

Where Hope Lies

It has been somewhat surreal watching the Corona Virus story unfold across the United States over the last several weeks. We have seen the cancellation of major sporting events, travel bans from Europe, national emergency declarations, the temporary closing of businesses, shelter-in-place orders, as well as dire warnings from different health officials. We are told that the virus will have a 1-2% mortality rate for those infected. The flu, by way of comparison has a .01% mortality. The most at risk are the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions. Some have estimated that 1 million Americans could die from this. All of the numbers thrown at us and the non-stop media coverage can be a bit daunting and perhaps capable of sparking grocery runs and other panic-driven behavior. Apparently, some people are worried about running out of toilet paper as Walmart is having a hard time keeping it on the shelf!

A few numbers by way of comparison. In the United States over 600,000 people die of heart disease every year. Another 600,000 from cancer. Chronic and respiratory disease account for another 160,000 while various accidents add another 170,000. 32,000 die from car accidents in the US per year or 90 per day. At this time the Corona Virus death toll in the US sits just north of 1000 and is still rising.

The Heidelberg Catechism was written back in the day when plagues still regularly afflicted Europe and its message is just as appropriate today as it was then. 16th century Christians knew what it was like to live in a world where infectious diseases travel about. The catechism asks the question: ‘What is thy only comfort in life and death?’

Answer: ‘That I with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins.’

The author of the Catechism understood both the brevity and fragility of life. He knew the Scriptures teach that under the best of circumstances we still are ‘just a vapor that appears for a little while and then is gone.’ [James 4:14]

Our great comfort in this world is not in being able to somehow navigate thru life avoiding all the many statistical causes of death. That is a fool’s errand as the mortality rate for human life is still 100%. The far greater hope is found in knowing Jesus Christ as Savior and knowing that whether we live or die we belong to Him and will spend eternity with God in heaven. That is a hope that will keep us anchored in the face of both real and over-hyped dangers.