

A Christian Response To The Global Crisis

How we, as Christians, respond in times of crisis is not just vitally important for our own faith and for our witness of the gospel, it's important for the wellbeing of those around us, who may be struggling with doubts and fears in what is a very distressing and anxious time.

A Measured And Faithful Response

I want to speak plainly to a disturbing trend currently being observed amongst some, in response to the current pandemic facing the globe. It's a response that could almost be described as 'tone deaf'; that many seem to be unaware and unobservant to the fear and anxiety of the people around them and, unwittingly or not, are adding to that fear and uncertainty with ill-thought through posts or shares online. Or, even worse, they're well aware of the fear and are choosing to actively capitalise on it to promote apocalyptic predictions or outcomes. Whilst we shouldn't be ambivalent about what's going on around the globe, we also need to be measured in our response and very careful not to be contributing to or escalating the level of panic that people may be experiencing.

When people are struggling with an uncertain future, have recently lost employment or are concerned for the wellbeing of their loved ones, Christians have both a responsibility and a privilege to point the world's attention to the One who is still in control of all. Not only that, we can choose to positively redirect the conversation, using our confidence in the God of all the earth to comfort people's hearts and settle their fears.

For Christians, times of trouble, in this particular case, the

far-reaching effects of Covid-19, are, firstly, an opportunity to test and prove our own conviction; that there is One God and Father who rules over all things (Psalm 103:19, Daniel 2:21, Ephesians 4:6). We have confidence that the Father has an ongoing rescue plan for humanity and that He has given authority over to His Holy Son, Jesus Christ, who holds all things in his hand (John 3:35, Matthew 11:27). It can be difficult in times of crisis to remain convicted of this, but we must continue to have confidence in God's promises and in the power and authority vested in the name of Jesus. We acknowledge that, as Christians, we are not immune to these troubles and our prayer is not that we would be removed from this but that we would be protected from evil (John 17:15). It is our Christian ideals, infact, that enable us to see purpose in our suffering and recognise the joy which can overcome all troubles, even the love of an everlasting Father.

"The Christian ideal is not freedom from work, but strength to do it; not freedom from temptation, but power to overcome it; not freedom from suffering, but joy in an abiding sense of the Father's love; not absence from the world, but grace to make the world better for our presence; not holy lives driven from the world, and living apart from it, but holy lives spent in the world and leavening it." – Ellicott's Commentary For English Readers.

Secondly, such crises are an opportunity to witness to the reality of a transformative gospel being outworked in our lives. We are to show good to all, as and where we are able (Galatians 6:10). We are to be thankful for those in authority and especially at a time like this, those in healthcare, who risk their own lives to treat and save others (1 Timothy 2:2). We need to remember to pray for them and assist where we can. We ought to show responsibility in following the direction of the government and officials, acknowledging measured concern for the situation we all find ourselves in and abiding by recommendations for the good of everyone (1 Peter 2:13). Now,

more than ever, is the time to show consideration and restraint and to lead the world by example. It is not the time (or ever!) for Christians to display greed or selfishness but to consider those who are our neighbour and to love them, as ourselves (Romans 13:8-10). And, particularly, it is vitally important to consider those who are weak and vulnerable amongst our communities, who have always found a special place in God's heart (James 1:27; Psalm 68:5).

Trust in God's sovereignty is not to be made dependent on human expectation of a particular timetable or outcome. For the present, it is enough that God's rule is expressed in and through His Spirit. | James D G Dunn

He Is A Good, Good Father

It is our commission, as Christians, to remind the world of a good, good God, who is actively seeking to overthrow the effects of sin in the world and restore humanity to full relationship with Himself. He is the One who rescues the poor who cries for help and the fatherless, who have none to assist them (Job 29:12). He sees the grief and anxiety of the afflicted and upholds the cause of the poor and the oppressed (Psalm 82:3). We need to reaffirm and speak this truth to each other and to the world! Christians are intended to be the light of the world, bringing hope to those who have none, especially in times of crisis and trouble.

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden." – Matthew 5:14, BSB

As Christians, we are emboldened to stand together now in faithful response, banishing exaggerated fear and pleading the cause of those who are afflicted and defenceless in this crisis. We need to pray, to worship and to continue to connect in all the ways that are possible to us right now. Most of all, we need to continue to point the people of the world to

Jesus, who told his much loved followers: “Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. Trust in God and trust in me also” (John 14:1).

If you are feeling anxious or fearful about the current situation, I want to encourage you to lay your burdens at Jesus’ feet and to share that anxiousness with him. If you want prayers for you or with you, please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

We have hope, as Christians, that God is actively working to restore all things to Himself and that one day soon, the earth will be filled with His glory and all tears will be wiped away (Habakkuk 2:14, Revelation 21:4). It’s our responsibility and privilege to share this hope with the world and comfort their hearts in times of trouble.

“But for you who obey me, my saving power will rise on you like the sun and bring healing like the sun’s rays. You will be as free and happy as calves let out of a stall.” – Malachi 4:2, GNT

Let’s pray for our communities, our country, and for the world, that God will bring healing, peace, and restoration to our lives, if it is His will and that this incredibly strange situation might provide opportunity to impact hearts for good, for His glory and His kingdom.

Finally, “Have courage, and be kind...” | Cinderella

The Parallels In Communion

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” | 1 Corinthians 10: 16-17, ESV

We Who Are Many Are One

Paul the Apostle's words, here in Corinthians, reference the deep and powerful truth which is embedded in the Christian ordinance of communion. The truth that, in taking the cup and sharing the bread, we are fully participating in Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus is the common element that binds believers together and his sacrifice is what makes the new resurrection life possible for every person who believes in his saving name.

This participation together in drinking wine and breaking bread is a compelling witness to the 'common union' believers share in the blood and body of Christ, the sharing in his sin-conquering death and his life-giving resurrection. There is nothing more powerful or significant for a church community than remembering the very thing which gave the church its birth and which binds each member together as part of 'the whole'.

For this reason, sharing communion is not just about remembering the death of Jesus, including the anguish, surrender, and sacrifice but also about celebrating his resurrection; the vanquishing of sin and the victory over death, won for every person who associates with his name. The new creation was born from his sacrifice and confirmed by his resurrected life, of which we are now all a part, bound together by the life-giving spirit of Jesus himself.

Sharing communion together as believers is primarily a time for celebration, for thanksgiving and praise, for “by his blood and in his name, in his freedom we are free!”

In celebrating this ordinance together, believers are not just connected to Jesus but to each other. It’s significant that Jesus associates the institution of communion – which speaks of his sacrifice and death, motivated by love – with the importance of his followers showing his love by **loving one another**.

During the meal (Matthew 26:17–30, Mark 14:12–26, Luke 22:7–39, and John 13:1–17:26), Jesus takes the bread and shares it with his disciples, telling them that it is symbolic of his body, soon to be broken for them in death. He shares the cup of wine, telling them it is a symbol of his blood, poured out for the forgiveness of their sins.

He gently tells his disciples that he will only be with them a little longer, referencing, of course, his impending betrayal and crucifixion. He then gives them a ‘new commandment’, to live by once he is gone:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” – John 13:34-35, ESV

Jesus first instituted the ordinance of communion, by which his followers would remember him, during his last meal on earth with his closest disciples, but this meal had its roots in a much deeper, incredibly powerful story of deliverance and freedom.

A Story Of Deliverance

The institution of communion had its origins in an ancient Jewish festive meal known as ‘Passover. Celebrated annually,

it commemorated the deliverance of the nation of Israel from bondage in Egypt.

The early chapters of the book of Exodus tell of the origins and background of the Passover (Exodus 1-12). Forcibly enslaved upon the accession of a new Pharaoh to the Egyptian throne, the people of Israel were subjected to cruelty, forced labour, and intolerable work and living conditions. In an effort to cull their numbers, Pharaoh had issued a directive of neonaticide for any male baby born. As soon as the baby was delivered, he was to be killed by the attending midwives. It was a terrible time for the people of Israel – cruelly mistreated and living in hopelessness, with no means to save themselves.

With heavy burdens bitterly borne, they desperately lifted their voices heavenward. God heard their cries for rescue and remembers his promises to their patriarchs [Abraham](#), Isaac, and Jacob, long ago (Exodus 2:24).

“And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey...” – Exodus 3:7-9

God stepped into their misery and suffering and promises to deliver them out of the affliction of Egypt. Through a series of plagues, demonstrating His almighty power, and the final dramatic death of Egypt’s own firstborn, God exercises His powerful arm of redemption and leads his people out of slavery to freedom and their promised land.

On the night of their leaving, the Israelites prepared unleavened bread and lamb, roasted over the fire. The lamb’s blood was brushed on the lintel and two doorposts of every Israelite home. When the Angel of Death went throughout Egypt,

killing the firstborn, he would see the blood and 'pass over' that house, sparing all those who were inside.

The night of Passover marked the end of slavery and brought deliverance and the beginning of the people of Israel's journey towards the promised land. Through death and sacrifice, came new life and hope.

The types that can be seen in this event for a Christian's new life are clear. It's no coincidence that Jesus uses this commemorative Passover meal, already 1,500 years old by this time and full of ancient symbology and meaning, to bring his disciples' attention to his own impending death, through which their rescue from 'slavery to sin' will be achieved.

Parallels In Leaving Egypt

Paul the Apostle observes that the events of Israel's exodus and subsequent journey through the wilderness towards the promised land are parallels of a Christian's new life in Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:1-13). He uses Egypt as a metaphor for sin and spiritual darkness and the exodus as an example of the freedom Christians experience in being rescued from the dominion of darkness (Colossians 1:13).

The **first parallel** to note is that of slavery. Just as the people of Israel were completely enslaved to the Egyptian Pharaoh, we are all slaves to sin, born so at birth and only confirmed throughout our lives by our sinful deeds (Romans 5:12, John 8:34). Yet God provided a deliverer, as He did for Israel, and the blood of this deliverer gives [salvation from death](#), which we are promised no longer has any hold over us (John 11:25. 1 Corinthians 15:55).

The **second parallel** is, of course, the sacrificial lamb. It is John the Baptist who first introduces Jesus as 'the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). Isaiah, a prophet in Old Testament writings, also prophesied of one

who would come to bear the sins of the world and that he would be 'led like a lamb to the slaughter' (Isaiah 53:7). The final book in the Bible, Revelation, confirms that Jesus was indeed the Lamb of God 'slain from the foundation of the world' (1 Peter 1:19, Revelation 13:8).

The theme of a sacrificial lamb has been constant throughout scripture (Genesis 3:21, Genesis 22:8, Numbers 9:12, Ezra 6:19, 2 Chronicles 35:11) and always intended to point forward to Jesus, who would be the ultimate sacrifice for all those who wanted to escape their inherent slavery to sin and death.

The **third parallel** is the deliverer himself. God raised up Moses, a natural-born Israelite to lead His people from Egypt. Adopted into Pharaoh's court as a baby and growing up under the very nose of the ruler of his people, Moses was not an outsider or a stranger but a man just like the people whom he would rescue and lead to freedom. The people of Israel were *his* people and their suffering was intimately connected with the suffering of *his* family.

One of the prophecies concerning Jesus was that he would be 'called out of Egypt'. This reveals the deeper truth about [Jesus' connection to the people he would come to save](#).

*"And he [Joseph] rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet [Hosea 11:1], "Out of Egypt I called my son."
| Matthew 2:14-15, ESV*

Jesus' redemptive work on behalf of humanity was deeply connected to his own humanity. Although he was the Son of God, and radiant with his Father's glory, he participated in every way in all the experiences of what it means to be human. His ability to sympathise with us and to reconcile on our behalf springs from a complete understanding of what it is like to be human; with all our doubts, fears, temptations, and failures,

without ever failing himself. He understood humans because he was human.

A **fourth parallel** exists in connection with the Passover and Exodus – that is, the crossing of the Red Sea. Paul the Apostle calls this crossing being ‘baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea’ (1 Corinthians 10:1) and comments that the Israelites all drank the same spiritual drink, which was Christ.

“For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.” | 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, ESV

Like the people of Israel, every person who desires to follow Jesus and ‘drink from that spiritual rock’ must first pass through the water of baptism, ‘under the cloud and through the sea’. The journey only truly begins on the other side of the ocean.

These parallels in the exodus story to our own Christian salvation are remarkable. They demonstrate the absolute power of God to achieve His purpose and that His plan of salvation has been in motion from the beginning of the world. God is on the move and God has always been on the move!

Paul reminds his readers that “all these things [that occurred to Israel] happened to them as examples for us” (1 Corinthians 10:11). Their defeats, joys, sufferings and victories were experienced as people who were ‘God’s witnesses’ (Isaiah 43:10) and from their stories, we can draw powerful truths about what God has done and is still doing for us.

The fact is, God moved heaven and earth to rescue His people

Israel and He has done nothing less than this for us, through the sending of His son, while we were still 'in Egypt'.

"But God proves His love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." | Romans 5:8, ESV

Through something as simple as bread and wine, Christians are reminded of God's promise of deliverance and of their forgiveness and freedom gifted through Jesus' sacrifice. It is a tangible witness to the transforming power of [the Gospel](#) in people's lives and the faithfulness of an eternal God.

[Disciples of Jesus](#) – Christians – have continued to celebrate this new covenant since that time, through the participation together of *communion*, the eating of bread and the drinking of wine 'in remembrance of Jesus'.

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's trespasses against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: Be reconciled to God...." | 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, BSB

If the story of the Exodus has resonated with you; if you recognise that you are 'in Egypt', in slavery to sin and subject to the power of death and you want rescue, I implore you on behalf of Christ – be saved! (2 Corinthians 5:20) God had so much love for the world that He gave His one and only Son, for everyone, and that includes you! The Gospel is Good News for every person and I believe God is still making a move, doing exciting things right here in the Northern Rivers! I'd love to help you be reconciled to Him! (If you're unsure

whether the Christian life is for you and just want to chat it over, with no pressure or expectation, I'd love to hear from you too). [Follow the link](#) to get in touch.

Keen to learn more about the book of Exodus? Head on over to [The Bible Project](#) website (click the link) where you'll find a couple of great overview videos.