



AUG 16th, 2020

I want you to imagine a terrible scenario (and sorry for the horrible thought of this). Imagine that all of those, who came down with the Coronavirus in our church and had to be relegated to quarantine, were living in 64AD and were taken captive by the Romans.

Imagine how we would feel not knowing the outcome of the lives of those we deeply care about and love. Today, we have been concerned and in intense prayer for those taken captive by this strange and unpredictable virus. We haven't been able to see them or hug them or help them very much. So, we pray. This is a small idea of what it would have been like in Rome when Christians were being arrested.

These have been unprecedented times. We have to live isolated and unable to gather as a church body like we would normally. There are many variables and many voices and many ideas on what the truth is. It's hard to know what is accurate information. We are suspicious of what is real and an accurate reporting of the facts. At the same time, within our fellowship of Christians, we have varied political and moral beliefs. All of this is hard to navigate these days.

Now, back to Rome. The situation was like what we are facing today, but on steroids! There were many rumors of what the truth was. Nero, was a volatile leader and the government was in constant turmoil. Rome had just had a massive

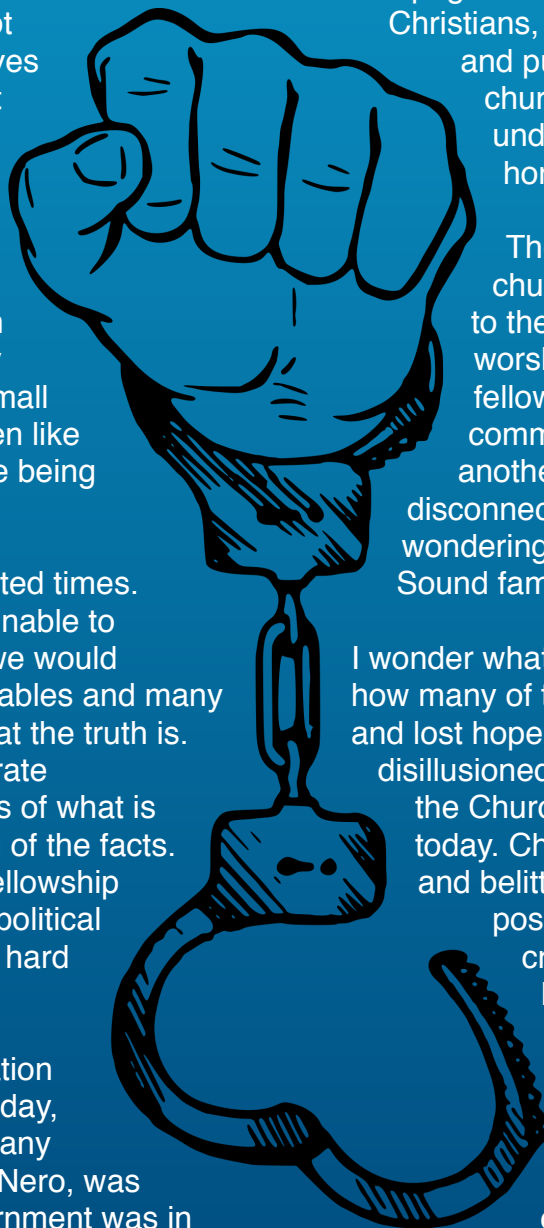
fire whereby half of the city burned to the ground. Rumors spread that Nero himself had ordered that the city be set ablaze. Nero put forward that Christians were to blame in order to remove suspicion from himself. Nero used them as scapegoats. Followers of Christ, nicknamed

Christians, young and old were tortured and put to death. As a result, the church in Rome had to go underground to save itself from horrid persecution.

There were no public assembly of churches. Christians were isolated to their family units. No corporate worship. No meals together. No fellowship. It was challenging just to communicate and to care for one another. I imagine believers felt disconnected and frustrated and alone wondering, "when would this all end?". Sound familiar?

I wonder what they did to survive? I wonder how many of them became so discouraged and lost hope so that they became disillusioned with any idea of Christianity or the Church. I have those fears for us today. Christians get labeled and mocked and belittled. Seldom are we cast in a positive light in society. Some criticism is deserved, some is not. Even within the Church, we are not always on the same page in our theology and personal beliefs about scriptural truths.

The question that keeps coming to my mind is, "How can we hold the line, stand firm for



truth, continually be attacked, and be loving and compassionate at the same time?”. What is my responsibility to be in order to stand with Christ, follow scripture, and love those who think and respond very differently than what I hold to be true?

We have been studying through the Gospel of Mark since COVID invaded. Mark handed down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. According to tradition, Emperor Nero had Peter crucified upside down in Rome, AD 64. Peter knew Jesus intimately, followed him for three years, and then watched him die. But, Peter and the others also found out that Jesus really is divine because they saw him again after his resurrected from the dead. Peter states, *“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”*

The resurrection of Jesus ignited a movement that is still going on today! The church really was set on fire! A fire of passionate belief that nothing in history has been able to snuff out. So, Christians did survive the Roman fire and persecution. Peter was put to death, but his words live on.

Here are a few thoughts, from the first book of Peter, of how he encouraged that early church through it's trying times:

“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.”

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God...”

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

I pray you remain steadfast and assured of the hope we have in Christ,
Pastor Wes Davis



GRACE YOUTH



IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY DONE SO, PLEASE BE SURE TO DOWNLOAD THE **CHURCH CENTER** APP TO STAY INFORMED ON ALL STUDENT EVENTS. WE USE IT FOR:

1. OUR YEARLY MEDICAL RELEASE FORM
2. THE CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR MS/HS GROUPS
3. REGISTRATIONS FOR TRIPS

WE WORK OUR HARDEST TO KEEP THE INFO UPDATED. IT IS ON BOTH GOOGLE PLAY AS WELL AS THE APPLE APP STORE

BACK TO SCHOOL

Students are heading back to school which **means YOUTH GROUP is starting up again!** Riverton resumes classes on August 19th, that will be the first evening for Youth Group as well.

Due to our recent spat with COVID our August meetings (19th/26th) will be on ZOOM. I will send the link out via flock note that *afternoon*. MS/HS will start at 7:00 still and will run till 8:00. HS is welcome to hang out after for more discussion/hang out time.



PRAYER FOR
OUR SCHOOL

Sunday Aug. 16

**Galena 4pm-4:30pm
Riverton 4:30pm-5pm
Baxter Springs 5pm-5:30pm**

You are invited to join others in our community to gather in the school parking lots, during the times listed, to pray for staff and students.

It is a "come-and-go" time at each school (example: you can go to Galena at 4pm, 4:25pm or any time in that time slot).

You can also stay as long as you would like to pray.

We would also encourage you to stay in your cars or social distance



SERVANTS NEEDED

We are on for working the SEKMA Thrift Store. If you are available to help Aug 19th, 21st and 22nd please call the church office from 9-12:00 and Alene will add you to the list.



In our new series, "Flash Forward," we are partnering with you to teach your child that they can have hope. But what is hope? And how is it different from faith?

Biblical hope is built on faith. Hope is the certainty that God will do good things. Romans 8:24 says, "But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?" We hope for things we have not seen, and because of faith we can have joy and be certain that God has good things coming. In John 14:3, Jesus tells us that He is preparing a place for us and will come back and take us with Him. That is cause for great hope!

In Flash Forward we are going to teach your child the acronym P.R.O. so that whenever they're not sure if God will do good things, they will know to do these three things:

- Pray- We can talk to God any time about anything.
- Remember- We can flash back to how good God has been in the past -- in our lives and in the lives of people we read about in the Bible -- and we can flash forward to all the good promises He has made for the future, especially the promise of heaven.
- Obey- We can do what God says even when it doesn't make sense and even when we don't want to.

If you're not on the Private GraceKids FaceBook Page to see the lessons, contact MJ at mj@gracecommunitychurch.net



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