

Optimism and the Christian

Introduction

1. Many things cause people to be pessimistic, but for the Christian, ***“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).***
2. God’s people are not immune to pessimism:
 - a. Israelites in the Exodus (**cf. Exodus 14**) – cried out to the Lord in complaint as the Egyptians closed in, saying it would have been better to stay in Egypt than to die in the wilderness.
 - b. Israelites at Kadesh Barnea (**cf. Numbers 13, 14**) – 12 spies sent to spy out the land, and 10 came back with a negative report, suggesting the people of Canaan were too great for them.
 - c. What pessimism actually looks like to God – **Numbers 14:11-12** – it is a sign of a lack of faith.
3. Children of God are people of hope – **Romans 15:13** – they are by definition to be optimistic people.
 - a. Optimism – “hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
 - b. Pessimism – “a tendency to see the worst aspect of things or believe that the worst will happen; a lack of hope or confidence in the future” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
 - c. ***“But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.” (Hebrews 6:9).***
- I. The Reason for Optimism
 - A. God’s Plan
 - a. **Ecclesiastes 9:11-12** – time and chance are a cause for pessimism.
 - i. Anything can happen to anyone at any time.
 - ii. Does not mean we HAVE to be pessimistic, but it is certainly something which causes pessimism.
 - b. God’s eternal plan – **Ephesians 3:11** – described as ***“eternal purpose.”***
 - i. I.e. it was devised by One who transcends time and chance, and outside time and chance.
 - ii. **Job 42:2** – God’s purposes cannot be thwarted.
 - c. Man, then, can trust in God’s plan with optimism – **Proverbs 3:5-6**
 - B. Jesus’ Death and Resurrection
 - a. God’s plan was accomplished in Christ – **Ephesians 3:11** – past tense – accomplished.
 - b. **Romans 8:3-4** – where the righteous requirement could not be fulfilled without Christ, it is not fulfilled in us because of Christ.
 - i. **(vv. 31-34)** – He combats pessimistic thoughts with the facts of Christ’s redemptive work – God’s plan thwarts the devil’s claims if we are in Christ.
 - c. **Romans 5:10** – saved by His life – i.e. in His resurrection. (**cf. 1 Corinthians 15:12-19** – if Christ is not raised.)

- C. The Holy Spirit's Work
 - a. He (HS) has freed us from sin and death – **Romans 8:2**
 - b. Through the word, He (HS) dwells in us and makes us alive to work righteousness before God – **Romans 8:10-11**
 - c. **Romans 6:12-14** – ultimately able (along with the blood of Christ) to live this way because of the Spirit's direction in the word. (**cf. Galatians 5:16-18**).
- II. Optimistic About
 - A. Spiritual Growth
 - a. We are commanded to grow – **1 Peter 2:1-3**
 - i. Christians are not to remain immature any more than a newborn baby.
 - ii. Babies grow, or we worry about them.
 - b. The problem? – Pessimism:
 - i. It is not that we don't have the resources.
 - ii. It is not that we don't have the help.
 - iii. It is not that we don't have the time. (Always room we can make.)
 - iv. One of the biggest inhibitors to growth is the idea that we personally don't have what it takes to grow.
 - 1. Became a Christian too late in life?
 - 2. Past life was too "bad?"
 - 3. Sullied reputation from without?
 - 4. Cannot fill the shoes of spiritual giants in our lives? (Family – mom, dad, grandparents, etc.)
 - 5. Etc.
 - v. Also, some tend to view spiritual growth as something that should happen overnight. When it doesn't they get discouraged.
 - c. The only thing in the way of our spiritual growth is ourselves – **2 Corinthians 6:12** – problem in Corinthian's relationship with Paul, thus with God, was their own affections.
 - i. THEIR OWN feelings caused their trouble.
 - ii. Specifically, in context their hard feelings toward Paul influenced by the false apostles.
 - d. **Philippians 2:12-16** – our spiritual growth requires our own diligence, and cooperation in full confidence with God's work in us.
 - i. **(vv. 14-15)** – must not complain and dispute with God's way.
 - ii. **(v. 16)** – must hold fast to God's direction.
 - e. God is able to cause growth in us! – **Ephesians 3:20-21** – He can make you grow stronger than you ever thought possible.
 - B. Winning the Battle Against Temptation
 - a. Temptation is an everyday reality.
 - i. All temptation is **"common to man" (1 Corinthians 10:13)**.
 - ii. We cannot escape temptation, but we don't have to yield to it!

- b. Much pessimism in regard to overcoming temptation comes from the error of the religious world about the nature of man:
 - i. Man does not have a sinful nature! – created upright – **Ecclesiastes 7:29**
 - ii. Sinful flesh? – **Romans 8:3**
 - 1. Flesh is not inherently sinful – else Jesus had sin – BUT JESUS WAS SINLESS, AND BY THAT CAN LEAD THE WAY FOR US.
 - 2. Inherent in the flesh are passions, urges, and longings which often lead to sin when unchecked.
 - 3. This is what Paul refers to.
 - iii. **Galatians 5:16-17** – God’s word tells us NOT to do that which is sinful, and WE DON’T HAVE TO!
 - c. We need to refuse the notion that we HAVE to sin. That it is engrained in our nature.
 - i. The children of God are characterized by their sinless Father – **1 John 3:7-9**
 - ii. We don’t have to sin. We can avoid sin by acting as the children of God that we are.
 - iii. Allowing His seed (the word of God) to remain in us.
 - d. The idea that man can’t help but sin not only leads to pessimism about overcoming temptation, but it takes away our responsibility, and allows sin!
 - e. **1 Peter 1:13-16** – part of girding up the loins of our mind (readying our mind) is understanding we can live without sin. We can overcome temptation!
 - f. **Matthew 26:41** – we must be vigilant and prayerful.
 - i. **“enter into”** – it will come, but don’t walk through the door to sin.
 - ii. Prayer – sets the mind’s focus on God, and accesses God’s powerful provisions.
 - g. **1 Corinthians 10:13** – there is always an escape.
 - i. We must be watchful and prayerful to see it.
 - ii. We must be willing to take it.
 - iii. We must be optimistic that God has, or will provide it.
- C. Reaching Heaven
- a. A struggle most Christians have to endure is standing for the Biblical teaching that the majority won’t make it to heaven, while still having confidence that we ourselves are going to make it.
 - i. There is an air of doubt surrounding many Christians.
 - ii. They don’t want to voice confidence in their salvation lest they come across as self-righteous.
 - iii. It is not a quality of humility to act like if we make it to heaven it will be by the skin of our teeth – it’s really a sign of immaturity, and/or ignorance, or lack of faith.

- iv. This concept of making it to heaven is a form of pessimism.
- b. God wants us to be optimistic about reaching heaven:
 - i. **Titus 1:1-3** – God promised it, and cannot lie.
 - 1. **(v. 1)** – speaks of the elect, and the truth.
 - 2. **(v. 3)** – speaks of the word.
 - 3. These are matters which work together with God’s promise, and the immutability of His counsel to grant confidence to the child of God.
 - ii. **Hebrews 6:13-18** – God has granted us examples of promises being kept, and rewards being realized.
 - iii. **Hebrews 6:19-20** – God has provided a perfect High Priest in Jesus who lived as a man, and paved the way to heaven for us – our hope enters behind the veil with Him.
- c. God says few will find the way to heaven, but He does not say NOBODY WILL – **Matthew 7:13-14**
- d. He has provided us a way for optimism and confidence in this pursuit:
 - i. **2 Peter 1:8-11** – we can add these matters to our faith and make heaven sure. (Abundantly supplied entrance)
 - ii. **Hebrews 12:1-2** – He has provided us many examples to follow, Jesus being the greatest – Jesus can FINISH our faith. (**cf. 1 Peter 1:9** – end of faith is salvation.)
 - iii. **2 Timothy 1:12** – if we commit ourselves to Christ we can be confident that He will keep us till the day of salvation.
- e. If we are in sin we should not be confident in our salvation.
- f. If we are following Christ we have every reason to be optimistic, and confident that we will reach heaven!

Conclusion

- 1. Christian’s should not be characterized by pessimism.
- 2. They should be an optimistic people.
- 3. Because of God’s provisions and protections they should always have a positive outlook on life – especially as it pertains to their spiritual journey, which is the most important matter.
- 4. They are people who can always rejoice – **Philippians 4:4**
- 5. Let us maintain optimism as we serve our great and awesome God.