

A FOCUSED DISCIPLE OF GOD
Sermon Title for Sunday March 29, 2020
Scripture: Psalm 46

My brothers and sisters, here we are again, missing another Sunday of service at Ebenezer. It is the fifth Sunday and we had plans to invite family members to our service today and to have some fun singing and a fellowship meal together. But in the midst of our planning, life happened, this Coronavirus changed all of our plans, so here we are again doing a different type of worship. I have found out over the years that man can plan things, but God can change things,

As I thought about this morning and what we have all been through the last few weeks, I thought about how so many of us are dealing with some adverse circumstances in our lives. With this new phenomenon in place, this virus that has changed this world and shaken it to its core, adversity has become something that we as a people are facing on a daily basis and we need to know how to deal

with things that sometimes knocks us off our spiritual center. One of the things that we have to talk about up front is the fact that in this life there are consequences to our actions. Every time we make decisions in life, we must understand that those decisions will have consequences attached to them.

Whether we make positive or negative decisions will determine whether we have positive or negative consequences in return.

To every action there is a reaction, whether it is positive or negative. Depending on how you react will determine whether you will be a winner or a loser, a champion or a runner up.

I want you to know to this morning that there are battles out there to be fought, and we must have a plan of action in order to win those battles.

How many of you know also know this morning that sometimes adversity comes into our lives out of nowhere

and in order for us to survive, we must know how to overcome them.

Ecclesiastes 7-14 tells us *“in the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider”*. When adversity comes, we must analyze the situation and see what God want us to do to handle the adversity that we are facing. Every now and then, something will happen in your life that will shock you, just blow your mind, cut you a flip, throw you off center, or just throw you whole life out of kilter. And even though you might not be able to figure it out, don't worry about it for we serve a God who was anticipating it. We must understand that we all have an enemy, and his job is to frustrate us and to take our focus off of the one who is able to keep you from falling. All of us are under attack right now. We don't know why, and we don't understand how it could happen to us and we never anticipated it.

It was just a few weeks ago when life was normal, we were worshiping together on the second Sunday in March.

We had a blessed time together and had made all these plans for the rest of the month. Then, out of nowhere, this Coronavirus starts spreading across this country and across this world, this silent assassin, that has so many people fearful and in some instances, in a panic mode. But you must know this morning that God has got your back. When we are under attack, Psalm 46-10 tells us to ***“be still and know that he is God”***. Know that God is able to rescue you from any situation that you might face. And not only will he rescue you, he is a deliver, and he will deliver on time, for we serve an awesome God who is an on-time God, Amen somebody. We just have to understand that we have to stay focused on the prize and stay in the race, and remember that the race is not given to the swift nor to the strong, but to he or she who endures till the end.

We must remember that every battle has a reason, and that every battle has a season, but our purpose is to hang in there and endure. Does not the bible tell us that he that

endures till the end shall be saved? It is important how we handle adversity and know you are not alone as you go through the fire. Remember the three Hebrew boys, they were in the midst of adversity when they were told to bow down to the music and the statue of King Nebuchadnezzar, and because of their faith and belief in God they simple refused to bow down to the king. You know the story, they were thrown into a fiery furnace, and when the king looked in, he asked the question, *“did we not put 3 men in the fire”*? He went on to say, *“I see a fourth man and he looks like the Son of God”*. You must know that God is with you even in the midst of a fire. Right now, that fire is in the form of the Coronavirus, but know that God is with us in the midst this virus as well. No matter how hot it gets, know that God is right by your side.

All of us in some way form or fashion will experience adversity, but it is those who stay strong to the finish that will be rewarded. Don't get all excited when adversity

comes your way. That is what the devil wants you to do. Remember who you are and whose you are and stay focused so that you won't miss out on the prize. And I want you to understand that you may lose some battles, but stay focused on God and you will win the war.

In dealing with adversity, we want to talk a little bit about counting the cost of discipleship and staying focused on the prize that God has in store for you. Church if you want to remain a disciple of Jesus Christ, you must stay focused

How many of you know that life is full of snapshots? R&B recording artists, Frankie Beverly and Maze call it "*Joy and Pain*", like sunshine and rain. Little pictures of things, trials, tribulations, heartaches and pains, joys and sorrows, the good, the bad and the ugly, and other things that make up snapshots of life. Every time you have to deal with a situation it is just a snapshot of life. But what we must realize is that there is a big picture to life, an overall picture that is put together by those snapshots.

Things happen, joys bring about smiles and laughter, and yet pain comes and goes, adversity passes, and every now and then a hardship will show up.

Our job is to remain focused on the big picture. For with the big picture, promotion follows adversity if we just continue to keep our eyes fixed on the prize and stay focused. I don't know about you but I know there is a better day a coming over in the by and by, Amen somebody.

So, we have to keep our minds guarded, our hearts focused and remember that you are not always in battle. Even when adversity comes, those attacks don't last forever. Look at life, people change, weather changes, circumstances change, so when adversity comes, don't let it discourage you, expect God to come through and be there till the end. Psalm 30-5 says "*weeping may endure for a night, but joy, will come in the morning*". Know that your adversity has a tomorrow and since God holds tomorrow, we should expect God to be with us in the

midst of our tomorrows. Know without a doubt that trouble don't last always, but true Christians disciples do. But what is the cost of true discipleship. How do we handle adversity when it comes to discipleship? Church, Jesus has expectations of his disciples. He expects us to be set apart, to act different and to be difference makers in this world and the lives of others. He expects us not to care as much for ourselves as we would for him and for others. In these uncertain times, God is looking at how we are handling being shut-in, whether we are spending that time complaining about our situations, or praying and working on our relationship with him. God is looking at whether we want the best for others do we spend this time looking out for ourselves. God is truly looking at how we handle this Coronavirus that we are all facing right now if we are looking to the hills from which cometh our help. Our help comes from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth!!

Handling adversity in life means you may have to lose something in order to gain Christ. You have to wonder if being in this situation right now is helping all of us to focus more on who God is in the midst of our lives and is this crisis helping us to strengthening our relationship with Jesus Christ.

But know without a doubt that gaining Jesus is worth losing it all because when you gain Jesus, you really gain it all. For he reminds us what good is it if we gain the whole world and lose our souls. I declare to you today; nothing is more important than knowing that your salvation is secure because of strengthening your relationship with Christ.

Church, keep your focus, keep your eyes on the prize. And when you have to just stand, stand in the midst of your trials. Stand in the midst of tribulation. Stand when your friends are gone. Stand if it means standing all alone. But you have to know that as long as God is on your side, you are able to handle anything that comes your way.

During adversity, God just wants to know where you stand.

My brothers and sisters, count the cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. It may cause you to face some adversity, but stay focused. But the bible tells us that he or she that stays faithful and endures till the end shall be saved.

Thanks for listening.

As we continue to be confined to our spaces, I know it gets difficult spending all of that time alone at home.

Please continue to check on each other and do what is necessary to ride out this storm. Take the time to enjoy your family, work on a project you have been putting off, read a good book or become a binge television watcher and whatever you choose to do to occupy your time. If needed just get plenty of rest.

I want to again thank all of you for your faithfulness as you continue to send your tithes and offerings to Ebenezer. We all are going through some adversity right now and I pray that we will all come out for the better after coming through all of this.

So, continue to take care of yourselves, continue to wash your hands, keep them away from your face, if you are going out, keep your social distancing and continue to pray for the healing of this nation and for this world. Be blessed all.