

# CORONA IN A BROKEN WORLD

## INTRO

- Asked for your thoughts and questions about Corona
- Saw a real mixed bag of responses
- So – three things I think we need to understand as Christians, so that we can speak **confidently and compassionately** into the situation.

## PUNISHMENT VS DISCIPLINE

As far back as we have records, people have looked at suffering and asked “why?” Sometimes there is a clear answer, other times there is not. It is important not to make sweeping statements that constrain God in ways that He does not constrain Himself. For instance, God does sometimes punish sin through direct action:

- Numbers 21 – bronze snake (people complain about God’s provision and leading, venomous snakes arrive)
- Acts 5 (NT!) – Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Spirit and the believers, and fall dead
- 1 Kings 14 – Jeroboam’s son becomes ill and King Jeroboam’s wife goes to a prophet in disguise. “The boy will die.”
  - BUT “All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only one belonging to Jeroboam who will be buried, because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the Lord has found anything good.”

Other times it is not so clear:

- In warning of things to come, the book of Revelation shows war, famine and death as operating under God’s control, but it doesn’t say whether God sends them or simply stops holding them back.
- There’s no mention of whether the famine prophesied in Acts 11 was “from God”, nor do we read of people asking
- Likewise the famine in the time of Joseph

In two specific situations, Jesus directly refutes the linkage between sin and suffering:

- Tower of Siloam (Luke 13)
- Man born blind (John 9)

Please be careful about second-guessing God! His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts.

How could God be omnipotent but not have “sent” an event? Give a young person a toolbox. If they throw it in the air and take a hammer to the head or a chisel to the shoulder, did you do it to them?

Some might say, “It’s because we as a nation and as the world live in an ungodly way – God is punishing us”. But remember that God’s punishments are generally of one of two sorts:

- Freeing the oppressed from evil – child-sacrificing Canaanites driven out of the land
- Disciplining His people when He wants them to change – e.g. Numbers 21, Acts 5 again
- Sometimes both – Egypt’s plagues were specifically challenges to their “gods” and their oppression (soot → boils)

This is where I want to leave this one – we don’t have to know whether God sent this virus as a warning or whether it’s simply the consequences of a fallen world. We do need to know how to respond. What can we learn? How is God using this bad thing to do us good?

## THIS IS NOT A LIFESAVING DEVICE

Inflatables carry a warning – “not a lifesaving device”. They’re fun, they’re OK to float on, but they’re not up to the job of saving lives.

*When I felt secure, I said,  
‘I shall never be shaken.’  
Lord, when you favoured me,  
you made my royal mountain stand firm;  
but when you hid your face,  
I was dismayed.*

This is a key message that we can learn for ourselves, and also share with those outside the Church: there are lots of “inflatables” in the world – career, money, authority, nationality, owning a house, good physical or mental health. None of them will save us. Quote often attributed to Corrie ten Boom: “You may never know that Jesus is all you need, until Jesus is all you have.” She lived that, because she knew what it was to lose almost everything.

We have a chance now to live out and to share the Gospel, which says, “store up your treasure in Heaven”!

On the subject of lifesaving equipment - oxygen masks on planes: “fit your own mask before assisting others”. We need to be digging deep in our own prayer and our meditation on the Scriptures, before we will find ourselves easily able to share this hope with others. But also, we’ve been opening God’s Word regularly in much easier times, and we’ve laid aside treasure. Now’s the time to bring it out!

## BRIEF ANGER, ENDURING FAVOUR

**God’s blessings far outweigh any disciplining.**

Lamentations 3:19-26, Job 2:10 – we can see God’s hand in all our troubles, while taking all His goodness for granted

Psalms 30 – His goodness is active, and far outweighs the trouble we suffer.

Do we really believe that all good gifts come from God? How do we do gratitude?

*Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people;  
praise his holy name.  
For his anger lasts only a moment,  
but his favour lasts a lifetime;  
weeping may stay for the night,  
but rejoicing comes in the morning.*

## OUTRO

- What do we need to repent of?
- Pull out the treasure.
- Meditate on it.
- Talk to God.
- Talk to people.