**Emerging from Coronavirus**

**A reflection from 1 Peter 1 verse 7**

"These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed."

The journey out of lockdown no doubt will be slower than we would like and life is obviously not going to be a quick return to the old normal. Lockdown has been difficult and a new living with the virus as we emerge from it will also bring with it all kinds of trials. God allows all kinds of trials to come upon us in order to test and strengthen our faith. Peter writes Just as gold is refined by fire, so our faith is "refined" or purified by trials. By means of trials God can tell whether our faith is genuine or not. Because of our hope of eternal life we are able to rejoice in these brief trials. If after we have been tested, our faith has proved to be genuine, we receive praise, glory and honour when Jesus returns.

The Apostle Peter writes of the genuineness of our faith and says it very valuable, because it doesn't perish like gold. Stocks and shares may fall, currency values may change but gold doesn't, but Peter knows that there will come a time when gold prices will collapse and currencies will be worthless. On that day what will have real value is genuine faith. Faith that even in life's trials, even in the coronavirus isolation, when no one can see each and meet each other in the normal way, faith that clings to Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

The question for us is will our faith have value over these next few months or however long it will be before we get through this pandemic or will it just get lost along with so many of the routines of church life that support it like services, church meetings and familiar faces because so much of our church scaffolding has come down or at least changed?

Do we have a genuine faith or just a token one? Our faith is exposed to trials of all types including this virus. Trials are to faith what fire is to gold, a refining agent. In the Old Testament Job was exposed to huge trials but the genuineness of his faith shone through. So in this challenging time of uncertainty and trials that we all face let it refine us and not define us.

The coronavirus has also brought new insights, opportunities and priorities to the surface with so many props removed for the genuineness of our faith to be exposed. Faith links us to hope because faith links us to Jesus and he is our hope because of his death and resurrection.

Christians don't get exemptions for COVID-19 but we are given hope. Even if it gets worse genuine faith has confidence in Jesus. Peter goes on to write about loving one another deeply from the heart (verse22) So whatever gift we have been given let's use it to serve others. Whilst emerging from lockdown we need to be a community that meets fear with faith. When we come out of this pandemic will our faith be refined or will it have evaporated? Will it be proved genuine or will it just slip away?

Closing prayer: And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen [1 Peter 5 verses 10 &11]