

Thank you for joining us to a time of devotion and prayer. The Bible says, "And the Scripture gives us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled. [Please hear this] May God, who gives this patience and encouragement help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus" (Romans 15:4b-5).

I want to talk about two things in this devotion. 1. A word about family and friends and 2. A word about God Himself.

First a word about family and friends. Confined to our homes with little if any interaction with the outside world can cause people's patience to grow thin. Those of us with little or no patience may even find this time more difficult than the rest. Please take the time to look at Romans 15 4-5. The Holy Spirit has the ability to work patience inside of us so we can display patience outwardly. Patience is refraining from hostile and angry responses and giving time for God to act according to God's will. Patience let's go of trying to control people and situations and let God do His work according to God's perfect timetable. Living in harmony does not mean we have to be in complete agreement. We agree to disagree in love. When a choir sings in harmony, it means they are on different musical notes but is sounds beautifully when put together as led by the Director. God directs us to live harmoniously in Christian love. Love is patient and love is kind. For those of us who lack patience we just have more room for God to work in our lives. Thank God He is always patient with us, maybe one of God's finest qualities in my less than humble opinion.

Moving to the second part of the talk. I have a few things I wish to say about God. But before I do, I want to pray for God's hedge of protection to be around all of us. Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we ask in the name of Jesus for you to place your hedge of protection around all of us, in our homes, when we are walking outside, and when we are in our vehicles. No matter where we are, please place your hedge of protection all around us 24 hours a day 7

days a week. God you are our safe shelter. You are our hiding place. We are always safe in you. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

A word about God. Yes, the Lord is our Savior. He saves our souls for all eternity. Another term that fits God beautifully is God is our rescuer. God is constantly rescuing us from circumstances that could drown us if we let them. When I was 4 years old, my Dad literally rescued me from drowning. We were at a swimming pool at a sports center. The pool had an edge to it in the water that you could walk around the entire pool just getting your feet wet. I accidentally slipped into the water and went directly to the bottom of the pool without holding my breath. I started gasping for breath and all I was doing was taking in water. Then it happened. I felt these hands underneath my arm pits. My Dad picked me up and held me way over his head. He had one of the biggest smiles on his face that I had ever seen. He not only rescued me, he was happy to do it and I lived to tell the story. His first words out of his mouth were this. "Don't tell your mother."

God is our rescuer. How you experience God being your rescuer during this time of trouble will be great for all of us to hear. God is working in your life full time and your testimony to God's grace and power in your life is worthy of being told and builds up the listeners. Let those texts, emails, and most of all phone calls keep coming. God rescues us so we will share with others God's rescuing power and grace. You all have true stories, testimonies to give; please give them.

The worldwide virus did not catch God by surprise. In Luke 21:11 the bible speaks about the end times foretelling the coming of many pestilences. Even before time began God saw the virus coming and He also sees it ending. Again, the virus did not catch God by surprise. God has not turned against us. God is allowing this virus to take place to accomplish His purposes for God knows exactly what He is doing. God's ways are always perfect, and God's redemption is always near. I do not blame God for the virus. Since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden,

the power of sin entered this world including any and all illnesses, diseases, and viruses that will be here until the last trumpet is sounded announcing Jesus' second coming. In the book of Revelation, it gives us a hint as to why such events take place. God allows such things to move all to turn to Jesus, repent of their sins, and be saved by God's grace through faith. The virus can be used for good as God gains our attention through what is happening. It is right to ask God to give us ears to hear what He is saying to us in God's quiet and clear way. May none of us be deaf to the truth God wishes us to hear in love. By listening to God our souls are refreshed and renewed. This is how God transforms us.

Jesus is at the right hand of the Father working all things for our good and for the greater glory of God. As the virus grows worse, and yes it will grow worse, God's grace and power is greater still.

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I close with this. God can and does change our lives for God's purposes. God is in the midst of changing all of us more into the image of Christ. Amen and Amen.