Hi,

Well, here we all are, isolated and trying to make sense of this crisis. Patti and I just found out that our nephew’s wedding on the 21st has been postponed. So sad, I can’t imagine how disappointed he and Marshall are, as well as the thousands of folks in similar circumstances.

But we are Christ’s and the saints have been through much worse. So, we will gather on-line or on the phone, it is the best we can do right now and it will be enough. I’ll be sending out an email every day with a few thoughts, a link or two, and a Bible study from the archives.

Here’s a few thoughts to get us started:

* I’m exploring the feasibility of doing on-line classes from our home. I’ll keep you posted on my progress.
* When Patti and I first started dating, I learned that she wrote a check out to the church every Sunday, in front of Robby, hoping he would tithe when he got older. Patti has kept up her habit, even though Robby has been on his own for awhile. But there are no plates to pass right now. So, for the first time ever, we gave on-line yesterday. It was a snap. I hope you will keep up your giving during this crisis. [Here’s the link we used yesterday.](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001jTaB0ah45Vw-3ZCDSLdos2GbRBRnuhhwRyvAm_lAKIzSMvfjRf95UprZZaE3Ttt3FxOjkWih1HvtDCFhr_dPuASr-Z0EWsp3HjQNQHSiR890i5iykNi4jPwXYjAEsSb7M_xcnnLreaojSyt6uhJR_WArLg1AmrFufwmLzMLrtpMa-vsaRl7jiw==&c=fzXTmfkr1C1TAuPV3WSnFr114x3jLW-_mctaD0Isp3r2oNMYXAWSTA==&ch=Z2hIfv6ArtssFCuZJKhhleQoT8JswVl0amgrkXXlPeoQWdwO90NleA==)
* I’ve attached the first in a series of studies I wrote in 2009 about the stories of David. I’ll include one a day. The saga of David is some of the best storytelling in the Bible.

“I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:12-13)

Yes, these are anxiety-inducing times. But anxiety has always been part of the human condition. In Peter’s day, people were no less anxious and stressed out than we are now, even when times were good – much less than when they were bad.

For the ancients, the heavens were populated with countless gods and goddesses, any of whom might take a disliking toward you or your neighbors on a whim. The pantheon of the gods was like one big soap opera, far removed from any human control. The gods would do what they wanted, when they wanted. People coped with the whims of the gods in different ways. Some, like the Epicureans, decided that since they couldn’t control their capricious gods, they’d simply grab all the pleasure and happiness they could in life. Others, like the Stoics, sought to make themselves immune to anxiety by learning a detached self-sufficiency, which they called “contentment.”

In his letter to the Christians in Philippi, Paul uses the language of the Stoics. This is the only place in his letters that Paul refers to himself as “content” (*autarkes* in the Greek). Paul would often use the language and vocabulary of his audience when he spoke to them about Jesus Christ. But Paul always meant something different too; there was always a Christian perspective. For the Stoics, contentment was all about being independent, needing no one else. That way, the “content” person couldn’t be harmed by the emotions or slights or needs of others. Obviously, Paul means something quite different; it is resting in the Lord whatever comes.

Paul, you see, is writing from prison and he knows that he may soon executed. Nonetheless, his letter to the Philippians is filled with joy. He has learned to be content in all things, even facing imprisonment and execution.

How has Paul learned this? What is his “secret”? Paul has learned that he can do all things – such as being content in all circumstances – through God. It is God who gives Paul the strength that he needs to be free from worry and anxiety. Paul’s secret is that he has come to understand and truly embrace the psalmist’s portrait of God as the good shepherd. Though Paul languishes in prison, he will “fear no evil,” confident that God will lead him to green pastures and still water. Paul’s cup will always overflow – in all circumstances. He knows that he will dwell in God’s house forever, because nothing – “not death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers . . . nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:38-39). Such confidence in God and the strength he provides is the basis for Paul’s joyful contentment and our own, even in the face of Covid-19. May it be so!

*A site to check out*

When Patti and I went to the Society of Biblical Literature last fall, I attended a session devoted to a new book by Nijay Gupta, *Paul and the Language of Faith*. [He maintains an interesting site: click here to get there.](https://www.patheos.com/blogs/cruxsola/)

*Movie recommendation*

Patti and I like old movies. We recently watched *Twelve Angry Men* with Henry Fonda. Such a powerful film and as relevant today as ever, all you have to do is switch out the “them” to a minority of your choice. Even if you’ve seen it before, as we had, I think you will enjoy it. The movie is available for free right now on TCM’s channel on Spectrum on-demand. You can also rent it for a few dollars on Amazon, Apple, and Google Play.

*Book recommendation*

One of the best epic novels of my time is James Clavell’s novel of Japan, *Shogun*. If you haven’t read it -- well, you probably have the time now. It will keep you busy for awhile. ;)

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott