



A Spiritual Encouragement Message **April 28, 2020**

He First Loved Us

A bit more than a decade ago, during the bad period of the Great Recession from the end of 2007 till the middle of 2009, most people received a tremendous impact economically. The United States unemployment rate alone reached about 10%. Many people lost their properties, some even lost their personal homes, others lost their jobs as I mentioned, many filed for bankruptcy, sadly we also knew of people putting a permanent solution to their temporary problem by committing suicide in their desperation and fears. Peoples' best general response to those times were about how to get the economy running well again? How to get back to normal? Normal is what got us in the mess to begin with. When we are in a mess, that is tremendous evidence that we need the Messiah. The world could not just go back to live as was normally living and expect better results. When we do the same, we usually obtain the same results. Today unemployment rate in the United States alone soars past 20% and the nation has now lost 26.5 million jobs. Thousands of people are dying alone besides suffering extreme pain and asphyxia. To try to get the economy running great again is a good plan, but it's secondary. Primarily we all need to fully turn our entire lives to our Creator, Lord and Savior. He said that to His disciples and to the multitudes from many cities following Him (Mathew 4:25, 6:19-34).

Six times He told them, do not worry (NKJV), do not be anxious about your life (ESV), what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on (Mathew 6:25). But seek first the kingdom of God and His, righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Mathew 6:33).

Our vertical relationship with God should always be first then our horizontal relationships with others. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mathew 22:37-39).

Our own parents and family are also secondary to our relationship to the Lord. To another He said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. You go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand

to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:59-62). Our Creator and Savior should always be first. Who else could create you and save you?

The church in Ephesus was a hard working church, a church with much patience and endurance, they did not bear with those who were evil, they rejected false apostles, that church did not grow weary, from a human perspective we could all say they were just fine with the Lord. But He who knows our hearts told them, "but I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent (Revelation 2:1-7). Long story short, today in Turkey where Ephesus ruins are located, sadly 99% of people are Muslim.

Today we may say that we are waiting on God so we can go back to normal, but contrary to just going back to normal God is waiting on us to turn entirely to Him first. To make a better genuine effort in our personal growth, prayer, study, worship, evangelism and good works, to live like Christ does for His church in our marriages, to truly raise our kids in the Lord's discipline, to really shine our light everywhere. When we are busy with our purpose then we can't be bothered with our pains. May we love God first in our lives as He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

In Christ,

Oscar Velazquez