



HANDS



FACE



SPACE

## HAVING CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT

My habit is to read God's Word first thing in the morning and last thing at night. As I write this on Thursday morning my verse of the day from BibleGateway is taken from a passage called "Submission to the authorities" in Romans 13, "*Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves... <sup>4</sup> For the one in authority is God's servant for your good...<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.<sup>6</sup> This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing*". Having read this I flicked on to the BBC news & read "*Covid-19: New four-week lockdown comes into force in England*". This is our 2<sup>nd</sup> national lockdown. We still have everchanging national, regional & local guidelines, contradictory advice depending on which "scientific experts" we listen to, all of which leads to strongly divergent opinions of what we should or should not do, and a plethora of sources of angst. *And my reading says that we all should submit to our governing authorities because they only come from God, and not to do so is to rebel against God & to invite judgment on oneself.* Strong words!! Latest figures from here show 25,177 new COVID cases per day with 492 deaths per day. As Christians we have a clear mandate to follow government guidelines, to take this lockdown seriously & to be seen to be good citizens.

When I was a child my mum and I would sit up all night and watch the American elections. I'm not sure why but we always had that interest. My youngest sister is a US citizen, and others here have relatives who

citizen, and others here have relatives who are also in USA. This morning they have no result yet in the most unbelievable US Presidential election that I have ever seen, with it climaxing in scenes of riots, Whitehouse parties, police and army on the streets, opposition supporters trying to storm counting centres – all quite surreal. An election like none before, & in Trump they have had a US President like none before. As this tension drags on it almost went unnoticed yesterday that USA had 100,000 new COVID cases on Wednesday, with more than 1100 deaths from it in a single day. *And my reading still says that we all should submit to our governing authorities because they only come from God, & not to do so is to rebel against God.*

Before going into business I studied psychology, along with a number of counselling courses & worked for a year in The Samaritans. During this COVID crisis counsellors have documented that something of our ongoing response to it will be based on our personality type & our perspective on life. Some of us will be struggling significantly more with the forced physical separation that lockdown has brought. Those with underlying greater or lesser mental health issues will also be struggling with being in the same confined space. Focus on remaining positive!

In the middle of this there are well-publicized ways to help ourselves. Make a point of taking some daily exercise, even if it is only 5-10 minutes in the open air. Take up a new hobby or activity. There is evidence suggesting that Shakespeare wrote his bleakest play, "King Lear" in isolation caused by the plague in 1605-06. We looked last year at Richard Wurmbrand who in 8 years in prison had 3+ years underground in solitary confinement & wrote 350 sermons,

later publishing some of them in 1969, "Sermons in Solitary Confinement". A man told me this week that in the first lockdown he taught himself about gardening, this time he's going to do a basic car mechanics course.

It IS important to remember that we are not the first people ever to be in lockdown. It might not feel like it, but we are blessed, so do not fret. We have amazing modern technology that allows us to Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Facetime, etc. We can connect virtually with each other when we want (& please remember as I have said frequently in this newsletter before, if you need any help, please ask. If you don't, we won't know. I am in my church office almost every morning, so ring, email, text, call in & we can chat safely outside in the car park).

During our Mission Zoom Mim spoke live from Uganda, 6500 miles away & told us of the huge challenges they face out there as pastors try to help people who don't have mobile phones or technology available, who can't read or write, who are in lockdown but have no guidance what that involves & how they are confronting widespread child abuse. If you are not comfortable with technology, why not make a point of writing a letter to Mim, to encourage her & Faith & the team out there. Next month Howard & Janet zoom into our Mission Prayer. We've already been praying for one of their families in Morocco where 14 are locked down in a small apartment & one girl has a medical emergency with bleeding. Again, why not decide to positively engage & write a note or letter to Howard & Janet to encourage them in their work.

None of this has taken God by surprise. He remains faithful, compassionate & loving. He has plans for us all. During this lockdown focus on our own personal relationship with Him. Try Lectio 365 from Pete Grieb's 24/7 work & begin each day focusing not on what we don't have, but on what we do – an ongoing relationship with Jesus which is the only thing that matters eternally.



## Travelling in COVID Days, and Managed Isolation

Phil & Brenda were delighted to have a visit recently from their New Zealand (NZ) based son Andrew. Andrew with his wife Margaret are missionaries based in New Zealand (NZ) for almost 30 years. As a Director of Missionary Ventures, called MotiVate his work covers not just New Zealand but the Pacific Islands of Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, etc., plus the Philippians, & S.E. Asia countries such as Vietnam & Cambodia.

Andrew rang me from his “managed isolation” in Auckland 2 days ago. During our conversation he commented that compared to NZ where he lives, the UK seemed quite lax in preventing the spread of COVID. This puzzled me as I hear many complain about losing their freedom here, so Andrew agreed to send me the following report (which I’ve edited due to lack of space) of his journey from UK via Singapore to NZ.

*When I arrived at Heathrow on Sunday I was actually quite surprised at the contrast between the series of health checks at Singapore airport on my way out with the more relaxed checks at Heathrow - even though COVID is much more serious in the UK. On arrival at Singapore Changi terminal 3, everyone on my flight was directed to a holding area which was separated off from other passengers. We waited there for around an hour & then had to line up to be escorted single file by a member of airport staff to the transit hotel, where we were all screened again & then checked in one by one to our rooms. Once in the room we were not allowed out & pre-ordered meals were delivered to our rooms. At checkout time, we had to wait for a call from reception to be met by a member of airport staff & escorted back to the gate ready for departure for NZ. At no time during our time at the airport were we allowed to separate from the other transit passengers to enter any other areas or do any shopping.*

*On arrival in Auckland we were met at the entrance to the Immigration Hall by medical staff for COVID screening, before going to the immigration desks for clearance. Once we collected our bags & cleared the customs hall, we were directed by police to another desk where we were allocated our hotel, which had to be pre-booked prior to leaving NZ using a government allocated data system. If we didn’t have a Managed Isolation voucher we wouldn’t have been allowed to board our flights to NZ. We sat 2 metres away from other passengers on the bus specially provided for transport to the hotel. On arrival at the hotel we were directed to leave the bus one at a time to go the hotel foyer. The hotel is one of several hotels around the city and other parts of NZ taken over by the government solely for Managed Isolation. It is guarded 24/7 by police, NZ defence personnel & security guards, and has a dedicated team of district health board & nursing staff as well as the usual hotel staff. The check-in procedure involved moving from one desk to another under NZ Defence supervision, first to receive our room allocation, then to present our meal selections for the next two days, then for health screening, & finally to identify our bags which had to be carried to our rooms by Security personnel. All of this was to ensure that we didn’t touch any hotel surfaces or make contact with other personnel or hotel guests.*

*Now in my room, I am allowed to leave only to go to a small courtyard area for some fresh air. If I do, I have to let the NZ defence personnel know where I am. I am never allowed to leave the hotel except for organized walks. These one-hour walks can only be taken at a specially fenced off area at a local college. The government provides a bus to take us there and is available at 3 different times each day. However the walk must be pre-booked as numbers are limited & I am only allowed to book one walk every 2 days. No hotel staff are allowed into my room during my 2-week isolation stay, so extra linen & towels are provided as well as washing up supplies & bags for laundry items. Hotel staff make daily trips to local supermarkets & chemists to pick up pre-ordered items on our behalf, and we can also order in takeaway food if needed. Meals are delivered 3 times a day to the room, and are left outside my door for me to pick up. Family members can come to the hotel to see us but they must stay behind fences 2 metres away and are constantly monitored by NZ defence personnel.*

*I will have a COVID test on day 3 and also on day 12 of my 14-day isolation. If it were shown that I had somehow come in close contact with a COVID positive guest, there is a strong possibility that my stay will be extended by a further 14 days. We get regular calls from nursing staff about any medical or mental health concerns and given the nature of the facility it’s my opinion that Managed Isolation is a well-organised system that is helping to prevent the entry of COVID-19 into NZ.*

When I read Andrew’s report, I thought the measures were a bit draconian. However yesterday NZ had 0 deaths compared to UK’s 378, & only 25 total compared with UK’s 48,000+. NZ has had 1618 total cases, UK 1,123,197. It is working! Please pray for Andrew and his wife Margaret and their missionary work with MotiVate, and also for Phil & Brenda with daughter Gail back here in Fairhaven.