

Optimism vs. Pessimism

TEXT: Matt. 6

THESIS: One who is optimistic does not ignore the realities of life (troubles, sickness, death, etc.), but he views them in the best possible light.

INTRODUCTION:

1. There are many things happening in the world, especially right now, which could cause one to take a pessimistic view of life in general.
 - a. The American economy is bad and many people have lost their jobs.
 - b. Our government has provided stimulus money to failing companies only to have those same failing companies literally give millions of dollars in bonuses to their CEOs.
2. Many of our young men and women are in foreign countries fighting battles due to terrorists who would love to terrorize, demoralize and kill Americans (and any others who disagree with their religion and philosophy).
3. Health care is another concern for those who are now without jobs and consequently without medical insurance.
 - a. What does the future hold for us?
 - b. What should be the Christian's outlook on the future in the face of all these problems?
 - i. What should be the Christian's outlook in troublesome times?
4. Before one takes a dark view of life, perhaps he should consider that he can go for a walk and hear song birds singing their enchanting songs.
 - a. We can go outside and see flowers blooming and spreading their sweet fragrance and also beautifully decorating the landscape around us.
 - b. And once we do this, let us then ask ourselves, "Does the One Who created the birds and gave them their songs care about me?"
 - i. "Does the One who provides sunshine and rain for the flowers know that I also need His attention?"
 - ii. **INDEED HE DOES!**
 - (1) Jesus reminds us in Matt. 6:24-34.
5. Today, I would like to talk about Optimist and Pessimist.
6. The word "Optimism" is from the Latin word "optimus" meaning "best" and is defined as "a tendency to anticipate the best possible outcome."
7. But on the other hand, "Pessimism" is "from the Latin pessimus (worst) and is defined as "a painful state of mind which negatively colours the perception of life, especially with regard to future events."
 - a. In short, optimism looks to the future with the best possible view, whereas pessimism looks to the future with the worse possible view.
 - b. Now which of these views should a Christian possess?
 - i. Should a Christian look at life with the best possible view or with the worst possible view?

- ii. Which of the two views did Jesus possess?
- iii. Did Paul accomplish all the great good he did by being pessimistic or by being optimistic?

8. Let us consider:

DISCUSSION:

I. GOOD THINKING HELPS PRODUCE GOOD HEALTH

- A. Does the way a person think affect his health and countenance? Sure it does.
 - 1. It should be no surprise to us that the way a person thinks directly affects the organs of the body.
 - 2. Tell someone that he is to speak in a public setting and his heart rate and adrenalin can increase.
 - a. Why? Because just the mere thought of public speaking makes some to get sick.
 - b. Their thinking (mind) has affected their body (health).
 - 3. Why is it that sometimes a person's face will turn red when they speak publically?
- B. Dr. McMillen writes in the book, *None of these Diseases*, "With each passing year, we obtain a wider comprehension of the ability of the mind to produce varied disturbances of the body . . . Invisible emotional tension in the mind can produce striking visible changes in the body, changes that can become serious and fatal . . . (In Fact) A large percentage of most physicians' practices are made up of patients whose illnesses are directly or indirectly the result of emotional stress.
 - 1. McMillen goes on to say, "The brain, where all the emotional stress is processed, is the control center of the entire body. From the brain millions of nerve fibers course out to every organ in the body. Chemicals released from these nerve fibers control or influence every chemical reaction in every organ of the body. Because our health is dependent on the proper balance of all these chemical reactions, it is no wonder that emotional upset in our brains can disrupt chemical reactions in a far-removed organ and cause disease."
 - 2. With what Dr. McMillian wrote, it is easy to see how anxiety (worry) and stress can affect the body's well being.
- C. Now certainly, there are going to be times of stress and sadness in our lives.
 - 1. Right thinking does not keep "bad things" from happening to us.
 - 2. However, right thinking does help us cope with the tragedies that come into our lives.
 - 3. One must keep in mind that even Jesus wept (John 11:35).
 - a. Jesus could be moved to tears.
 - b. On occasions, He even got angry and was grieved (Mark 3:5).
 - (1) Even God, the Father and the Holy Spirit can be grieved (Gen. 6:6; Eph. 4:30).
 - c. There will be times when we too are grieved due to various

- circumstances in life.
- d. And so, one should not feel guilty when these feelings arise, as they are normal for us and God!
4. Remember, even Solomon observed that there is a time to weep and a time to laugh (Eccl. 3:4).
 - a. Even though we were created to live life realistically, that also means that we were given the fatiguing emotions of fear, anger, anxiety and sorrow.
 - b. All of our emotions have their proper place.
 - (1) However, these negative emotions should not dominate our life, especially to the point of mental or physical illness.
 - (2) Again, God does not expect us to live a life of doom and gloom.
 - (a) And, we further see too much of it on the news.
- D. Jesus though, came to give us an abundant life, not one that is full of despair and depression.
1. He said, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).
 - a. Even in a world where there is tribulation, we can still be of good cheer.
 - b. For Jesus instructed, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).
 2. You know, the Bible mentions the benefits of having a merry heart, that is, thinking joyfully or optimistically.
 - a. “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken” (Prov. 15:13).
 - b. “All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast” (Prov. 15:15).
 - c. “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Prov. 17:22).
 - d. “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works” (Eccl. 9:7).
- E. We need to remember that good thinking helps produce good health.

II. CAUSES OF PESSIMISM (THINKING THE WORST)

- A. If a person has some sort of physical imbalance in his life that causes uncontrollable depression, he should seek medical help.
 1. It is possible that a person has medical problems for which he needs medical attention.
 2. Also, one should keep in mind that it is possible for one to be over-stressed and is simply having a bad day.

- a. But usually, in a day or two, we snap out of it.
- 3. However, others have spiritual problems with “pessimism” (thinking the worst) and this problem is more dangerous than some might think.
 - a. Spiritual pessimism will cause one to disobey God.
 - b. Let’s look at Israel for the prime example.
 - c. I When God worked many wonders in Egypt, sending plague after plague on the Egyptians in order to bring Israel out of captivity, when God opened the Red Sea so that the Israelites could cross on dry ground and destroyed the Egyptians when they tried to cross the same Red Sea as the Israelites, when God promised Israel the land of Canaan and was told to go and possess it.
 - (1) What happened?
 - (a) Remember the ten spies who said they could not take the land.
 - (b) Then, they convinced the congregation they could not possess what God had promised.
 - (c) So because of their disobedience, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years until all that were twenty years old and above in that generation died.
 - d. In Deut 1:20-28, we find Moses reminding the generation following them why they did not possess the land.
 - (1) It was because they rebelled against the commandment of the LORD their God and murmured in their tents.
- B. Now, would you say that the children of Israel were optimistic or pessimistic?
 - 1. Obviously, they were pessimistic . . . they thought the worst.
 - 2. But, what does God call their pessimism?
 - a. Look at Heb. 3:12-19.
 - b. He calls their pessimism, “unbelief!”
- C. That means, pessimism is a lack of faith.
 - 1. It will cause us to have fear and failure rather than success and salvation.
 - 2. Even the world knows “success comes in cans” and not in can-nots.
 - a. Remember being taught as a child about the little train that said “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can?”
 - b. How much more should the child of God, who has a loving Father in Heaven, have the best or optimistic attitude of mind!

III. REASONS FOR OPTIMISM (THINKING THE BEST)

- A. There are many reasons, in fact, for the child of God to be optimistic.
 - 1. As previously stated, we have a Father who loves and provides for each of us.
 - a. Jesus admonished in Matt. 7:7-11, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For

every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.”

2. We have a Savior who gave His life that we might have eternal life.
 - a. The Hebrew writer penned, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9).
 3. We have the Holy Spirit who revealed God’s complete revelation to us through inspired men in the first century and who intercedes for us today (2 Tim. 3:16-17, Rom. 8:26).
 4. We have brethren all over the world who genuinely care for us and we for them.
 5. And, we have the providence of God who provides for us every day of our lives (1 Peter 3:12).
- B. We have a great and worthy purpose to life – to glorify God and to seek and save the lost (Mk. 16:15-16).
1. To keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:12-14)
 2. And, “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Eph. 3:21)

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8).
 - a. When He came to this world, He knew he would suffer ill treatment by man and ultimately would be crucified, though He did no wrong.
 - b. However, one does not read that Jesus was pessimistic.
 - i. Sure, He was troubled in spirit (John 13:21), yet He maintained faith and confidence in God, the Father.
2. The Hebrews’ writer tells us of Jesus’ optimistic attitude, even while suffering at the hands of sinful man.
 - a. He wrote, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2).
 - b. Jesus could (and did), endure the cross knowing the joy that was set before him.
3. What a great lesson for us!
 - a. Of course, one who is optimistic does not ignore the realities of life (troubles, sickness, death, etc.), but he views them in the best possible light.
 - b. How do you view life?
4. If you are pessimistic, do you have enough faith in God? The children of Israel did not have enough faith in God because they were pessimistic.

- a. Trust in God. Lean on Him. Come to Him. Correct you life with God.