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VE Day - A reminder of the loss of freedoms our parents and grandparents endured

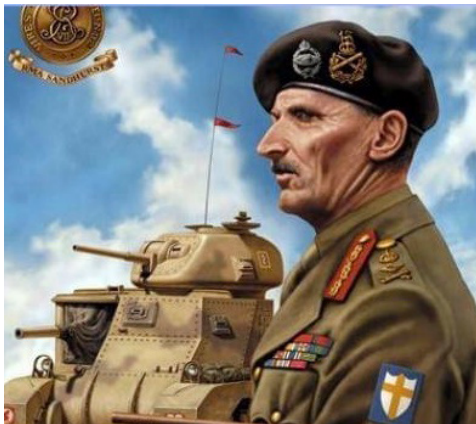
We mark the 75th anniversary of the ending of the World War II in Europe today. I have but the faintest memories of the atmosphere of that and subsequent times manifested in the lives of my father and mother back then.

I emphasise that they are were but faint, mere impressions of a child, since I was only approaching my third birthday!

Today, the nations is remembering that great day, 75 years ago and rightly paying tribute to those who lived and died to make victory possible.

However, the Christian will notice I am sure a very sad omission. There is little mention made of the Lord Who wrought the deliverance for us a people!

I would like to share with you some very wise and proper words, spoken on this day 75 years ago.



"We must remember to give the praise and the thankfulness where it is due: This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes." - Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery

I noticed one newspaper article linking that day with the hoped for day of the lifting of the present 'lockdown' restrictions. Of course, as the tide of war turned against Germany, the threat of air raids became less. In the last days of the war, there was the terrible bombardment of the V1 and V2 rocket on London but the last rocket fell on 27th March 1945. The last raid by German aircraft had taken place on 29th January 1944.

In light of this, it can be well imagined that the confinements under which the population had endured had been somewhat eased, whether officially or otherwise. But most of the restrictions were ended with the surrender of Germany, with the exception of food and petrol rationing.

As a child, I moved with my parents and sisters to London where my father had been recruited, being a carpenter, as part of the work force employed in the mammoth task of rebuilding the homes and commercial premises destroyed in the years of war. I can recall starting school in Millsfield School, just opposite our home in Elmcroft Street, in East London. I visited the old school some years ago which is still functioning as a school and even talked with a teacher and some pupils playing in the school yard which hasn't changed from when I played there. I had entered the school yard through the very door I had used all those years ago.

As a foot note, our family returned to Keenaghy, Lisnaskea in 1950. I was accompanied by a strong 'cockney' accent, which I subsequently lost!

Looking back on those days and the restrictions imposed upon the nation by its leaders, I was caused to think that all 'crises' are accompanied by a loss of personal freedom.

That thought brought me instantly to the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew's gospel 24:15-21. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."



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Here are restrictions arising as a result of the dreadful emergency that the manifestation of the Antichrist in Jerusalem will bring upon the Jews in the city and further afield.

Doubtless, when that occasion arises there will be those who, through unbelief, will not act upon these words of the Saviour. They will reject the alarm He sounds in Matthew 24 as false and unfounded, maybe even a mere myth! The financial consequences and the inconveniences such action will entail, will be put forth as a reason for rejecting Christ's words. After all, it will be said, He is requiring us to flee without even as much as spare clothing or any household goods.

Such restrictions, it will be argued, are an infringement upon civil rights and freedoms and are an affront to 'democracy'!

I can easily imagine the arguments of that future day for I have heard and read the most of them in recent days!

However, generations in the past have been faced by such divinely-imposed restrictions in times of crisis.

Surely, we can imagine the response to many, many people to the preaching of Noah as he preached God's warning of the flood that was coming on the earth. The population rejected the warning and were "disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water," 1 Peter 3:20.

There is nothing new in rejecting the deprivations that wise action in the face of danger and threat impose!

We might say that we see the same spirit manifested today among a foolish minority, and that for reasons they consider most persuasive and wise, as was manifested in the days of Jeremiah and the dreadful crisis that surrounded the citizens of Jerusalem and Judah in the face of the Babylonian invasion.

The warning of Jeremiah, given him by God to deliver to the people, was plain.

"Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee," Jeremiah 1:14-19.

There was not an acceptance of the warning given by Jeremiah. His warning required action that the populace considered most unwarranted.

"Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities. Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant. For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us," 4:5-8.

Such assembling in the defenced cities was to be accompanied by repentance and a seeking of the Lord. "For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us. . . . O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain



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thoughts lodge within thee?" 4:8, 14.

The fleeing to 'the defenced cities' would entail commercial loss for it meant that they could not continue their legitimate business pursuits. That was the price of safety as set down by the Lord. It was far too high for some!

The ignoring of God's warnings and the measures He instituted resulted in even greater judgments befalling the nation. The land was laid waste.

When ultimate defeat at the hands of Babylon came about, Judah was again exhorted by the Lord's servant to accept the restrictions imposed upon them, and that justly by the Lord for their continued disobedience. They again refused.

"I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you. Also I spake to the priests and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the LORD'S house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste? But if they be prophets, and if the word of the LORD be with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon. For thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem; Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem; They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place," Jeremiah 27:12-22.

This prospect set forth by Jeremiah was rejected by the people who were influenced by false prophets. They were looking for a wonderful recovery out of their woes.

"And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon," Jeremiah 28:1-4.

Basically, we have a parallel today in the cry of those who say that a lifting of the 'restrictions' under which we are required to live, will bring about a great recovery. It will not be so, any more than it was in the days of Jeremiah.

The demands of God in Jeremiah's day were naturally sensible and right and for the ultimate good of the people. They did mean commercial loss and social inconvenience but they would have led on to a real recovery had the people but obeyed them

Today, it is argued by some that there is no 'pandemic' and that the measures instituted by the government



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are wrong, unlawful and unnecessary!

'There is no pandemic' proclaimed Piers Corbyn, brother of former Labour Party leader, Jeremy back at the end of April. Now, who could reject the voice of such a pillar of wisdom, coming as it does from such a perceptive ancestry!

However, the rejecters of God's measures in Jeremiah's day paid a high price!

Jeremiah responded, at God's direction, to the profane and proud boasts of the false prophet Hananiah "in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD."

"For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also. Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month," Jeremiah 28:14-17.

The consequences of rebellion and disobedience of God for Jerusalem are graphically catalogued for us in the little book, the Lamentations of Jeremiah. I can but urge you to read it and see there the consequences of refusing God's wise and merciful counsel.

The motives of the British Government, and indeed the other governments engaged in combatting Covid-19, may be criticised and questioned, as can be the wisdom of some of the restrictions and how they are applied. We have seen how there has been a changing of some of the guidelines by government ministers as inconsistencies and unreasonableness became evident with regards some elements of the application of the lockdown requirements. Such are not the actions of tyrants but of those trying to do what is best for the people. I believe it can be likened unto the placing of a fireguard in the front of an open fire by a parent concerned for the safety of a child.

We ought to remember the words of Paul to the church right at the heart of secular power in his day.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour," Romans 13:13:1-7.

It is one thing to resist a government, as did our Covenanting forefathers, when they were ordered to disobey God's Law and comply with man's! However, when a benign law, designed for our good, is instituted, I do not believe that the Lord will approve of the defiance of such!

I make no attempt at all to defend the motives of government when the present restrictions were invoked, largely because I don't really know the mind of our government leaders with regards these matters. There may well be all sorts of financial and political chicanery at work within the minds of many politicians, even as there are amongst many commercial interests in the nation. The raising of the price of items of medical equipment, now in high demand, is but one example of the greed of men at work.

However, common sense can easily endorse many, if not all of the measures introduced in the face of this



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I have no doubt that the 'social distancing' measures are totally in agreement with common sense and the experiences gained from past pandemics. More importantly to me, it is in agreement with the Word of God.

The Lord required His people to separate themselves from contagious diseases and from spiritual uncleanness by separating the diseased and contaminated from their company. The leper was to proclaim his leprosy so that all could avoid him. "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean," Leviticus 13:45.

Sadly, today, we are unable to detect just who may have contracted Covid-19 and who, being contagious, will pass it on to us if we come into close contact with them.

Hence the restrictions that are in place.

I listened to a news report of a man who has just recovered from the coronavirus and the sufferings he endured. He was most adamant in his desires that all heed the present restrictions and stay safe. He caught the virus by not heeding the warnings that were in place when he attended Cheltenham Race Festival. He, foolishly, now blames the government for not banning the gathering!

You can imagine what he would have said, had the government, in those early days of the crisis, actually stopped him going!!!! Doubtless, he would have been heard saying what a few foolish people are saying today about the restrictions.

It is quite amazing how much wiser a dose of Covid-19 can make a person.

Sadly, the folly of today's refusing good counsel is but a foreshadowing of that which will come to a much greater degree upon the world.

Indeed, it has already started with the world-wide rejection of the old truths of the gospel and the embracing of the blatant follies of men embodied in modern 'Christianity' with its repudiation of the Bible, the Word of God.

However, worse is to come when that part of the world termed the 'prophetic earth', the territories of the old Roman Empire, follows in adoring wonder after the beast, Revelation 13:3.

He will be, in his person and in his words and in his actions, most personable. He is likened unto the lithe beauty of the leopard, Revelation 13:1. Even John the Apostle, foolishly 'wondered' and 'admired' the spirit of Antichristianity, as it was manifested just prior to its full embodiment in the 'Beast', the Antichrist!

"And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel?" Revelation 17:6-7.

Such 'admiration' of that so evidently evil by the servant of Christ, shows just how wrong God's people may be when evaluating the words and works of the devil.

John's actions were not recorded to shame him but rather to warn, advise and counsel us to beware of being deceived by "the deceitfulness of sin," Hebrews 3:13.

Rev. Ivan Foster.

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