

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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Sometimes I just don't like being told what to do. And sometimes I just follow the crowd, not knowing where we are going, but hoping we're going somewhere! Human behavior is quite predictable. History tells us that. You don't have to study anthropology, sociology, or theology. You just need to be human and pay attention to life-changing realities. It's nothing new. Humans have been, and continue to be, exposed to experts that speak authoritatively, and often mandate conformity. And we trust that we are hearing the truth because it could be for our own good, so we hear.

Recently I visited the cattle yard...I mean *Walmart*...to get some prescriptions refilled. I don't mean to offend, but it all seemed a little too managed. To get to the entrance I had to walk around some strategically placed shopping carts, and then I was channeled into a waiting line by some temporary barriers of fencing...the kind used for crowd control at parades, protests, and such. Then we had to toe the lines on the concrete, six feet of separation, to get to the gatekeeper, I mean *employee*, who passively waved us in a few at a time, depending upon the flow of folks coming out of the store. Once inside, I had to navigate one-way aisles, and a rearranged store layout, to keep all of us cattle, I mean *people*, moving in a controlled direction. Like I said, it was a little too managed for me. But I still resisted suggestions to wear a mask...which may prove me be a freedom-loving fool. But the jury's still out on that.

Some of what I hear lately is becoming quite bothersome and annoying. It's almost like the slow drip, drip, drip of raindrops falling on a metal rooftop that is provoking my spirit. Some folks I talk to remind me of what stones in the middle of a rapid moving stream might say if they could...*this river is really wearing us down*. Without getting into too much of a personal rant, I want to speak out while I still can about the effects of our social and cultural environmental contaminants that seem to affect human behavior. Sometimes for good...sometimes not so much. It takes wisdom to know the difference. And often history has to define what humanity was going through at a particular time to make sense of it all. It also depends upon who writes the history that shapes the truth, rather than truth doing the shaping. It's good to know that we have a source of information from Someone who writes history from a perspective of fulfilling the future. He plans the end from the beginning and the beginning from the ending. Most of us only think deeply about the moment we're living in after we have passed through the season we're living in. We may not ask *what does this mean* until we are asking *what did this mean*. We are in one of those seasons now. And I am confident that many human experts among us don't know where we are going. You can tell by the way what they're saying keeps changing. But I am also confident that we have access to vital information about the way all things will be resolved. And our Source is our Savior. The Word of God shows us the way to live now, in the future, and forever. His Word doesn't change. Because He is the Word of God. We don't have to wander about or wonder about our destiny.

Two messages I keep hearing remind me that an older and wiser sage once said *The best of men are men at best*. I think he was talking about the experts among us. These two messages are being processed in my processor...*Non-essential personnel stay home*...and *Maintain social distancing*. Both of these expressions seem to trigger something deep within me that pushes back against these two cultural commandments. Who determines the essential nature of a person? I'm not talking about whether we go to work or not. I am focusing on what gives a person value...and what is the basis of making that choice? The determination of whether you and I are essential, important, or valuable, has been predetermined in the mind of God before time's clock began to tick. There are many in the world today that have lost all they hoped to gain according to the way the world judges value. But as long as we have life within us we are given the opportunity to surrender this life to the Most High God and follow Him into eternity. Most around us are traveling the opposite direction. Use the time God has given you to choose wisely. We matter to God. The Cross of Christ says so. It is essential that you submit to the Lord today while it is still day. Secondly, I am elated that a point in time, the Most High God deemed it necessary to violate His own principle of social distancing. His holy nature was separated from sinful humanity. Then the One who sits high came low. God became a man so man could inherit God's nature and join God in His Kingdom. Today, do not maintain your social distance from the Lord. He calls us to come near...all who are weary and heavy laden...and find rest for our souls. Listen...I think I'm being called. How about you?

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam