

Sunday, June 28, 2020—The Present Distress & The Local Church

- I am going to break from our series on Colossians to address a matter that came up this past week.
- I Corinthians 7:26
- It was brought to my attention that some folks who were present our first Sunday back two weeks ago (6/14) might not want to come back to church again until things are “normal.”
- I was told that things were just too awkward and strange. I was accused of being a cowardly compromiser for choosing to wear a mask inside the building before and after the service.
- First let me say I agree. I agree that our first meeting back on June 14 was awkward and strange.
  - We had not seen one another in nearly 4 months. It was kind of like a family reunion with family members that you haven’t seen in a long time.
  - We all came back to a situation in which everyone has their own opinion about what is going on with the Corona Virus and what the appropriate precautionary measures should be.
    - Some are not comfortable meeting at all and therefore are choosing to watch from home.
    - Others say they will not come back until there is a no mask policy.
  - We returned to find that our sound board had been stolen a circumstance that greatly impacted our first meeting back.
- So, yes, I agree that our first meeting back was awkward. Try having to preach amid such feelings of awkwardness, disappoint, frustration, and violation sensing that the theft of the sound board was an intentional act of sabotage.
- Is leaving and refusing to come back until things are “normal” the appropriate response to these circumstances? Yes, if you want the adversary to win. The adversary would like nothing more than to divide our church over the issue of masks.
  - II Corinthians 11:3—But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.
- Mask wearing is not new. I showed you the pictures in previous studies of people wearing masks at football and baseball games and other public events during the Spanish Influenza outbreak a hundred years ago.

- What is new in 2020 is that everything is being politized. Listening to media has entrenched people into diametrically opposed camps that view those in the other camp with disdain if not hatred. Then folks come into the church with these viewpoints and impose them on others. Where is the softening impact and influence of the word of God?
- I do not want to diminish or make light of the real hardships and suffering that Corona Virus and the shutdown have caused many of our fellow Americans.
  - Deaths
  - Loss of income
  - Business closures
  - Mental & emotional health
- That said, for most of us the Corona Virus has been little more than a frustrating inconvenience. Yet for many Corona Virus has stolen their joy and caused them to turn anywhere and everywhere except the word of God for perspective and answers.
- I Corinthians 11:1
- Philippians 3:17
- II Thessalonians 3:9
- II Corinthians 11:23-28—I believe that Paul wrote the book of II Corinthians in the early portion of Acts 20. Note all of the hardships that Paul had endured.
- Acts 21:27-40—Paul is beaten within an inch of his life by a riotous Jewish mob before the Roman political authorities intervene.
- Acts 22:1-24—Paul is permitted to address the Jewish mob that sought to kill him.
- Acts 22:25-30—Paul uses his Roman citizenship to his advantage.
- Acts 23:1-10—Paul testifies before the Sanhedrin
- Acts 23:11—Paul is told that he will bear witness to Christ in Rome.
- Acts 23:12-22—the plot to kill Paul.
- Acts 23:23-35—Paul is sent to Caesarea.

- Acts 24:1-23—Paul testifies before Felix.
- Acts 24:24-27—Paul is a victim of political corruption and unjust imprisonment.
- Acts 25:1-11—Paul appeals to Caesar.
- Acts 25:12-27—Paul is brought before Agrippa.
- Acts 26:2, 29—Paul thinks himself happy.
- Paul, after suffering unjust beatings, political corruption, and unjust imprisonment for over two years was “happy.” Why? How? Because Paul was not deriving his happiness from his circumstances and political fortunes but from the Lord.
- What about us? We cannot allow Corona Virus and all the political striving associated with it to scramble our eggs to the point that we are behaving with suspicion and contempt toward other members of the body of Christ.
- The present distress has given us an opportunity to practice what we preach. To exercise grace one toward another. To practice one-anothering.
- I chose to wear a mask in the assembly not because I am a cowardly pawn in some political game. No, under grace I can chose to wear a mask in the assembly out of care and esteem for others.
  - Romans 12:10—kindly affectioned one to another & preferring one another
  - Romans 14:13—not judge one another
  - I Corinthians 12:25—same care one for another
  - Galatians 4:13—by love serve one another
  - Galatians 5:15--**should not** be biting, devouring, and consuming one another
  - Ephesians 4:2—forbearing one another in love
  - I Thessalonians 5:11—Paul’s last one-anothering statement is for believers to “edify one another.”
    - Romans 14:19—what things make for peace and build up the other members of the body of Christ? Practicing the other one-anotherings.
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12—we need one another.

- Read about the trees.
- Romans 12:5—as members of the B.O.C. we should never be alone and should always have someone having our back and be there to comfort, exhort, love, edify etc.