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Letters to the Church during COVID-19: 29th April 2020

To all the brothers and sisters at KBC,

I hope this finds you well and keeping safe during this season. It's the word I have been using to describe the time we are in, season. I think 'season' is a good word to use because it conveys the idea that it will pass. This is not permanent, and we will emerge from this season with all the changes it has brought to us. Further, for every season there is a purpose: winter for rest, autumn for harvest and pruning, spring for readiness of growth and summer for growth and fruitfulness. It is the same with this season, God is working out His purposes for us, within it. With this in mind, last week and over the next coming weeks, we will be reflecting on passages of Scripture in light of our current circumstances. This week's reflection I picked up from a podcast Stuart Woodward forwarded to me and which was really thought provoking.

We are going to be thinking about Acts 28:30-31. So, grab your Bible and have a quick read of what Luke writes as he closes out the book of Acts. All done?

Super - what do you notice about the passage? You guessed it - Paul is on lockdown. He is under house arrest in Rome, the culmination of events which began way back in Acts 21:37. He has a measure of freedom, in that he is not in chains and is able to invite visitors, but he is not allowed to leave the house and he is under permanent guard. One could say his lockdown measures were far more stringent than what we are enduring. I am sure you know this, but this is not the first time Paul has been on lockdown. He's had more than a few visits to prison for preaching the gospel and each occasion points to the kind of things Paul did while on lockdown.

Four things stand out which we could perhaps put into practice in our life. Just a warning there will be plenty of overlap in the coming weeks and you may begin to think, 'he's starting to sound like a stuck record!' But according to research, we need to hear something at least eight times before it eventually sinks in. So here we go (on some points...again):

1. Paul prayed: almost all of Paul's letters to the churches begin with prayer and so often you will find the words, 'we remember you constantly in our prayers' or 'we have not stopped praying for you'. The amount of times, as a pastor, I have thought, 'where did he get the time, he was so busy!' The answer is probably: on lockdown. Paul prayed earnestly for the church and so can we in this season.

2. Paul praised: the most famous occasion was in jail in Philippi. After being beaten by the city officials and then thrown in jail, in the middle of the night Paul and Silas could be heard praying and singing hymns of praise. So, can we in this season, adoring God for who He is and praising Him for His never failing care and kindness.
3. Paul pondered: my guess is that during these times of lockdown Paul had lots of time to think and reflect. It is such a lost art in our frantically busy culture, the art of reflection. One author describes the need, 'we reflect on the past in the present in order to improve our future. Reflection turns history into learning'. Paul pondered and engaged in moments of reflection and so can we.
4. Paul penned (or wrote): he basically wrote huge chunks of the New Testament while he was in prison. Reflecting on the issues people raised, pondering the wonder of the cross he then wrote letters to the churches (which we have in the New Testament), encouraging them, exhorting them, warning them, instructing them and conveying his love to them. In short, he kept connected, only his letters didn't come with a hashtag in front. So, can we, stay connected and especially as the lockdown persists.

At this point you may be thinking, 'Yeah but what if I don't want to, what if I just don't have the desire at the moment to do these things?' It happens, sometimes we lose our spiritual fervour but more about that next week.

For now, may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Grace be with you!

Stu
#KeepTrusting #KeepConnected #Call4Support

Notices:

Upcoming events on Zoom

Thursday: 7:45pm, Unpack the Preach, discipleship group discussion. This session will include splitting off into smaller break out rooms for discussion. So, it would be really helpful if you could let **Stu** know directly by email or text/phone call whether you plan to attend.

Sunday: 10:30am, Sunday Morning Service (we will open the room at 10am for people to gather to chat and leave it open after the service for people to chat as well).

Thursday 21 May: additional Church Member's meeting.

KBC YouTube channel: Here you will find Stu's daily devotional series 'You are....' and our sermons each week: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0lqZEJkxDYGSeCQCw6onJw/featured>