

HOPE IN TROUBLED TIMES

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Today many people are fearful for the future when they consider the current world situation, which they believe to be fraught with troubles. Many of these troubles will, in one way or another, affect our hopes of peace and security.

Global Instability

We see the worsening of relations between the USA, Russia and North Korea, a heightening of tensions in the Middle East, the secret testing of nuclear missiles and threats of nuclear war from superpowers that have the capability of annihilating much of planet Earth.

War

In the Middle East there has been an exodus of thousands of people fleeing from war-torn countries. Bombing, shooting and torture have forced them to flee for their lives. Migrants continue to arrive at the borders of various countries, hoping to be accepted as refugees.

Famine

Famine in Africa and the Middle East is currently threatening the lives of twenty million people. The United Nations has declared a Humanitarian Crisis and is appealing for urgent aid for the Famine-stricken countries of South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen, where 1.4 Million children are at risk of dying from starvation and related diseases.

Fear

People live in fear because of terrorist attacks in many of Europe's capital cities. Tightened security at airports, on the public transport system, at public buildings and on the streets has failed to quell the public's fear of further attacks by terrorist groups or individuals.

National Instability

There is economic uncertainty concerning Brexit and its impact on our relationship with the EU, with the possibility of cross-border tariffs and its effect on business.

Local Concerns

Many people are trying to cope with problems such as bereavement, long-term physical illness, unemployment, poverty, loneliness, disability and homelessness. The number of people receiving treatment for stress, depression, addiction and thoughts of self-harm or suicide is on the increase.

OUR TROUBLE

In these times of trouble, be it globally, nationally, locally or personally, there is a serious problem that affects everyone but it is often either ignored or overlooked. It is a spiritual problem, which began in the Garden of Eden when Adam, our representative and the federal head of the human race, disobeyed God. This sin of disobedience resulted in separation from God. As Adam's descendants, all of mankind inherited his sinful nature and consequently are liable for sin's penalty.

According to the Scriptures, *'Everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.¹ No one is righteous-not even one.'² The wages [penalty] of sin is death.'³ This penalty includes spiritual, physical and eternal death, which is separation from God for all eternity. As a consequence of our sin we are born spiritually dead, we will die physically and, if we die in our sins, unrepentant and unforgiven, we will pay sin's penalty in Hell, which is described in the Scriptures as a place of *'eternal punishment.⁴ where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁵ and the fire never goes out'.⁶* The penalty for sin must be paid, and our religious endeavours and good works will not suffice.*

OUR HOPE

However, God, in His mercy, sent His Son, Jesus, to pay sin's penalty on our behalf by dying on the cross, thereby securing a pardon for all who will repent of their sins and put their faith in Him. *'God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.⁷ He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.'*⁸ The forgiveness of sins and the salvation of repentant sinners was secured through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *'He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.'*⁹

IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

When we realise the seriousness of our spiritual condition, the devastating consequences of sin and our urgent need of forgiveness we can look to God for help. When we see our world sinking ever deeper into turmoil and our own personal circumstances causing us to lose hope, it is good to know there is One who has promised to help us. The Psalmist wrote, *'God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.'*¹⁰

THERE IS HOPE

Friend, there is hope in these troubled times. The Lord says, *'Call on me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory.'*¹¹ You can call upon the Lord today. You can ask Him to forgive your sins and to save your soul by granting you the pardon Jesus secured for you through His death on the cross. The Lord will also give you the strength to face life's troubles with the assurance that you will not have to face them alone. He has promised those who are trusting Him, *'I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.'*¹²

STEPS TO FAITH IN JESUS

Jesus purchased for us a pardon by paying the penalty for our sins when He died on the cross as our substitute and sin-bearer. This pardon will be put to your account when you:

ACKNOWLEDGE the fact that you are a sinner, and that you cannot earn or merit salvation.

BELIEVE that when Jesus died on the cross He paid, on your behalf, the penalty for your sins.

COME to the risen Saviour in sincere repentance, confessing your need of His forgiveness.

DECIDE to reach out by faith and receive from God the gift of eternal life.

The following is a suggested prayer:

'Lord, I know I am not worthy of your mercy, but I believe you will not turn me away, for I come to you in sincere repentance, asking you to forgive my sins and to grant me the gift of eternal life. Thank you, Lord, for hearing and answering my prayer.'

STEPPING STONES

If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour you are now a member of God's family and can call Him Father. In order to grow spiritually it is important that you:

LISTEN to your Heavenly Father. God will speak to you through His Word, so Bible reading is very important.

LEARN to spend time with your Heavenly Father each day. You can speak to God in prayer.

LOOK to Him always for direction for your life. God's Holy Spirit, who indwells you, will guide and instruct you as you read the Bible and pray.

Scripture References

1: Romans 3:23

4: Matthew 25:46

7: Romans 5:8

10: Psalms 46:1

2: Romans 3:10

5: Matthew 8:12

8: Isaiah 53: 5,6

11: Psalms 50:15

3: Romans 6:23

6: Mark 9:48

9: Titus 3:5

12: Hebrews 13:5

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