

## Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

March 17, 2020

Well, okay, here we are, five days or so into an official pandemic. How are you doing so far?

Let me begin this week with an historical reflection, after which I'll make some suggestions about how to proceed.

Some of you know that firefighters, of whom Jill's father was one,<sup>1</sup> live by the motto, "**We run in when others run out.**" That's what our Lord Jesus did for us long ago, and that's what He does for us today.

When the Eternal God chose to don human flesh, Jesus "ran in" to our violence, sin, and death, and absorbed it into Himself on the Cross. **No one took His life. He ran in.** Early Christians did that, too.

Ancient societies and religions were not known for their care for the sick and dying. It was common in ancient societies, including Rome, which saw the inception and rise of Christianity, to abandon the sick and dying. Roman religion did not teach followers to care for the helpless.

Destitute families lacking any resources to help sometimes even abandoned the chronically ill to die. In Rome, sick or elderly slaves were routinely left to waste away on Tiber Island. Unwanted children were often left to die of exposure. If a father decided that the family couldn't afford to feed another child, that child would be abandoned on the steps of a temple or in the public square. Almost without exception defective newborns were exposed in this way.

Against this backdrop, Christianity was a distinct contrast. The Bible teaches the intrinsic value of every human being, and this is what motivated early Christians to begin caring for their sick. Church leaders followed the biblical admonition to visit the sick. Congregations and communities set up formal practices for care.

And as this became common among Christians, they were challenged to care for non-Christians, as well. Christians who often risked their lives to care even for non-Christians represented a radical difference in the values taught by the Bible than anything else known at that time.

In the third century AD, **an epidemic** swept across Northern Africa, Italy, and the western empire. As many as 5,000 people a day were dying in Rome. The sick were abandoned in the streets and the dead left unburied.

Carthage's bishop, Cyprian, encouraged Christians to care for the sick and dying. They buried the dead and risked getting sick by taking in the sick. This was repeated other times in the early centuries of the church during epidemics. Christians introduced a new concern and standard of care for sick people.

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<sup>1</sup> And he died as the result of a fire-related injury.



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**CBF: transforming Oakland Mills into a community others wish to replicate.**

Archived Laptops are available at [http://www.dcstancil.com/daves\\_laptop](http://www.dcstancil.com/daves_laptop)

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Rodney Stark, author of *The Rise of Christianity*, argues that some of the marked growth of the church in the early centuries can be attributed to care and compassion Christians showed for the sick. He tracks increased conversion rates during three plagues: the Antonine plague (2nd century), the Cyprian plague (3rd century), and the Justinian plague (6th century). Christians demonstrated their love for God and biblical values, and they offered a very attractive witness.

Their example has been followed through the history of the Christian church. Today, we take for granted the responsibility to care for the sick regardless of religious convictions. It was Christians practicing what the Bible taught them that began caring for those in need.<sup>2</sup>

**This is the faith we practice.**

**This is the heritage we share.**

**This is the opportunity we have today.**

So here are a few suggestions about how to move through these days:

1. Trust God.
2. Turn off your television. Don't stay glued to the news.
3. Pray. Pray for one another. Pray for health workers. Pray for government.
4. Read Scripture. Catch up on your Bible reading.
5. Memorize Scripture.
6. Go for a walk. Enjoy springtime.
7. Read a good book. Catch up on your periodicals.
8. Check on family, friends, and neighbors periodically.
9. Focus your mind: *Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things* (Philippians 4:8).
10. Trust God.

I've attached some Scripture references that may be helpful.

**We are the Light. Be the Light.**

Dave

The light shines  
in the darkness,  
and the darkness  
has not overcome it.

**John 1:5**



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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.str.org/blog/the-witness-of-christian-compassion#.XmuW1N6YVPY>

# Scripture Passages for Special Needs

## **Anxiety**

Philippians 4:6-7  
2 Timothy 1:7  
Hebrews 13:6  
1 John 4:18-19

## **Bitterness**

Psalm 27:13-14  
Psalm 37:5-7  
Mark 11:25  
Hebrews 12:12-15

## **Broken Relationships**

Psalm 55  
Matthew 5:23-24  
Matthew 18:15-17

## **Comfort**

Isaiah 26:3  
Isaiah 41:13  
John 14:1  
1 Corinthians 10:13

## **Confidence**

Psalm 31:23  
Habakkuk 3:17-18  
Matthew 5:6  
John 15:7  
2 Corinthians 5:7  
2 Corinthians 9:8  
Philippians 4:13  
Colossians 3:23  
Hebrews 11:1

## **Courage**

Joshua 1:1-9  
2 Timothy 1:7

## **Death**

Psalm 6  
Psalm 102  
Psalm 139  
John 10:27-28  
John 11:25-26  
John 14:6  
1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

## **Death Desired**

Job 6:8-11  
Job 7:1-3, 15-16

## **Discouraged**

Psalm 27:13-14  
Psalm 37:5-7  
Mark 11:25  
Hebrews 12:12-15

## **Doubt**

Matthew 14:31  
John 20:25-29  
Romans 15:13

## **Failure**

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

## **Faith**

Psalm 31:24  
Habakkuk 3:17-18  
Matthew 5:6  
John 15:7  
2 Corinthians 5:7  
2 Corinthians 9:8  
Philippians 4:13  
Colossians 3:23  
Hebrews 11:1

## **Fear**

Psalm 27  
Psalm 91:1-2  
Psalm 125:2  
Mark 4:40-41  
John 12:42  
John 14:26-27  
2 Corinthians 4:16-18  
Romans 8:38-39  
Philippians 4:5-7  
Hebrews 12:1-2  
1 Peter 1:13, 21

## **Forgiveness**

Matthew 18:21-35  
Luke 17:1-4

## **Frustration**

Psalm 23  
Psalm 37:4

## **Grief**

Psalm 90

## **Guidance**

Proverbs 3:5-6  
Isaiah 30:21

## **Guilt**

Psalm 25:18  
Psalm 51:1-3  
Isaiah 1:18  
Isaiah 43:25  
Matthew 9:13  
Matthew 11:28-30  
John 3:16  
John 5:24  
John 8:11, 31  
Romans 5:1  
Romans 8:26  
2 Corinthians 12:9  
Hebrews 4:15-16  
1 John 1:8-9  
1 John 3:1-3, 19-20

## **Happiness**

Matthew 5:3-12  
John 15:11-17

## **Hate**

Ephesians 4:31  
1 John 2:9  
1 John 3:15

## **Hope**

Psalm 42:5  
Jeremiah 29:11  
Romans 8:28  
Hebrews 12:11-12  
1 Peter 5:7

## **Loneliness**

Psalm 139  
Jeremiah 23:24  
Matthew 28:20  
Romans 8:38-39

## **Old Age**

Psalm 71

## **Patience**

James 1:3-4, 19  
1 Peter 2:19-23

## **Prayer**

Matthew 6:9-13  
Romans 15:5-6, 13  
2 Corinthians 1:3-7  
2 Corinthians 2:14  
Galatians 1:3-5  
Ephesians 1:3-10, 16-23  
Ephesians 3:14-21  
Philippians 1:3-6, 8-11

## **Resentment**

Philippians 4:6-7  
2 Timothy 1:7  
Hebrews 13:6  
1 John 4:18-19

## **Security**

Isaiah 26:3  
Isaiah 41:13  
John 14:1  
1 Corinthians 10:13

## **Self-Discipline**

Psalm 141:3  
Proverbs 16:32  
2 Corinthians 10:5  
Philippians 4:8-9  
James 1:19-20

## **Suffering**

Psalm 40  
John 15:18-25  
Romans 5:3-4  
2 Corinthians 1:3-7  
Hebrews 4:14-16

## **Terminal Illness**

Psalm 41

## **Unanswered Prayer**

Luke 11:5-12

## **Uncertainty**

Psalm 42

## **Weakness**

Psalm 18:1-3  
Psalm 121  
Isaiah 40:31  
Isaiah 41:10  
Colossians 1:11

## **Weariness**

Deuteronomy 33:27  
Psalm 16  
Psalm 20  
Isaiah 40:31  
Matthew 11:28

## **Worry**

Psalm 37  
Mark 4:25-26  
John 14:27-31  
Philippians 4:6-7  
2 Timothy 1:7  
Hebrews 13:6  
1 John 4:18-19

## **Other Promises**

Deuteronomy 31:8  
2 Chronicles 7:14  
Psalm 33:18-19  
Psalm 34:19  
Psalm 84:11  
Isaiah 40:31  
Isaiah 43:2  
Isaiah 65:24  
Jeremiah 33:3  
Matthew 11:28  
Matthew 28:20  
Mark 11:24  
John 8:12  
John 10:27-30  
John 16:33  
Romans 8:28  
Romans 8:38-39  
1 Corinthians 10:13  
Galatians 6:9  
Ephesians 3:20  
Philippians 4:13  
Philippians 4:6-7  
2 Timothy 1:12  
2 Timothy 1:12  
Hebrews 6:18-19  
Hebrews 13:5  
1 John 1:9  
1 John 4:4  
1 Peter 1:7

