

Foreword

Many Christians in the West are concerned that our secular societies are becoming more inhospitable to Christian faith and practice. We often feel persecuted. In no way do I want to minimize the headwinds we are now facing in the countries that formerly constituted Christendom. But to get desperately needed perspective, we must listen to the voices of believers in parts of the world where the opposition is much more pervasive and often takes the form of violence. This is the situation for Christians in large swaths of Asia—East, South, and West. They are indeed learning what the words of our Lord mean:

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11–12 NIV)

Christians in the West seldom have had to test these important words of Jesus in the way our brothers and sisters in Asia have. Chinese Christians in particular have had reason in recent

years to rely on this promise of Jesus. There are at least four things to learn from these verses.

“BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN PEOPLE INSULT YOU.”

Not, “Blessed are you *if* people insult you.” Every beatitude is a characteristic of a Christian. Every Christian must be poor in spirit, or you are not a Christian; every Christian must hunger and thirst after righteousness, or you are not a Christian. This is the last of the Beatitudes, which means Jesus assumes that if you are a Christian, you will be persecuted. If you are living in any way consistently with Christianity, you will experience some kind of losses, some pushback, some opposition. (See 2 Timothy 3:12 for confirmation of this interpretation: “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” [ESV]).

WE ARE ONLY BLESSED IF THE
PERSECUTION IS “BECAUSE OF ME [JESUS].”

Not “because of *you*.” Peter says something similar in 1 Peter 4:15: “But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler” (ESV). The word translated “meddler” is an amazing Greek word. It means to be a busybody or to be tactless. What Peter and Jesus are saying is, if you are talking about your Christian faith in a feckless way, a tactless way, an abrasive way, an insensitive way, a culturally inappropriate way, and people oppose you, don’t say, “I am being persecuted for Jesus’s sake!” No, you are being persecuted for *your* sake. If you are being obnoxious, the promise of blessedness doesn’t hold.

PERSECUTION BECAUSE OF JESUS
RESULTS IN PRAISE FOR THE FATHER.

Here is one way to determine whether you are being persecuted for Jesus's sake or for your own sake:

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:13–16 NIV)

Some people will look at your life and faith and persecute you; others will look at that same life and will "praise your Father in heaven." Some non-Christians will respond with hostility, while others will be attracted by your life and persuaded by your testimony.

I propose that this is a great way to test ourselves. If we are *only* persecuted and few or no people are finding faith or being attracted to Jesus through us, then we are likely being persecuted for our tactlessness. If we are never persecuted, then we are likely compromising or being too quiet about our faith. But if *both* of those things are happening—if you are persecuted *and* your testimony is bearing fruit—you are in a sweet spot. Speaking the truth without love will only bring opposition; being loving without insisting on the truth is cowardice. One of the most worrisome things about the church in the West is that we are not seeing much persecution *or* attraction, and surely that is an indictment.

WE CAN EXPERIENCE THE PROMISE OF
BLESSEDNESS THROUGH MEDITATING ON JESUS.

Finally, how do we get the *blessedness* that Jesus says comes if you are persecuted for his sake?

That blessedness is a fascinating promise. It means the Holy Spirit will rest on you in a special way. It means his character will come into your life and be created, and it will shape you in a special way. It likely also means that you will see some people attracted to Jesus because of, not in spite of, the persecution.

But I suggest you not be passive, that you actively go in prayer to God during times of persecution to seek the joy, love, and courage you need. One way to do that is to meditate on Jesus in the following way.

Philippians 2 tells us that Jesus “emptied himself” (ESV) of his glory. The King James Version translates these verses to say that Jesus, even though he was equal with the Father, “made himself of no reputation.” He had glory, and he had honor. He had the name, but he became rejected. He was shamed, humiliated—voluntarily. Crucifixion was not only a way to execute people. It was intentionally the most humiliating and ignominious death the Romans could come up with. Death on a cross was a dishonorable death. That means Jesus died in absolute shame so that you and I will not die in shame. We are going to have a name that lasts forever. Our names are written in heaven, inscribed in God’s book. We are going to live with honor and glory forever because Jesus experienced shame and humiliation.

Now if you take a little hit to your reputation, if you get persecuted a little bit, knowing what Jesus did for you, can you bear that shame, knowing that he took the ultimate shame so that you could have the ultimate honor? Yes—if you meditate on Jesus’s

humiliation, the blessedness that comes from that will help you to endure your own.

This is a sobering message. But look—it ends in joy. “Rejoice and be glad,” Jesus says. Why? “Because great is your reward in heaven.” Look at that hope and know that you have the name that will never perish. Know that you have an honor and a glory that will never fade.

This is a book about living as a Christian under suffering and trials. Persecution is one form of suffering we in the West associate with the Chinese house church, but for Chinese Christians, suffering is a complex and multifaceted issue. The pandemic has only complicated rather than simplified the pressures of the Chinese house church.

However, there is a note of this joy that runs throughout the testimonies and reflections in this volume. In early 2020, I witnessed this joy firsthand as thousands of Chinese house church Christians met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. While they gathered to encourage one another with gospel hope in the face of growing persecution, cases of COVID-19 broke out across their cities back home. They returned to China not in fear but with bold hope, knowing their home abides in the heavenly city, which cannot be destroyed. Let us learn from the witness of our Chinese brothers and sisters so that we can stand fast all the better as we face trials wherever we live.

Tim Keller
New York City
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Meditations *on*
Brokenness

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But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the Lord, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly." And when David arose in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, "Go and say to David, 'Thus says the Lord, Three things I offer you. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you.' " So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall three years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me." Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man."

So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the appointed time. And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men. And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, "Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house."

And Gad came that day to David and said to him, "Go up, raise an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." So David went up at Gad's word, as the Lord commanded.

Let Us Fall Into *the* Hand *of the* Lord

GUO MUYUN

There is a popular song adapted from a poem by Yu Xinqiao. The refrain, which is also the name of the song, repeats: “In this life, if I must die, I must die in your hands.” In 2 Samuel 24, God offers three disasters for David to consider and choose from: war, famine, or pestilence. David responds by saying something similar, “Let us fall into the hand of the Lord ... but let me not fall into the hand of man,” meaning, “If I must die, I must die in the hands of the Lord.”

We observe in the Bible that God sent disasters to punish sinful, rebellious human beings. The three most common disasters are famine, sword, and pestilence, as mentioned in Ezekiel 7:15: “The sword is without; pestilence and famine are within. He who is in the field dies by the sword, and him who is in the city famine and pestilence devour.” There is also one well-known passage in Revelation 6:8 about one of the biggest disasters during the end times: “And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s

name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.” Many such Bible passages tell us that many so-called natural disasters were sent by God.

If you search history, read the Bible, and observe reality, you find that different nations have responded differently to disasters sent by God, and the differences can be huge. For example, when the ten plagues were sent to Egypt, Pharaoh would not repent, but shouted, “Stay strong, Egypt.” On the other hand, when pestilence and earthquake were about to fall on Nineveh, this city that might have been crueler and eviler than Egypt instead repented, and all the people put on sackcloth and sat in ashes.

Today’s reality reflects similar contrasting differences. As the pandemic spread outside of China, Britain worked toward “herd immunity,” with their human bodies serving as a new great wall. The United States set up a National Day of Prayer, and also developed various technologies and medicines, as well as free testing for its people. Italy’s response was similar to its response during World War II—its people sang on the balconies while the government tried to copy what other countries did.

The Bible has foretold that in the end times when the last days arrive, the human response to the disasters will be even worse. Revelation 9:20–21 says: “The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.” Revelation 16:8–11 says:

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. They were scorched by the

fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory. The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

The historian Lei Haizong once said that these three disasters—sword, famine and pestilence—were ways of natural selection for excessive populations in ancient times.² We do not need to analyze whether this comment was influenced by the theory of evolution; he was describing a fact. He further analyzed that ordinary people held to a concept of “doom” adopted from Buddhism, which had its own rationality. For example, there was a historical peasant rebel leader named Huang Chao. The people believed he was a devil who came into the world to kill cowards and starving people. Once he came to you, you were doomed to die.

As a historian, Lei proposed a concept called the “Theory of Largest Increases and Decreases,” which he claimed was the principle behind the population fluctuations across Chinese history. When the population had increased to or even beyond the saturation point, it would then decrease to the point where there would be land without men farming it and food without men to eat it.

At the saturation point, society suffered from top to bottom. Government officials became more corrupt and enforced various harsh taxes. Under the double pressure of hunger and harsh taxes, stronger members of the lower classes either gave up their land to work as merchants in cities, to become bandits, or to become vagrants and beggars. As more land was abandoned, previously fertile farmland became wasteland, with lower productivity and an increased possibility for famine. The more wasteland, the lower the productivity. The lower the productivity, the more famine.

The more famine, the more bandits. The more bandits, the more wasteland.

Such a vicious circle culminated in good people being indistinguishable from bandits—a proliferation of roving rebels. And proliferation of roving rebels led to great massacres. Finally, when one of the rebels managed to kill all the others, he became the next emperor.

After a period of unrest, someone ultimately conquered and unified the whole country. Then, all of a sudden, the supply of land and food would exceed the demand. Because the population had decreased and there were now large areas of wasteland, the population could increase without danger of famine. This ushered in peaceful times of prosperity, which lasted from dozens of years to a few hundred years, such as happened during the rule of Emperors Wen and Jing of the Han Dynasty, the resurgence of Emperor Guangwu of the Han Dynasty, the rule of Emperor Taizong in the Tang Dynasty, and the High Qing Era.

All of these were short, golden ages that were the result of the unrest and massacres of the previous dynasty. Life during these golden ages was fairly easy and peaceful, yet such ages never lasted for long. Dozens or a hundred years later, the population would again grow past the saturation point and the old tragedy would emerge again.

This was the view of Lei Haizong and it is terrifying. For according to him, every few dozen or few hundred years, tragedy repeats itself. We are left with only one question in response: What can we do to get away from such historical patterns and curses? How can we survive these desperate situations of pestilence, sword, and famine?

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The answer lies in the story of David. Before the events of 2 Samuel 24, David numbered his people, which is similar to a census or military review. Such reviews were not wrong; they were neither moral nor immoral in and of themselves. Whether it was right or wrong to conduct such a census depended on the motive and context. Throughout his life as the king of Israel, David was generally a man who feared God and was godly and brave, but he committed two grave sins and this was one of them.

David's motive for numbering his people was nothing more than wanting to confirm the size of his army, following the practices of the surrounding powers. He forgot that none of his numerous victories over the course of his glorious military career were won by his military power alone. In his sensational first battle, young David took one smooth stone and, with a sling, killed the giant Goliath. He did not succeed because of his superior fighting skills. No, he succeeded because God helped him. When David numbered his people, he forgot how he started.

Consequently, his numbering of the people brought disaster for them. As the saying goes, an incapable commander will bring out an incapable team. An incapable king's foolish actions brought disaster to the whole nation. But the people were not unlucky to have David as their representative. All of his people benefited when David won battles, conquered cities, and captured spoils. The king was the government and represented all of his people; he established covenants on behalf of the people with God, as well as with other nations. He could lead the people into blessing, and he could lead the people into trouble and punishment when he sinned.

As long as you are among the people, you will be represented—actively or passively, consciously or unconsciously, either by this person or by that one. There is no absolute individualist.

No one can claim that they do not need a representative. One can independently choose the person one will be represented by, and even the person chosen may not always be available as an option.

Though David committed a sin, he was fortunate a prophet came to him who represented the people and, more importantly, who spoke for God. Gad spoke in a simple and authoritative way, because in Israel where God ruled, David was in charge of the sword only, while prophets had the more authoritative voice. This prophet spoke directly to his king. What he said can be summarized as: “You have committed a sin; now there are three disasters; pick one.” When Gad pointed to David and said, “You

committed sin,” the king did not dare to challenge him. He listened to the word of God and immediately confessed his sin.

His repentance was first demonstrated by his heart striking him. Scripture says: “David’s heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the LORD, ‘I have sinned greatly in what

I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly’ ” (2 Samuel 24:10).

In ancient China, when there was pestilence, flood, or famine, emperors would issue an edict to take the blame on themselves and to confess that they had offended heaven. Oftentimes, it was mere lip service. Of course, they could have not imagined that their successors in later ages would be too lazy to even offer lip service to heaven. But even their edicts of self-blame were not on par with David’s prayer of confession.

David’s choice demonstrates his unconditional trust in God. Three years of famine, three months of war, or three days of pestilence: which would you choose? No matter what David chose,

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he would certainly bring death to his nation. He replied: "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man" (2 Samuel 24:14). Those who truly know God will all make such a choice. David, and subsequently Christians, was clear that it is more dreadful to fall into the hands of men, represented by famine and the sword. He knew very clearly that, while God sends disasters, he can also stop them. He can afflict you, but he can also heal you, and he is the most merciful. To fall into the hand of God resigns ourselves to providence, which is the best choice in a difficult situation.

God made the choice for him. The God whose mercy is great chose to send pestilence. The deaths of 70,000 Israelites in three days may look startling, yet compared to the potentially greater disasters of famine and sword, this is possibly the lightest punishment. Of course, the deaths of 70,000 is a grave thing; in the words of Takeshi Kitano, a Japanese director, we are discussing the death of one person that takes place 70,000 times.³

With such a horrible situation, David's confession became even more urgent. While his words seem uncertain, he bore responsibility. He prayed to God, "I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house" (2 Samuel 24:17). Even before his prayer, the merciful God had asked the angel who was working destruction among the people to stay his hand.

David himself was guilty. How could someone who is guilty bear the guilt of others? If a mafia gang commits a crime together, and later one of them stands up and says, "I am willing to bear the guilt of my boss," the judge will say, "What guilt of his can you bear? You killed people and have to confess your crime first and bear your own guilt." David caused the disaster, and if you commit the crime, you are guilty. You cannot bear another's guilt.

On the other hand, the people were not innocent, either. When the people were wandering in the wilderness, they corporately committed great sins that resulted in God sending them pestilences out of his wrath. “There is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). This horrible scene is a repetition of what happened in the book of Numbers. Most of them had forgotten God and were proud of their military strength and the power of their nation. According to David’s numbering of the people, there were 800,000 valiant men in Israel who drew the sword, and 500,000 in Judah. This was a formidable number. But when you rely on your own strength without relying on God, no one among 1.3 million valiant men can say he is innocent. I imagine there were still many people in Israel who refused to confess their sins even after God sent the pestilence, instead busily telling each other that it must have been the Philistines who poisoned them. Or perhaps, out of fear, they desperately tried to pile up some hyssop that was highly marketed by the *Israeli Truth Daily*.

David’s willingness to bear his responsibility deserves recognition. He said, “I have sinned, and I and my father’s house are willing to bear the penalty. May you let the people go.” He did not try to shift blame or boast, but rather bore the penalty and faced the consequences himself, instead of sending Joab or Gad or Zadok to the front line. When the disaster stopped, David, the psalmist, did not host a celebration or release a collection of poems boasting about himself. He followed the instructions of the prophet and raised an altar for worship, which was the predecessor of the temple in Jerusalem, the core of Israel’s whole system of worship.

What was the purpose of the pestilence? This pestilence, which David caused, might have been one of the lightest disasters sent by God because of his great mercy. I am not sure whether

the pestilence we and the whole world experienced was one of the lightest disasters sent by God. I hope this God of mercy is merciful toward us, because it is better for us to fall into the hand of God than into the hand of man. However, we cannot neglect or forget the meaning and purpose of disasters. All disasters are opportunities to confess our sins according to our particular situations and give thanks and glory to God—who demands justice and righteousness, has no tolerance for sin, but is full of mercy.

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Because he represents the people, the king should be the first to confess. But most kings do not confess their sins; and if they do confess, they do not repent. If he expresses a willingness to repent, it is a superficial repentance, without truly taking responsibility for their wrongdoing. But the king David said, “I and my father’s house are willing to take responsibility.” Of course, he himself was guilty—the chief criminal for this incident. So how could he be qualified to take the guilt of others?

If you read the Bible to find out how this word of David was fulfilled, you will discover it was fulfilled in a later age through one of David’s descendants. That descendant—Jesus, his bodily offspring—was the Messiah for whom he hoped. David said: “Let us fall into the hand of the Lord.” Before Jesus died, he said something similar: “‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last” (Luke 23:46).

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. As the Son of God and the true God himself, he came into this world and lived over thirty years; then he went to the cross and breathed his last breath. All this he did in order to truly bear the sins of the people. David wanted to do this, but he himself was guilty. Jesus was completely guiltless.

Because he was completely guiltless, he was qualified to bear the sins of others, so that salvation comes through him. Jesus is the King, a King even greater than David, but he is also the King on the cross. He is the King who died on the cross, and his mission and glory were to bear the penalty that should have been borne by the kings of the world. Therefore, when we see kings who should confess their sins but are unwilling to do so, we should first have hope in Jesus, the true King, the only one who can bear chastisement for the sins of the people.

Furthermore, the prophets should be the second to confess. Today, people commemorate whistle-blowers in various ways. The comment section of Dr. Li Wenliang's last post on *Weibo* has become China's online wailing wall, with hundreds of thousands of comments where people pour out their anguish, as if that comment area was the only space for their outpouring and expression.⁴ The writer Fang Fang, who is not a Christian and writes within the government system, has unexpectedly become the conscience of the nation.⁵

David's prophets were brave and not afraid to speak, but later, the prophets of Israel were increasingly reticent to speak up, so that the Bible refers to them as "silent dogs." Dogs are supposed to guard the household. When enemies come, the dog is supposed to bark and alert those inside. If it is silent or even cooperates with thieves and robbers, the dog has not done its duty. In later times and other places, there were those who claimed to be prophets, yet did not speak, kneeling instead to the kings and licking their feet while attacking those who dared to speak.

But the prophets of this age—especially Christians, including me—are guilty. We as prophets are guilty, because besides that plump prophet Wang Yi, not one of us dared to speak directly to the king like Nathan and Gad, saying, "That sinner is you, and you

are sinful.”⁶ This pestilence demonstrates that one of the greatest sins of this nation is lying and silence. Silence leads to silent dogs and lies lead to dogs pretending to howl like sheep or other animals. This generation has become a classic case of deceiving leaders and deceived people. There is not even one true man. You do not see many gentlemen speaking up, but rather what the Bible describes as “a woman encircles a man” (Jeremiah 31:22). The loudest voices have come from the women of Wuhan: “All is fake! I have to tell the truth!” Such a situation is tragic, sad, and desperate.

But there is good news. When Jesus came into this world, the situation was a lot like today. There was no prophet except John the Baptist, who taught the people to confess their sins and repent. The Lord Jesus spoke up and began to spread the gospel. The first message of his gospel was this: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). Both the judgment and blessings of the kingdom of heaven are near; but you are still sinners who cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven unless you repent. The core of Jesus’ message is this: “All your superficial language and hypocritical actions are fake! You are all fake, and therefore, all human beings are sinners who must repent.”

While Jesus proclaims judgment, he is not conducting moral trials. Christians, of whom I am one, should confess their sins to friends who have not yet believed in the Lord, and most of all to God, because Chinese Christians bear the name of the priesthood without fulfilling the duties of priests. By the standard of universal priesthood, we have all failed to fulfill our duties. Most of us have not lived as the priests of God, such as Moses

What we need the most now is to repent, rather than to “stay strong;” to confess our sins, rather than to boast of ourselves; to bear responsibility, rather than to shift blame; to speak up, rather than to keep silent.

and Aaron, who took their censers in the middle of the people infected by the pestilence, praying to God for forgiveness. We cannot believe in anyone else—even those you deem as good people—because all of us are sinners and are weak. We must look up to the true High Priest, Jesus Christ, who loved us and died for us while we did not even know him. What we need the most now is to repent, rather than to “stay strong;” to confess our sins, rather than to boast of ourselves; to bear responsibility, rather than to shift blame; to speak up, rather than to keep silent.

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Even though the pestilence has broken and spread out, we still give thanks to God, because he is full of mercy. It is grace to fall into his hand, because he has sent the lightest possible disaster, this pestilence, to warn us and give us time to repent for this nation’s and this people’s great sins. As the saying goes, “It is up to the doer to untie the knot.” We pray to him, that the God who sent the plague will also be the God who stops the plague. He is the only one who can make the pestilence pass from us, as we cannot overcome the pestilence. We pray for him to stay the hand of destruction.

God listens to those with broken and contrite hearts, those who pray like David. God himself said in the Bible, “If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemies besiege them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing his own affliction and his own sorrow and stretching out his hands toward this house, then hear from heaven your dwelling place and forgive and render

to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways” (2 Chronicles 6:28–30). His promises are such that in disaster, pestilence, or famine, if we pray to him, sincerely confessing and repenting of our sins, God will forgive and help us.

The Christian’s hope lies in this: we are not stronger or purer than others. Instead, rather than believing in ourselves, we believe in Jesus, who upholds us when we fall, who comforts us when we give up, who strengthens us when our strength is drained, who loves us when we are in pain, who does not give us up even when we are hopeless about ourselves.

As a result of this pestilence, my hope is for people to hear the gospel of God. If disaster makes you desperate, if human nature horrifies you and leads you to understand the meaning of “let me not fall into the hand of man,” I hope your despair will not lead you into a chasm of hopelessness. I hope that in such despair you will begin to lose hope in humanity and begin to have hope in God, in this Jesus who can save us. Rise up and pray to him.

I hope that in such despair you will begin to lose hope in humanity and begin to have hope in God, in this Jesus who can save us. Rise up and pray to him.

I hope those outside the church and those who do not yet know Christ will come to the church he established on earth. I hope those of you who are in false churches will be free from their bondage. I pray God’s true church will live out a true witness.

May the grace of God come down to us, to all people and all nations, so that kings will bow their heads and confess their sins in humility of heart and posture; so that prophets speak up with boldness spreading the gospel everywhere; so that priests will stand out and guard the people; so that the people will all confess their sins and look up to this true savior, Jesus Christ.