



FATHERHOOD IN CHANGING TIMES EPHESIANS 6:1-4

- A. Current Events and the Future
- B. A Biblical Response
- C. Facing the Future

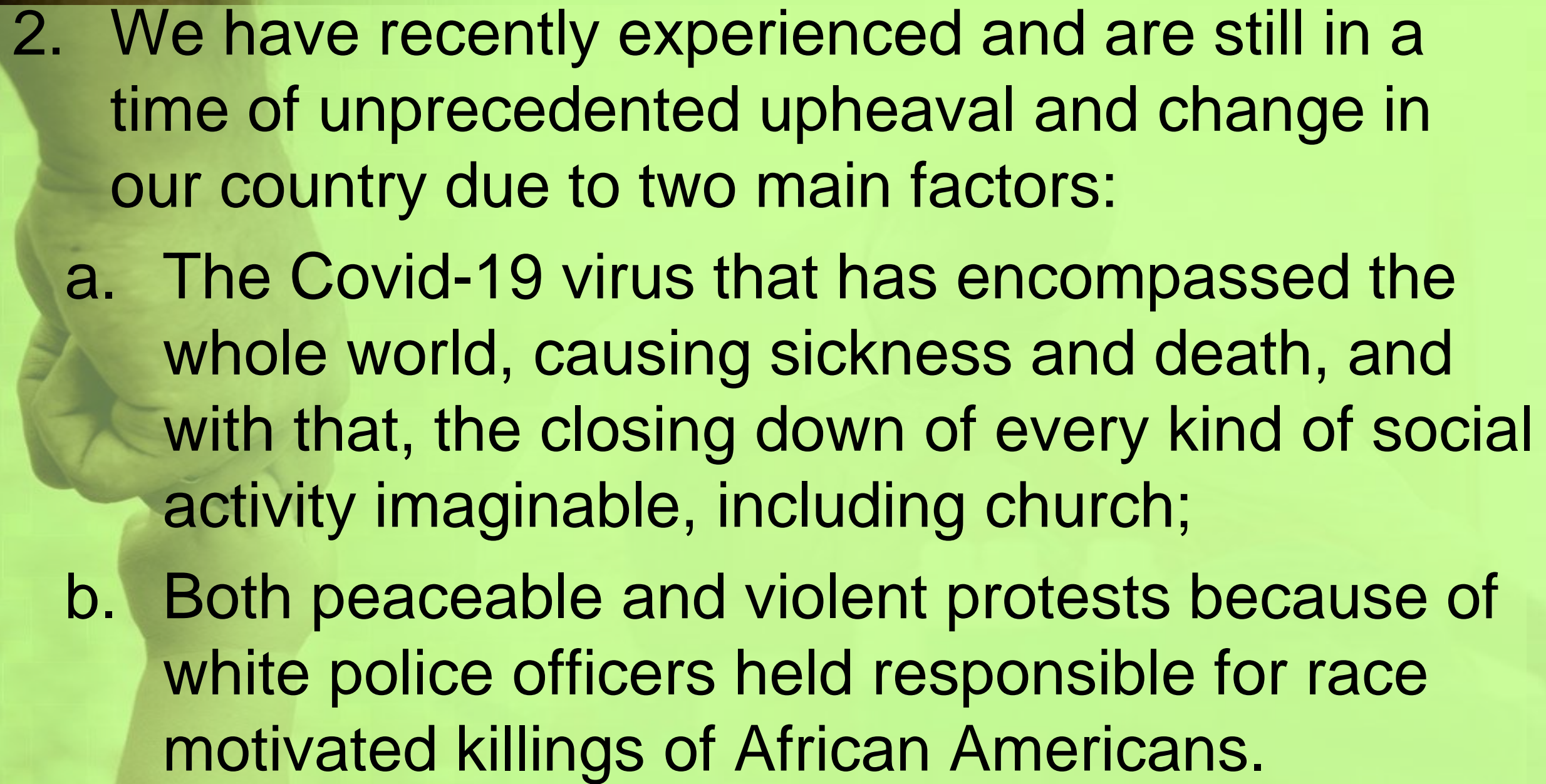
A. Current Events and the Future

1. There is a context of time for all biblical events.
 - a. John the Baptist (Lk. 3:1 ff.)
 - b. Governments (Rm. 13; 1Pt. 2:13 ff.; Ac. 17:24-28)
 - c. Riots & the potential for them (Ac. 4:21, 5:13, 26, 33, cf. 40; 6:8-15, 7:54-8:3; 14:19; 16:19-24; 17:5-13)
 - d. The consummate riot at Ephesus (Ac. 19:23-41).
 - e. Remember the “present distress” at Corinth (1Cor. 7:26).

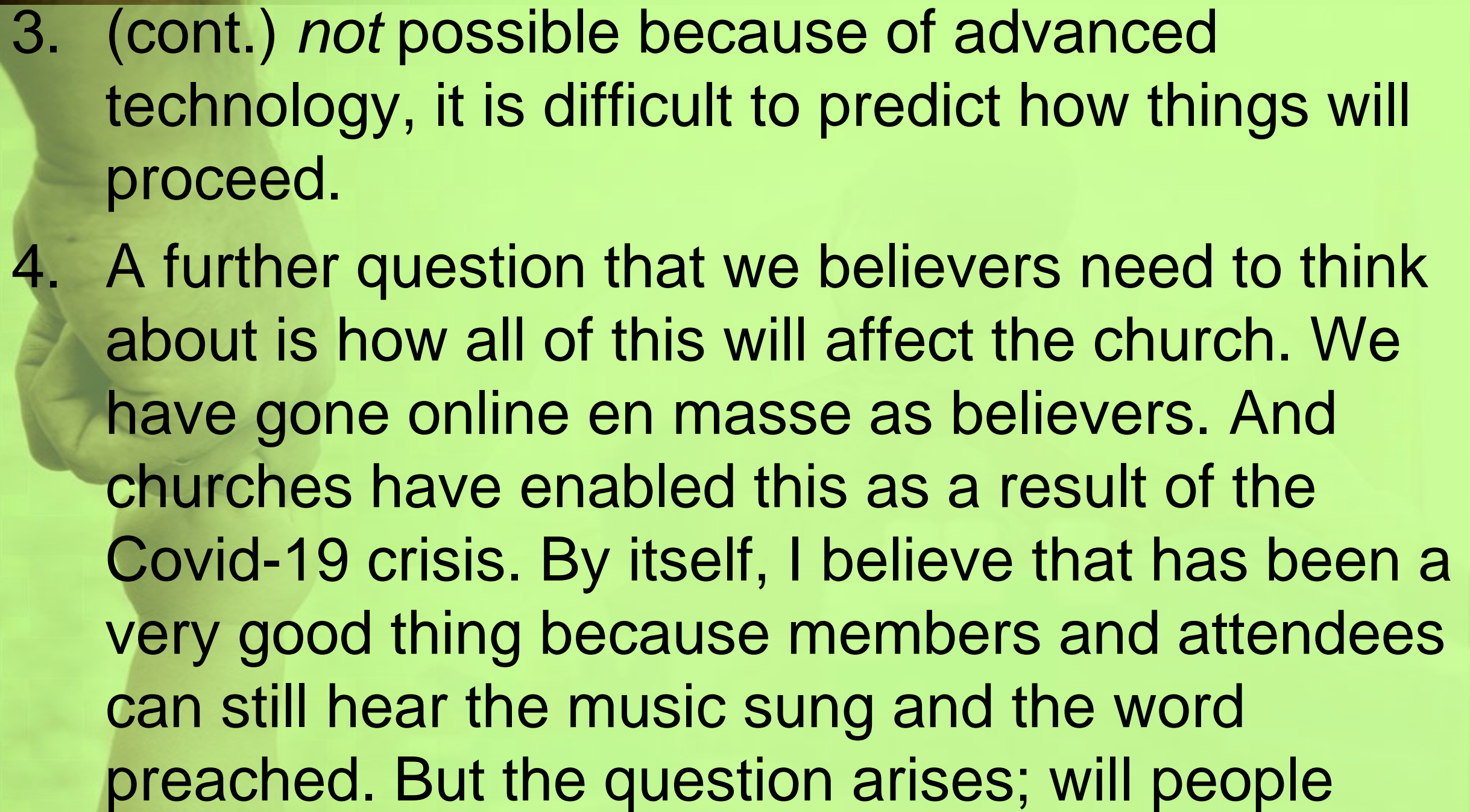


PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bible-history.com%2Fnew-testament%2Fpauls-first-missionary-journey.html&psig=AOvVaw1tdGikPGCz0z48UKLSSk9D&ust=1592780539666000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAIQjRxqFwoTCIDiyprAkeoCFQAAAAAAdAAAAABAD>

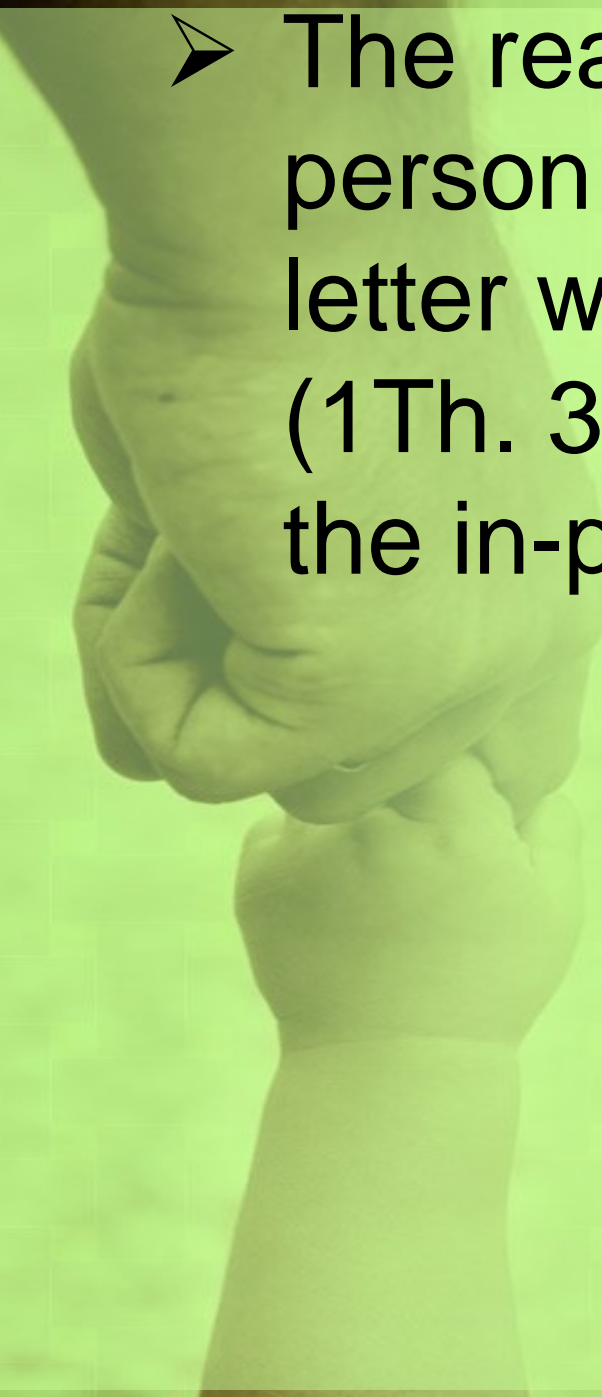
- 
2. We have recently experienced and are still in a time of unprecedented upheaval and change in our country due to two main factors:
- a. The Covid-19 virus that has encompassed the whole world, causing sickness and death, and with that, the closing down of every kind of social activity imaginable, including church;
 - b. Both peaceable and violent protests because of white police officers held responsible for race motivated killings of African Americans.

3. Some believe that things will *never* be the same in America again – e.g., that more people will henceforth work from home via remote computer technology. A recent video pan of New York City revealed shockingly empty streets with commentary suggesting a decline in commercial real estate prices because of the likelihood of people not returning to the hustle and bustle of crowded streets and cramped elevators and offices. Because we have been presented with a scenario of events and possibilities heretofore

- 
3. (cont.) *not* possible because of advanced technology, it is difficult to predict how things will proceed.
 4. A further question that we believers need to think about is how all of this will affect the church. We have gone online en masse as believers. And churches have enabled this as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. By itself, I believe that has been a very good thing because members and attendees can still hear the music sung and the word preached. But the question arises; will people

4. (cont.) return to church when the crisis is over?
Pandemics are not forever; they *do* end.

- Biblically speaking, we *must* return: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:23-25).
- *But* online technology might lead to a bad habit.

- 
- The reality is that something edifying happens in person that cannot happen online or even in letter writing (1Th. 2:17-20) or word of mouth (1Th. 3:6), for in that last passage Paul still wants the in-person meeting to happen.

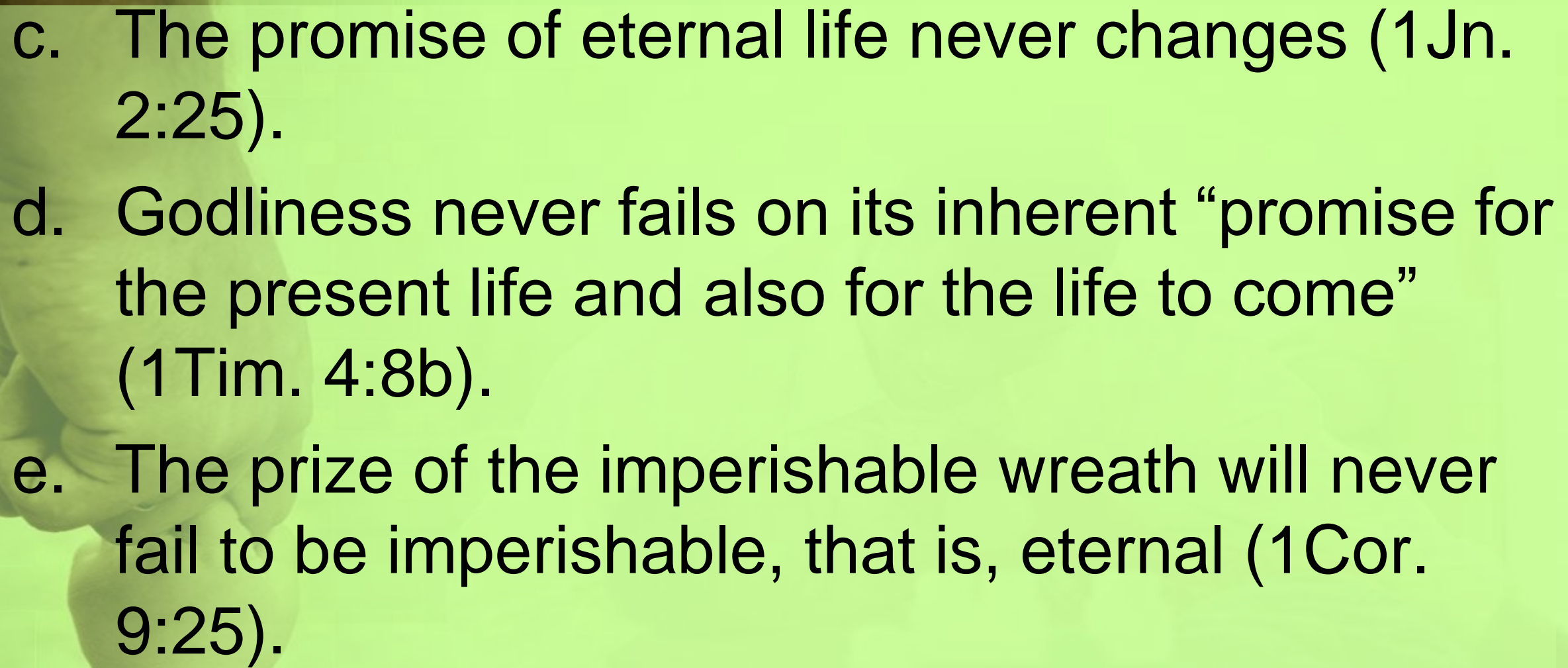
B. A Biblical Response

1. It is not that we are to ignore the reality of our present circumstances. 1Cor. 7:26 seems to make that clear. Fathers must decide with wisdom how to proceed, as must all believers. In that entire chapter of 1Cor. 7, Paul seems to call for stability in leaving things as they currently stand if possible. Read 1Cor. 7:17-40.
2. At the same time, recalling the great tumult in Ephesus in Ac. 19, when Paul addressed family matters in Eph. 5:22-6:9, it was the straightforward

2. (cont.) material that we have come to expect, very similar to what he said to the Colossians in 3:18-4:1. Yes, very likely things had calmed down in Ephesus by the time the letter was written prhps. 7 yrs. later, but we must realize that instability is by its very nature unpredictable, just as our situation was only a few months ago. But what Paul might have said, would have varied little overall beyond what we see in 1Cor. 7.

C. Facing the Future

1. Stay the course, no matter what your circumstances might be. They are ever-changing.
2. Let's consider what we can count on:
 - a. God's word never changes (Mt. 24:25; Is. 40:8; Ps. 119:89).
 - b. God never changes (Heb. 1:12). Jesus never changes (Heb. 13:8). The Spirit never changes (Heb. 9:14).

- 
- c. The promise of eternal life never changes (1Jn. 2:25).
 - d. Godliness never fails on its inherent “promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (1Tim. 4:8b).
 - e. The prize of the imperishable wreath will never fail to be imperishable, that is, eternal (1Cor. 9:25).

Conclusion:

This life is marked by vicissitudes, “A usually unforeseen change in circumstance or experience that affects one's life, especially in a trying way” (<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/vicissitude>). All that we see is temporary, but what we cannot see is eternal (2Cor. 4:18b). “Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God” (2Pt. 3:11-12b). “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (1Cor. 15:58).