller: The creation is in “bondage to decay” (Rom. 8:21). It's caught in a continuous cycle of death and decomposition. Everything in nature wears down and dies. And so nature is a realm of pain and suffering. It “has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth” (Rom. 8:22). There's relentless pain that comes from first to last, as things decay. In this creation, no experience is untainted by pain.

THEREFORE, WE ARE VICTIMS OF PAIN IN THE FALLEN WORLD, AWAITING THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES

Note: The Lord Jesus' death on the cross brought forgiveness of sin. But only at His second coming, the whole creation will be renewed. Currently, believers too experience pain as we live in this fallen world.

- ❖ **Romans 8:23-25**, And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, **THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES**. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Note: Yes, we do pray for God's help. But we are not free from pain completely as long as we are in this fallen world.

RESPONSE 2. DON'T PANIC

- ❖ **Psalms 46:1-3**, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore **WE WILL NOT FEAR** though the earth gives way (earthquake comes), though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

- ❖ **Contextualize**, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though coronavirus breaks out, spreading rapidly and coming closer to our doors.”

Why we need not fear? Because the God of the heavens and the earth is our refuge. We are not Christless, hopeless, helpless, and godless. Let us not live like those who are so. We have Christ, hope, help, and God is with us.

Note: It is said that more than 300 times the Scripture says “Do not fear...”

Joni Eareckson Tada (author, speaker, singer, painter—all done from a wheelchair): On July 30, 1967, Joni (age 17) went with her sister (Kathy) to a beach and suffered a diving accident that made her quadriplegic (permanently unable to move or feel your arms or legs). Later she suffered from three-stage breast cancer. During Covid-19 crisis, she wrote:

I am an individual at great risk to this coronavirus. I am an aging quadriplegic (70 years) with very fragile lungs, an immune system that can be easily compromised. But I bolster my confidence that the world belongs to almighty God, so Christians can be confident in His plan and purposes. There is absolutely no reason to be caught up in the panic or to be caught up in the blame.

- ❖ **Proverbs 28:1**, “The righteous are bold as a lion.”

Illustration: After the invention of atomic bomb, the first atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. In 1948, C S Lewis wrote an essay “On Living in an Atomic Age”. He talks about the anxiety that the majority of people had in his day due to the threat of nuclear war.

C S Lewis, “On Living in an Atomic Age” (1948): This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb [this coronavirus], let that bomb [coronavirus] when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs [coronavirus]. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) **but they need not dominate our minds.**

Caution: Don’t just keep hearing the news about Coronavirus. Meditate on God’s Word. Strengthen yourself in the Lord.

What do unbelievers see in us? BE A WITNESS OF PEACE AND COURAGE

Jesus said to His disciples:

- ❖ **Matthew 10:28**, And do not fear those who kill the body (CORONAVIRUS) but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him (GOD) who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

RESPONSE 3. TRUST IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

- ❖ **Psalm 112:6-7**, For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. **He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.**

God's Sovereignty: God is in **authority** over all things and He is in **control** of all things. There is nothing that doesn't fall under His authority and nothing that is out of His control.

- ❖ **2 Chronicles 20:6**, O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. [IN AUTHORITY]
- ❖ **Colossians 1:17**, And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. [IN CONTROL]

No matter how worse the situations may look: God is seated on the Throne. He has authority over all His creation. Nothing is out of His control. None can prevail against Him. He is sovereign.

The Holy Bible reveals:

- ⇒ God either *causes* plagues (in the case of Egypt)
- ⇒ Or God *allows* plague (in the case of Job)—this could be Satan's attack or man's failure

Point: NOTHING HAPPENS OUTSIDE HIS DIVINE CAUSE OR CONSENT. GOD IS NOT WEAK, IMPOTENT, AND HELPLESS. HE IS SOVEREIGN.

We don't know the exact reason behind Covid 19, whether this is God's judgment or God allowed Satan's attack or man's failure, but we as Christians must trust the sovereignty of God.

Charles Spurgeon: When you go through a trial, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which you lay your head.

Note: Like Daniel and Nehemiah, it is also good for us to confess the sin of our land and seek God's mercy and healing.

RESPONSE 4. BE WISE AND CAREFUL

What's the difference between fear and concern? Fear robs the joy and peace that you have in Christ and leads you to behave abnormally. Concern leads you to behave carefully while maintaining joy and peace in Christ. So, we need not panic but we must be careful and not be reckless.

❖ **Proverbs 22:3**, The prudent (wise) sees danger and hides himself, but the simple (foolish) go on and suffer for it.

Dangers to avoid:

- i. Keep washing your hands for 20 seconds, especially when you go out and touch things.
- ii. Avoid touching your face, eyes, mouth, and nose. The primary way we make ourselves sick is by touching our face with our infected fingers.
- iii. Avoid touching common objects when out in public. (door handles, stair rails, bus poles, chairs...etc) It is better to avoid eating outside.
- iv. Maintain social distance, especially from people coughing and having cold.
⇒ **WHO:** The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
- v. Wear a good quality facemask.
- vi. Disinfect surfaces you regularly use (dining table, kitchen counter, bathroom, mobile phones, computer).

Note: Our security must not be placed in precautions but in Christ alone.

REPONSE 5. PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE HOPELESS

Understand: We have hope in the Living God at present and for the future. Understand the state of unbelievers who are hopeless.

IT IS GOOD TO THINK ABOUT OUR SAFETY BUT LET US NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE HOPELESS STATE OF UNBELIEVERS.

❖ **Acts 16:19**, ¹⁶ As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." ¹⁸ And this she kept doing for

many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. ¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and **dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.** ²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ **And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely.** ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ **About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,** ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” ²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, **“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”** ³¹ And they said, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”** ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴ Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Caution: The Gospel is not about Jesus saves you from coronavirus. The Gospel is about Jesus dying on the cross for people's sin, which is much more dangerous than coronavirus.

C H Spurgeon: If there ever be a time when the mind is sensitive, it is when death is abroad. I recollect, when first I came to London, how anxiously people listened to the gospel, for the cholera was raging terribly. There was little scoffing then... All day, and sometimes all night long, I went about from house to house, and saw men and women dying, and, oh, how glad they were to see my face! When many were afraid to enter their houses lest they should catch the deadly disease, we who had no fear about such things found ourselves most gladly listened to when we spoke of Christ and of things Divine.

Note: Be careful of safety as you evangelize.

RESPONSE 6. DO GOOD TO THE HELPLESS

- ❖ **Galatians 6:10**, So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

In AD 249 to 262, Western civilization was devastated by one of the deadliest pandemics in its history. Though the exact cause of the plague is uncertain, the city of Rome was said to have lost an estimated 5,000 people a day at the height of the outbreak. One eyewitness, Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria, wrote that although the plague did not discriminate between Christians and non-Christians, “Its full impact fell on [non-Christians].” Having noted the difference between Christian and non-Christian responses to the plague, he says of the non-Christians in Alexandria:

At the first onset of the disease, they pushed the sufferers away and fled from their dearest, throwing them into the roads before they were dead and treating unburied corpses as dirt, hoping thereby to avert the spread and contagion of the fatal disease; but do what they might, they found it difficult to escape.

If the non-Christian response to the plague was characterized by self-protection, self-preservation, and avoiding the sick at all costs, the Christian response was the opposite. According to Dionysius, the plague served as a “schooling and testing” for Christians. In a detailed description of how Christians responded to the plague in Alexandria, he writes of how “the best” among them honorably served the sick until they themselves caught the disease and died:

Most of our brother-Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of the danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbours and cheerfully accepting their pains.

During the third century, the writer Tertullian recorded that when plagues deserted their nearest relatives in the plague, Christians stayed and ministered to the sick.

Note: Follow safety precautions (mentioned in 5th factor) when you help someone.

RESPONSE 7. PRAY FOR GOD’S HELP

- ❖ **James 5:13**, Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.
- ❖ **Philippians 4:6-7**, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the

peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Pray to the Lord that He would keep you from suffering. But if you suffer, pray to the Lord that He would deliver you from suffering. But if you are not delivered, pray to the Lord that He would give you the grace to go through the suffering.

Note: Pray also for those who are going through suffering.

RESPONSE 8. BE READY TO DIE ANYTIME

C S Lewis: “Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb [this coronavirus] was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways.”

- ❖ **James 4:14**, What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.
- ❖ **John 11:25-26**, Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. **Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?**”

Charles Spurgeon:

Illustration: During the 19th century, the first cholera pandemic (1817–24) occurred in Calcutta, India, and impacted the other parts of the world. Key symptoms were diarrhoea and dehydration. Millions of people died.

In the year 1854, when I had scarcely been in London twelve months, the neighborhood in which I labored was visited by Asiatic cholera, and my congregation suffered from its inroads. Family after family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave.

I went home, and was soon called away again; that time, to see a young woman. She also was in the last extremity, but it was a fair, fair sight. She was singing, — though she knew she was dying, — and talking to those round about her, telling her brothers and sisters to follow her to Heaven, bidding goodbye to her father, and all the while smiling as if it had been her marriage day. She was happy and blessed.

Who is the man that does not fear to die? I will tell you. The man that is a believer. Fear to die! Thank God, I do not. The cholera may come again next summer—I pray God it may not; but if it does, it matters not to me: I will toil and visit the sick by night and by day, until I drop; and if it takes me, sudden death is sudden glory.

❖ **I Corinthians 15:54-57**, “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Unbeliever: If you do not know Jesus, remember what Jesus did on the cross. Repent and believe in Christ.

Believer: If you are a believer in Christ, find your security in Him.

RECAP:

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