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## Reflection for March 23



By Tsuker Yang

The Lord be with you.

Blessed be the God of Israel and our Lord Jesus Christ.

I greet you today with a joyful heart amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that puts our nation in high alert and lockdown in many states. I am uplifting and grateful for what our government and health professionals are doing to minimize the risk of the disease, and for what our pastors and churches are doing observing the recommendations of our government and health agencies. Life may be harder now but we will adapt and overcome it eventually. Just as our immune system can adapt to our seasonal virus in our body, we will learn and adapt to the new reality and social distancing.

Yesterday I sat for two hours worshipping in the comfort of my kitchen table briefly here and there online with couple of our churches. I am amazed how quickly many of our churches have adapted to the new reality that forces us to

adjust, discipline, learn, even change and be creative in our life, especially in our worship and prayer. We've been crushed by the pandemic but it won't put us to minimize our faith and our worship. It is an awakening experience to me that drastic change is not only a solution but an immanence of our survival. I am so glad that most of our pastors and churches are quickened to overcome the challenge before us with great skills and creative mind in the use of technology. It seems to me now that the use of technology in worship is no longer an option or preference but a requirement and desirable.

Can you imagine the use of social media, texting, video conference and livestream (such as Facebook, Youtube, Zoom, etc.) for worship? Are you tuning in or tuning off when the Scripture is read from a mobile platform, or from a projection or online screen? What about sharing our joys or concerns during prayer time through texting, Facebook message or Messenger to the pastor's mobile platform (cellphone, tablet or computer)? These were done yesterday, and I agree that it should be encouraged as we are going through an uncharted time of our social distancing. Even our traditional way of giving in making our offering by check and cash will need to change to online giving or automatic withdraw from a bank account. As people of faith, how we are to live during such time as these depends on how we can quickly adapt to the new reality and how we put our trust in God.

I want to share with you two Scriptures which I hope we can glean from them to give us power, perspective and perseverance.

2 Timothy 1:7, *"For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."* By our faith and trust in God, we are not people of cowardice or people who live in fear but people of power, love and self-discipline. We will be stronger and become better in what we do in our ministry as we make our journey through and out of the wilderness of the pandemic. We must... this is the most important. Let's not allow the pandemic hinder our ministry or close our church door, worship service, prayer meeting, and Bible study. We will find any mean necessary to continue our worship, open our church door and do God's ministry, even if this mean virtual/online worship service, zoom meeting, social distancing and online giving. We will be empowered. We will love more and we will be disciplined that God may be glorified.

Acts 8:1-4. *"At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word."* The church in the New Testament time didn't stop their ministry when they faced with persecution and fear. They grew stronger and larger in the midst of uncertainty and suffering because God was with them and leading.

As we face the pandemic today we are not alone. God is with us... the One who we call Creator, Savior and Sustainer. God turned chaos into life and order. Christ reconciled and restored our God-given humanity of original righteousness. The Holy Spirit leads and empowers us in our everyday life. Our God is the same yesterday, and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). The pandemic will force us into fear of death and economic downfall and even chaos. But we will come out of it with power and hopeful future, as Paul said, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

*“Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10). “I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).* Let's not be discouraged but be empowered, in love and self-disciplined as we learn to adapt to change and new reality, including our virtual worship and social distancing activities, for the glory of God and God's ministry.

Tug Tswv nrug nraim koj nyob.

Thov Vaajtswv kws yog cov Ixayees tug Vaajtswv hab peb tug Tswv Yexus tau koob meej.

Kuv tuaj ntsib koj nubnua lug ntawm lub sab kaaj zoo sab quas hlo txawm tas COVID-19 yuav tsim kev kub ntshuv luj zuj zug rua peb haivneeg hab kaw zejzok kev moog lug. Kuv kuj txaus sab hab ua tsaug rua tej dlejnum kws peb cov nomtswv hab kws tshuaj tau teev lug txwv kuas txuj kev phomsij muaj tsawg, hab ua tsaug rua peb cov xwbfbw hab pawg ntseeg kws mej tau ua raws le tej nomtswv hab chaw khumob tej kev saamfwm tseg. Kev noj nyob yuav nyuab rua sijhawm nuav tabsis peb yeej yuav yoog tau hab kovyeed thaum xaus. Tuabyaam le peb lub cev tej roj ntshaav tub kovyeed tej kaabmob khaub thuas kws peb naj xyoo raug, peb yeej yuav kovyeed, kawm paub txug hab yoog tau txuj kev tshab hab kev tuabneeg ceefvaam tsis pub nyob sibze uake.

Naagmo kuv nyob ntawm kuv lub rooj noj mov hab koom nrug peb tej pawg ntseeg pehawm Vaajtswv nyob rua huv *online*. Kuv xaav tsi thoob tas ua caag peb cov ntseeg ntau pawg yuav yoog tau sai rua txuj kev tshab kws quabyuam peb lug txhimkhu, lug tswj peb tugkheej, lug kawm, hab lug hloov peb lub neej, tshwjkeeb yog peb kev tuaj pehawm Vaajtswv hab thov Vaajtswv. Tug kaabmob corona nuav tau raug thoob tebchaws tabsis peb yuav tsi ca nwg txu peb txuj kev ntseeg hab kev pehawm Vaajtswv. Tamsim qhov peb raug nuav ua rua kuv tsaag tas tej kev hloov sai sai le nuav tsi yog kev dlaws teebmeem xwb tabsis yog kev cawm peb kev caj hab tuag. Kuv zoo sab tas peb cov xwbfbw coob leej ntau tug hab ntau pawg ntseeg kuj muaj peevxwm hab kev txawj ntse lug npaaj kev pehawm Vaajtswv nyob rua *Youtube, Livestream, Facebook* hab lwm yaam. Ua rua kuv pum tau tas kev *sivtechnology* lug paab rua kev pehawm Vaajtswv tsi yog ib yaam yug xaiv los nyam, tabsis yog yaam yuavtsum muaj hab xaav tau.

Koj xaav tas kev *siv social media, texting, video conference* hab *livestream* (xws le *Facebook, Youtube, Zoom, etc.*) rua kev pehawm Vaajtswv puas zoo hab? Koj txaus sab lossis tsi txaus sab thaum nyeem Vaajtswv txuj lug nyob ntawm lub xuvtooj, ntawm dlaim rom *powerpoint*, hab nyob huv *internet*? Tsi taag le, lub sijhawm thov Vaajtswv es tuabneeg xaa *text, Facebook, messenger* moog rua xwbfbw lub xuvtooj ntawm teg, lub *tablet* lossis *computer* koj ho xaav le caag? Tej nuav tau muaj tshimsim naagmo, hab kuv xaav tas yuavtsum tau txhawb kuas muaj tej nuav sijhawm kws peb nyob rua thaajtsaam kws tsi tau muaj leejtwg moog dlua. Peb kev sau *check* hab tso nyaj nsuab fij txajntsig rua Vaajtswv yuav tau hloov moog ua tso nyob *online* lossis ua ntawv tso cai tshu tawm huv txhaab nyaj lug tso. Ua ib cov ntseeg, peb yuav nyob rua lub caijnyoog zoo le naj nub nua tau yuavtsum yog peb yoog tau sai rua txuj kev tshab kws peb raug nuav hab peb kev ruaj sab rua Vaajtswv.

Kuv xaav muab ob nqai Vaajlugkub lug rua peb kawm ua kev txhawb peb lub zug, kev totaub hab kev tivtaug kev txomnyem.

2 Timautes 1:7, *“Rua qhov Vaajtswv tsi tau muab tug ntsujplig kws muaj sab ntshai, tabsi tug ntsujplig kws muaj sab tawv, sab hlub hab sab tswj tau peb tugkheej.”* Lug ntawm peb kev ntseeg hab ca sab rua Vaajtswv, peb tsi yog cov tuabneeg kws muaj lub sab ntshai tabsi yog cov kws muaj lub sab tawv, lub sab hlub lwm tug hab tswj tau peb tugkheej lub sab lossis tej kws peb ua. Peb yuav muaj zug hab luj hlub rua kev ua Vaajtswv dlejnum sijhawm peb hlaa dlau lub taj suabpuam kws peb taabtom taug kev nuav. Qhov nuav tseemceeb heev. Thov tsi xob ca tug kaabmob nuav thaiv tau peb txuj kev ua Vaajtswv dlejnum, kaw qhov rooj rua peb lub tuamtsev lossis peb kev pehawm Vaajtswv, kev tuaj thov Vaajtswv hab kev tuaj kawm Vaajtswv txuj lug. Peb yuav nrhav txhua txuj hauv kev kuas peb muaj kev pehawm Vaajtswv hab ua tau Vaajtswv teg dlejnum, txawm tas yuav *siv technology* hab pehawm Vaajtswv nyob *online*, lossis fij txajntsig rua Vaajtswv nyob *online*. Vaajtswv yuav pub peb muaj fwjchim hab peevxwm ua tau. Peb yuav hlub tau lwm tug ntau tshaaj ntshuv hab tswj tau peb tugkheej rua Vaajtswv tau ntsejmuag.

Tegnum 8:1-4, *“Txij nub ntawd lug cov ntseeg kws nyob huv lub nroog Yeluxalees raug tsimtxom heev. Taagnrho cov ntseeg suavdlawg tsiv moog nyob txhua lub zog huv xeev Yudas hab xeev Xamalis, tsuas tshuav cov timthawj txhaj tsi tsiv xwb. Cov txivneej kws fwm Vaajtswv muaj qee leej tuaj muab Xatefanaus lub cev kwv moog log, puab quaj hab hlub Xatefanaus kawg le. Xaulus tsimtxom cov ntseeg heev; nwg moog huv cov ntseeg tej tsev ib lub rua ib lub, nwg nteg cov ntseeg, tsi has quaspuj lossis txivneej huv tuabsi koj moog kaw rua huv tsev lojcuji. Cov ntseeg kws tsiv moog nyob rua txhua qhov chaw, puab kuj moog qha Txujmoo Zoo rua qhov ntawd.”*

Cov ntseeg kws nyob rua tam sau Phau Vaajlugkub Tshab puab tsi tso Vaajtswv dlejnum tseg thaum puab ntsib kev tsimtxom lossis txhawj ntshai. Puab yijfuab kubsab hab lujhlab txawm yog tas puab raug kev txomnyem vim Vaajtswv nrug nraim puab nyob hab koj puab.

Sijhawm naj nub nua kws peb raug tug kaabmob COVID-19 nuav peb tsi yog nyob pebkheej nkaus xwb. Vaajtswv nrug peb nyob, tug kws peb hu has tas tug Tsim Ntuj Tsim Teb, tug Cawmseej, hab tug Komkwm. Xws le peb paub, Vaajtswv tig *chaos* lug moog muaj sa hab txuj kaab ke nyob. Yexus koj peb tuabneeg rov lug sibhum xeeb nrug Vaajtswv hab ua tau tuabneeg ncaajnceeg dlwbhuv le qub thaum hauvpaug chivkeeb lug. Vaaj Ntsujplig tug Dlawbhuv koj hab txhawb peb lub neej txujsa txhua nub txhua lub sijhawm. Tug kaabmob nuav yuav yuam peb kuas peb ntshai tuag, ntshai poob dlejnum, hab tsis paub ua lub neej nyob le caag. Tabsis peb yuav kovyeed hab muaj kev ca sab ntsoov rua lub neej tomntej, xws le kws Xwbfbw Povlauj tau has lawm tas, *“Peb paub has tas, peb cov kws hlub Vaajtswv, txawm yog peb tau zoo los txomnyem Vaajtswv yuav ua kuas tej ntawd muaj nuj nqes rua peb cov kws Vaajtswv pum zoo hu lug lawv le Vaajtswv npaaj tseg lawm”* (Loos 8:28).

*“Mej tsi xob ntshai, rua qhov kuv nrug nraim mej. Kuv yog mej tug Vaajtswv, mej tsi xob poob sab. Kuv yuav paab mej hab txhawb kuas mej muaj zug, kuv saab teg xis yuav puag rawv mej”* (Yaxaya 41:10). *“Koj yuavtsum ncu ntsoov tej kws kuv has rua koj lawm, koj ua sab tawv qhawv tsi xob ntshai, tsi xob txhawj hab tsi xob poob sab, rua qhov kuv yog tug Tswv kws yog koj tug Vaajtswv, kuv yuav nrug nraim koj xhua qhov kws koj moog”* (Yausuas 1:9). Ca peb tsi xob ntshai lossis qaug zug tabsi peb yuavtsum muaj sab kub lug rua Vaajtswv dlejnum, sishlub sispaa heev tshaaj qub hab tswjfwv peb tugkheej ua lub neej rua Vaajtswv tau ntsej muag, sijhawm kws peb taabtom txhimkhu, hloov hab nyob rua txuj kev tshab hab kev pehawm Vaajtswv txawv dlua le yaav taag lug.

