

“Missionaries & Corona”

To the Indian Missionaries from R. Stanley, 16 April 2020

Dear Missionary Friends,

Greetings with love in the Name of the Lord who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servants! Let Him be magnified! (Psa 35:27).

I'm sure you are receiving periodic letters from the leaders of your respective Missions, with a word from the Lord, to uplift your sagging spirits in these depressing days. This letter is common to the nearly 60,000 workers of the Indian Missions stationed all over the country to bless people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Having had the privilege of leading the Blessing Youth Mission (BYM), as its Founder, for 33 years (1971-2003), which include 7 years of stay in the mission fields of various States, I would like to highlight a few of your concerns in this letter, identifying myself with you. I've met with many of you as the Guest Speaker in several of your National Staff Retreats.

(1) There's no one in the entire world who is not worried about his health at this hour. Your worries are manifold as you are in areas where immediate and nearby medical help is not available. Our prayers are with you no doubt, but I would like to encourage you with God's promises of healing and protection (Psa 91:5,6; Ex 15:26b; Psa 103:3; Isa 53:4; Lk 4:38,39; Js 5:14-16; Psa 41:1,3). Please read these verses as often as possible, to yourself and to your family members. Your faith will be built up for these challenging times (Rom 10:17). You are in God's hands, and nothing will happen to you without His knowledge and permission (Jn 10:28,29).

(2) You will have many questions about your financial needs. It is obvious that the income through offerings has drastically fallen for almost all the Missions and Evangelistic Agencies. Even with the regular inflow of funds, the situation in many of our organisations has been hand-to-mouth only. Your uncertainty about your April salary is understandable. The extension of the National Lockdown till 3rd May has made the prospects bleak. Not all Missions have a substantial reserve for a rainy day. I would like to remind you that it's God who called you, and the organisation is only the means through which you serve Him. He is the Source. It's the Shepherd's responsibility to feed the sheep. It's the Captain's responsibility to provide for the soldiers. It's the Father's responsibility to take care of the children. The Lord's Prayer is strictly a Missionary Prayer. The request for "daily bread" is the central one of the seven (Mt 6:9-13). Here again, let's remind ourselves of God's promises for the needs of our body (Mt 6:25-34; 1 Tim 5:18; Psa 33:18,19; 37:18,19,25; Isa 33:16). The dear Mission supporters have understood the gravity of the situation and

they are doing their best to help the organisations in this crisis. I am happy that my letter *“To Mission Supporters...”*, dated 7 April 2020 (Online Letter 124, www.StanleyOnBible.com) has stirred up many to increase their giving. The God who fed His people for 40 years in the barren desert is still the same!

(3) Those of you having children in schools or colleges go through emotional stress. Some of your kids have not been able to come home for vacation from boarding schools due to travel restrictions. How much you would have been waiting for their days with you in the field stations! Your pain is understandable. God will reward you for all these enormous sacrifices you are making for His Kingdom’s sake. Some of you were counting on their summer vacation for their preparation for NEET and other competitive exams. Suddenly everything has become uncertain. May be you are not able to be with your daughters during their confinement. The concerns of Missionary children are thus numerous. I can only think of how God blessed Isaac because of his Missionary Dad, Abraham (Gen 12:1; 25:11; 26:12,13). God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love which you have shown toward His Name (Heb 6:10).

(4) Your next concern is about the new believers and congregations in the field. You are not able to visit them or gather them for worship and teaching. Most of them are illiterate or they have no Bibles in their languages for personal meditation. They have been solely depending on your weekly feeding. I know the labour pain you have undergone to birth one soul into the Kingdom. This is the burden Missionary Paul shares in 2 Corinthians 11:28,29 “Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the Churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?” It’s usually when the Missionary-Shepherds are not with the sheep, the ravenous wolves play havoc. The enemy becomes active in sowing tares in our fields. In such helpless situations, you have to simply “commend them to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build them up” (Acts 20:29,32). Remember, Jesus has prayed for those whom we lead to Him (Jn 17:20).

(5) Thoughts about your old parents keep biting your heart. It’s so disturbing that the elders are very susceptible to Corona. You even wonder whether you would be able to travel home if something happens during these days of restrictions. May be some of you have already gone through such a situation. Sorry, I don’t have enough words to comfort you except to remind you of the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:37-29. Many of our forefathers became Christians because of the sacrificial labour of European and Western Missionaries who never once returned home! Let us thank God that we atleast have mobilephones to keep in touch with our folks. Distance is no matter for our God (Jer 23:23).

(6) Let’s use these days for our spiritual renewal. In our busy schedule, we would not have found time to spend unhurriedly in God’s presence with His

Word. Missionary Paul concentrated on reading and writing while imprisoned (2 Tim 4:13; Phil 1:1,7,12-14). Dust would have accumulated on our feet which need washing (Jn 13:8-10). A period of self-examination will be rewarding (Psa 139:23,24). None of us has outgrown the need for this exercise (Prov 20:9; 1 Jn 1:8). Relationship problems abound among Missionaries. Holding bitterness or grudge is to our own disadvantage (Gal 5:14,15). This is the golden opportunity to bury our unpleasant past as God has done with our own sins (Mic 7:19). Stop backbiting and scandalising (Num 12; Gen 9:20-25; 2 Sam 1:17-20). We cannot afford to be divided in a country like India where our enemies are not divided (Mt 12:26). Just to oppose and persecute us, even archenemies and lifelong rivals like Pilate and Herod become friends (Lk 23:12). Make calls to the Missionaries of your own organisation and those known to you in other Missions, and make loving enquiries. We need each other. Use the "*Fruits of the Spirit Prayer*," attached to my Online Letter 123, April 6. Flush away whatever bitterness you have against the administration. Leave the matter with God if any injustice has been done to you (1 Pet 2:23). Pray for your leaders. They have their own struggles and shortcomings. Let the peace of God "rule" our hearts (Col 3:15).

(7) Finally, a word to the Retired Missionaries. Days are more difficult for you than for the youngsters active in service. You are already struggling with the drastic cut in your monthly income. Old-age problems add to the misery. Susceptibility of senior citizens to the Coronavirus is threatening. As one among you, at 74, I suggest that we make Psalm 71:17,18 as our daily prayer: "O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wonderful works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, oh God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come!"

History tells us of so many Revivals which broke out following national and global disasters. After promising restoration from the damage caused by locusts, God assures us of an outpouring of His Spirit resulting in a huge ingathering of souls (Joel 2:25,28,29,32a). The healing of the Nation begins with the humbling of ourselves (2 Chr 7:14). Read my article, "*If My people humble themselves...*" (Online Letter 125, April 16). The future prospects are as bright as the promises of God. Stay safe! Stay blessed!

Your friend,
R. Stanley

(I request you to forward this letter to the Missionaries of your own organisation and also to those of others. If you are just a Mission Supporter, forward this letter to Missionaries known to you. Thank you.)