

# Talking to a Blank Wall

By PAUL J. SCHARF

My last in-person church ministry engagement was on Sunday, March 15. It was a very good experience in a small church, and (as I predicted to the congregation) it was a day that we will never forget.

It felt sort of like being a kid in school—seeing the snowflakes beginning to fall, and knowing that there will be no class tomorrow!

I told the group—which, by the way, included several people who *love* The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry—that it might be our last ministry in a church for a while, due to concerns over the coronavirus, which was just beginning to capture the nation's attention.

I was more right on all counts than I wanted to be. I could not have imagined that it would be nearly three months before I would speak in front of a church congregation again. But only now am I preparing to do that next week.

This period of being shut down could be described in many ways. It was eerily frightening in one sense, and easily quite discouraging. With no certain end in sight, it could be extremely frustrating, even worrisome. For many people, it has been a time of great loneliness—and, for some, severe depression.

Thankfully, for us in Wisconsin, the statewide shutdown is a thing of the past, although life is still very far from being completely back to normal.

I definitely feel for those in states where such measures are still in place. My heart aches for people who have lost jobs and incomes, or more, during this time. I cannot even imagine the pain felt by someone who has had to sit by and see their small business—perhaps their entire life's work—vanish during this crisis.

These shutdowns were definitely not on our wish list in our work with The Friends of Israel—especially, at this stage of the game, as we are still attempting to raise prayer and financial support to conduct our ministry.

Nevertheless, as the shutdowns began, I made a bold claim to our supporters. I said in March that our prayer was that we might actually be able to come through this period stronger, and better prepared to expand our ministry, than we were going into the shutdown.

By the grace of God, and with the great help of supporting churches and individuals—as well as The Friends of Israel itself—I can honestly say that we thank the Lord that He has made this a reality for us. In fact, this is true to such an extent that I can barely fathom how we attempted to do what we did before this time.

I am referring here to advances made in communication, on social media and—the biggest change—by beginning to broadcast on my own page at [SermonAudio.com/pscharf](http://SermonAudio.com/pscharf).

These were all things that I had planned to do, and desired to do, from the start of this ministry. The shutdown both necessitated that we begin some of these methods of outreach, but also afforded us the time to implement them. Having put these things in place, we have every intention of continuing these new endeavors as we resume a normal schedule of ministry.

The main difference going forward will be that I will once again get to speak before actual congregations of people—as well as talking to a blank wall (i.e., recording messages for SermonAudio).

The shutdown was difficult, but valuable. I hope we do not have to do anything like this again. Yet, if we do, I will pray and seek to use the time for the greatest spiritual benefit.

What has the Lord taught you, or done for you, during this time of isolation?

And, as I have asked you before, would you please pray for us now at this vital time in our service with The Friends of Israel, that we might “take heed to the ministry which (we) have received in the Lord, that (we) may fulfill it” (Col. 4:17)?

*Paul J. Scharf (M.A., M.Div., Faith Baptist Theological Seminary) is a church ministries representative for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, based in Columbus, WI, and serving in the Midwest. For more information on his ministry, visit [sermonaudio.com/pscharf](http://sermonaudio.com/pscharf) or [foi.org/scharf](http://foi.org/scharf), or email [pscharf@foi.org](mailto:pscharf@foi.org).*

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