



A letter from

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It is more than a little disconcerting to face the fact that every day I find myself responding to questions by saying, “I don’t know.” Now, I should explain that these questions are not about the Gospel but concern the issues surrounding the pandemic. No doubt you can identify with this.

Along with the peculiar challenges to physical health, we now find ourselves in a period of political agitation and social deterioration. For some, the response has been “to take arms against a sea of troubles,” while others are tempted to sound retreat and search for a “hiding place.” When in thick clouds and buffeted by severe turbulence, my pilot friends tell me that it’s crucial to fly by the instruments!

To do so is to remember that God is sovereign over all the affairs of time. He is not taken by surprise; He cannot be. Although from our limited perspective life seems chaotic, nothing is out of His control. Like the disciples in the storm, we’re tempted to “awaken” the LORD to inform Him that the ship is going down (Mark 4:35-41)! We’ll be comforted to remember that Jesus’ response was “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”

A biblical view of history is vital so that we can see our circumstances clearly. It is in *looking back* at the wondrous works of God that we can have stability when *looking around* us and confidence when *looking forward*. In our studies in 1 Samuel, we saw how Samuel put a memorial stone—an Ebenezer—in place for this very reason. One of John Newton’s hymns, which begins, “Begone, unbelief, my Savior is near,” captures this thought in its third verse:

His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink:
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.

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This is the confidence of God's people in every generation. When the apostles were beaten, imprisoned, and threatened, the church prayed not that the opposition would be stifled or that they would be kept from persecution but that they would be enabled to continue to do what the Lord Jesus had commanded: TO SPEAK GOD'S WORD WITH GREAT BOLDNESS (Acts 4:29).

So what are we to do? We're to pray as the apostles prayed, for the great need of the hour is Spirit-filled, Christ-centered boldness! This, so that we're enabled to be brave enough to declare that our problem is not physical but spiritual and to kindly, clearly, and unapologetically let it be known that Jesus did not come to improve our circumstances but to bear sin's punishment and call sinners to Himself.

The Bible makes it clear that the whole church is to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. So whether you're a musician or a farmer or a pharmacist, a schoolboy or a librarian, the charge you've been given is to speak His Word, the mystery of the Gospel, with boldness. And before you begin to focus on whether we should be "in the building" or not, let's not forget that for the church in Acts the question never arose, because they were focused on going rather than coming.

This may well be one of the great moments in our little lives when the Gospel begins to take hold and countless lives are changed. Let's make sure that we do not miss the opportunity. It's a privilege to offer you help and encouragement along these lines.

With my love in the Lord Jesus,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alistair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A'.