

## Jesus' Concern For Others (#3)

Joe Slater

Even as He hung dying on the cross, Jesus thought of others. He practiced what He preached about loving one's enemies as he prayed, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" (Luke 23:34). Yes, while the burning pain wracked His body, Jesus was praying for the very ones crucifying Him! We might expect Him to curse them or call down angels to destroy them, but Jesus was concerned with their spiritual state. He knew that unless they believed in Him, repented, and obeyed the gospel, they would die with this and other sins on their record. They would face God in judgment guilty and condemned to suffer eternally in Hell. A selfish person might think, "Good! That's just what they deserve. Let them die lost – that will teach them!" But Jesus loved them. He wanted what was best for them despite the fact that they hated Him, mocked Him, spat upon Him, and were even now killing Him!

Then there was the robber crucified alongside Him who pleaded, "*Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom*" (Luke 23:42). Earlier he had joined his fellow-robber mocking Jesus (Mark 15:32). However, he now demonstrated repentance by rebuking the other criminal's taunts: "*Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong*" (Luke 23:40-41).

What would you have done? Could you have forgiven him like Jesus did? Though this robber had insulted him only a little while earlier, Jesus was willing to forgive. He was concerned about the man's eternal welfare. "*Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43).

More Next Week

## ***I Will Give You Rest***

*"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28, ESV).

An e-mail was forwarded to me that originated with the CDC. The relevant part of their message read, "The COVID-19 pandemic may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a new disease ... can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. ... social distancing, can make people feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety."

Perhaps you have already noticed these reactions.

Yes, people are stressed right now. And, unfortunately, anti-Christian governing officials may be manipulating the situation to inflict damage on the church. So, Christians face the same stress factors that non-Christians face, plus some additional stress factors. There are at least two ways of looking at this.

We could view it as a hopeless catastrophe -- the end of our nation as we have known it, perhaps the end of the church as we have known it. Or we could view it as an unusual opportunity.

Opportunities for evangelism often increase in times of stress. Peter tells us that we should always be ready to give an answer to the one who asks us concerning the hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15). If we remain calm when others are stressed, we are more likely to hear such a request.

In the early 1960s, not many people were asking about our hope. Everyone was hopeful and expectant. Our nation was going to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade; the UN was going to end the practice of warfare; and the civil rights act was going to end racism once and for all. Everyone was hopeful, and it was in some ways harder for the Christian faith to stand out. But

in this time of stress, the calm, composed and hardworking Christian will be noticed.

Let us not be among those who practically worship political leaders. More government will not provide the solution to the world's problems. Racism and war are caused mainly by spiritual defects. The most important solution will be in changing hearts, not laws.

Jesus gives us rest. Let us rest in his promise. When, in the midst of this stressful world, we rest in Jesus, our hopefulness will be notable. We will then have opportunity to explain the source of our peace, contentment, and hope.

The virus has caused stress, and the stress is our opportunity.

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)

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## **Is The Bible A Fable?**

If the Bible is a mere fable, why do infidels single it out and seek its destruction? There are thousands of fables in the land, and they let them pass – why not let the Bible pass, if it is just another fable? Why do they oppose it?

Ah, the book will not let them alone. It condemns them at every turn. Their spirits cannot rest. It follows them day by day and it haunts them every night. It is before them when they rise up, and it is there when they lie down. They rant and they rave, they scoff and they scowl – but they feel afraid.

--Foy E. Wallace, Jr. (deceased) via *The Torch*