

A Must Read From an SDA Pastor

Dear Church Family,

I'm writing this with a heavy heart and with consternation because I'm hearing stories that unsettle me. The majority of Adventists are on the government-mandates bandwagon. I'm sad about that. But I'm grieved to hear about the shaking of the remnant. Some who've looked at the evidence and decided they would not get the shot are now wavering – not because they've been convinced by facts that have changed their minds about the safety of the shot, but because they're feeling pressure from friends, family, and the church.

Satan is dividing families, friends, and church members. Many of us were prepared for separation over spiritual beliefs and doctrines. We were not prepared to face painful separation over something that on the surface appears to be a health issue. If all that stands in the way of continued companionship with our loved ones is a shot, why not just take it? This seems to be the reasoning of many self-sacrificing Christians.

Note: I've written what follows to the generic "you." Please don't take offense. I do not have anyone in particular in mind but felt it to be the tense most conducive to my purpose.

If you're convinced the shot is unsafe, or the people pushing it are untrustworthy, but feel you must reconsider your position due to other considerations, the issue has become spiritual. When you feel tempted to sin against your conscience, you also stand at risk of becoming presumptuous. Have you heard anyone say, "I don't believe the shot is safe, but I'll have to take it if I want to see my kids," or "I'll have to take the shot because I have family out of country," or "I'll have to take it or I'll lose my job," or "I'll have to take it to go to school," or anything along those lines?

Paul wrote, "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). He was talking about converted pagans who risked hurting their conscience by eating food consecrated to idols. The principle applies to the vaccine. If you believe it's harmful, and there's heaps of evidence that it is, then you sin against your conscience if you take the shot. It's as simple as that. In his famous words to the council when he was being tried for heresy, Martin Luther said, "To go against conscience is neither right nor safe." It's not right because it grieves the Holy Spirit when we willingly sin and it's not safe because it dulls our spiritual perception by searing the conscience which God has given us to help us discern right from wrong.

What considerations are worth gambling our salvation over? Jesus said,

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 10:37-39)

The enemy is turning up the heat and some people are reasoning that since this is a health issue, it has nothing to do with salvation. But to veer from truth opens opportunities for Satan to set further snares of deception.

As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position, and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. (GC 608)

It's not only your own conscience that you must protect. If you take the shot when you believe it's unsafe, how will it affect others who witness your compromise? How will it affect those who are trying to decide what to do? For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple (defile the temple of the Holy Ghost, "which temple ye are" by putting something harmful into it), shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols (sin against their conscience, also)?

(Adaptation of 1 Corinthians 8:10)

We are living in very trying times. The choice to exercise the God-given right of freedom of choice to refuse vaccination is starting to cost people around the world dearly. Consider this as basic training for the fiercer fight that lies ahead.

If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? (Jeremiah 12:5)

Consider the tactics being used to coerce people into getting the shot. If the shot is safe and effective against a horribly deadly, rampant disease, why not lay all that evidence on the table and let people choose the most reasonable course for themselves? Why offer ice cream cones, free tickets to games, ballots in million-dollar lotteries, free drinks, etc. to entice people to get the shot? Why use scare tactics and threats to coerce people when bribery doesn't work? Coercion and deception are Satan's tools. Reason and truth are God's. Which side

does the pro-vax position stand on? Doesn't that tell you something about the values of those who are condoning this kind of coercion? Doesn't it make you suspicious of their motives?

People have been sending me videos and letters published by the church, in which SDA experts are encouraging church members to take the shot. Some of the "encouragement" comes in the form of heaping the unvaccinated with guilt for not demonstrating love to their neighbour by refusing to take the shot. Some of it comes from manipulating Bible verses and EGW statements to support vaccination. In other words, the church is using the same methods the world is using to pressure people into being vaccinated.

WHY ISN'T THE CHURCH SPEAKING OUT AGAINST THE COERCIVE MEASURES BEING USED TO MANIPULATE PEOPLE? WHY ISN'T THE CHURCH SPEAKING OUT AGAINST THE ENEMY'S TACTICS AND OUR INCREASING LOSS OF LIBERTIES? WHY ISN'T THE CHURCH WARNING ITS MEMBERS AND THE WORLD AGAINST THE TOTALITARIAN TAKE-OVER BY THE BEAST?

Before I leave the topic of the methods being used to garner your consent to receive the shot, I'd like to make this additional point. If you, having been convinced the shot is not of God, buckle to the pressure and take it to protect certain temporal advantages it would give you, can you be sure those advantages will be assured to you? Can you make deals with the devil? If he promises you can keep your job, travel, enjoy dinner at restaurants, access to entertainment, or whatever, can you trust him? Will he favour you because you self-sacrificingly complied with his demands? Can you trust a hostage-taker?

God is ultimately in control of this whole situation. The trial has not come to us in the way we expected it to come. Neither did the Saviour come in the way the Jews expected Him to come. Let's be careful we do not make a similar mistake in passing off this test as something that has no spiritual consequences.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

There is only one thing that I'm aware of that can separate us from Christ's love – our own free choice. Sadly, when we sin against conscience, we can become deceived and end up making choices against Christ rather than for Him.

Many of us are now feeling lonely for those whose companionship we've come to rely on because they agreed with us but have now compromised because of pressure and a coerced will. Perhaps we alone in our families have not gotten the shot. But when we do what's right, Christ stands with us. When we choose what's right, we stand with a cloud of witnesses also.

Elijah felt lonely but God assured him there were 7000 others who hadn't bowed to Baal. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego must have felt lonely. But Jesus stood by them. Job sat alone on his ash heap, clinging to God when his friends deserted him and even his wife turned against God. The aged Daniel was alone cast into the lions' den – where were the others? We have many examples of faithfulness to encourage us to stand firm on truth. May God give us strength to stand alone if need be.

Read again the story of Gideon. After the fearful had left and God had sent the disqualified ones away, a handful of faithful ones were given the privilege of witnessing God's overthrow of the enemy. Gideon's little band were faithful and willing, and God honoured them for that.

The divisive crisis that we're in is a trial that has caught us unprepared. Like Peter who brandished a sword against the enemy, many of us felt prepared to fight a head-on attack by the enemy. We expected an obvious spiritual battle. Let's not follow Peter in buckling under peer pressure when a servant girl sneeringly questioned him. Like Peter, we need conversion. We must learn to rely on Christ's strength, not our own.

Christ's words to Peter are for us. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

It is Satan's purpose to "dash to pieces" God's people, as the word "scatter" denotes in Daniel 12:7 – "And when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." But with God on our side, we are more than conquerors, more than a match for him. Satan is constantly at work, but few have any idea of his activity and subtlety. The people of God must be prepared to withstand the wily foe. It is this resistance that Satan dreads. He knows better than we do the limit of his power and how easily he can be overcome if we resist and face him. Through divine strength the weakest saint is more than a match for him and all his angels.... (5T 293.4)

Let's not judge those who differ from us on this issue. But guard your conscience. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). Arm yourself with knowledge. Be fully convinced, not coerced. Love one another. Pray without ceasing.