

## THE GOOD NEWS IN THE BAD NEWS

I believe it is better to look on the bright side of things as much as is possible. It is better to be optimistic than pessimistic about the future.

If you study history you will see that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century a great optimism was prevalent throughout the western world.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I do not seem to see this same kind of optimism. Between the disaster of 9/11, the tsunami, terrorism, wars, pollution, and crime, the future can look pretty bleak.

Nevertheless, I try to be optimistic because I see all these things as signs that Jesus is indeed coming back just as he promised.

Let us look at some predictions Jesus made almost 2,000 years ago about what the world would be like before he returned. These events, though terrible, should not take us by surprise because Jesus told us about them.

These events that Jesus predicted point to the hope of His return and the promise that when He does return all our suffering will be over if we have lived Christian lives.

So what exactly did Jesus say the world would face during the time before His second coming? How accurate have His predictions been?

One thing that Jesus said in Matthew 24:6 was "*And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars.*" All through history there have been treaties, conferences, and alliances in an attempt to avert war. What are the results of all these attempts? It has been estimated that during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 160 million people were killed directly as a result of war. Jesus predicted that right.

Let us read more of the verse in Matthew 24:6, "*see that ye be not troubled.*" What, not troubled by wars? Jesus means

don't let these things discourage you or cause you to lose faith in him and the promise of his return. These bad things will happen, but despite them He is coming back, so we must not lose our faith in Him.

What else did Jesus say we should expect before his return? *"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."* (Mat. 24:7-8) Let us note and understand that in these scriptures, Jesus clearly did not give any hope that somehow humans would be able to conquer the scourges of war, hunger, sickness, and disease. Jesus knew the future. He is not only showing us He knows the future, He is giving us hope and security amid the suffering.

Every year there is a contest on Coney Island in New York. It is called "Nathan's Famous Fourth of July International Hotdog Eating Contest." The reigning champion holds the record of eating more hotdogs in less time than anyone else in the world, 68 hotdogs with buns in 10 minutes.

In contrast to this gluttony, Jesus talked about natural disasters, famines, and pestilences. All the great strides we have made in science have not been able to spare us from these things. Amid all our plenty and technology, one cannot forget the pictures from Africa of starving children who are literally skin and bones. In a world with so much abundance, with so much overindulgence, many people are still starving in famines. Should we be surprised by this, discouraged or tempted to lose our faith? No, because Jesus warned us that this would happen.

Jesus also spoke of pestilences. In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the horrible Spanish influenza devastated the world population. This disease, which was believed to have originated in China, spread to Japan, Europe, America, and Africa. Before this epidemic ended, an estimated 40 million people died in one year. Currently HIV/AIDS afflicts about 40 million people worldwide. Sexually transmitted diseases infect about 400 million adults every year, and the problem of disease is getting worse. Measles still kills literally hundreds of thousands of children worldwide every year. Jesus warned us about pestilence almost 2000 years ago, long before the rise of modern medicine and the hope that someday humans would be able to

wipe out disease. Those hopes so far have been mostly futile while Jesus speaking centuries ago was right.

Jesus also said that we can expect the world to be shattered by earthquakes such as the one that caused the tsunami in December 2004 that killed an estimated 230,000 people. Two thousand years ago Jesus described accurately what the world would be like before his return.

Yet after describing such horrific events, Jesus warned, "*All these are the beginning of sorrows (birth pains).*" What did Jesus mean? Perhaps He meant that no matter how bad war, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes get, we can expect other bad things as well before he returns. When we hear of the horrible crimes, terrorism, pain, and suffering that infects our world, we realize Jesus gave us an incredibly accurate picture of what our world would be like before he returns.

Jesus said one other thing that we must not miss. Amid all these terrible events to occur, He said in Luke 21:28, "*And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*" Jesus is telling us not to become discouraged because none of the terrible things taking place in the world have taken Him by surprise. He assures us that they won't be forever because one day he will return and it will all end. That is why we should not lose faith. We should not believe that the tragedies of war, sickness, and death are proof that there is no God.

The world can be very discouraging. But in Jesus' words, we have the assurance that in spite of the bad things that happen, we are not to give up, because He is coming back to put a stop to it all.

The good news is that you and I are not left on our own. Jesus' words prove that He knows about all these things and that despite them, we can have hope. All we have to do is live Christian lives.

**ERLIN TREKELL**  
(Springfield, CO)

## APOLOGIA

In this month's Apologia we will continue to discuss the subject of how to deal with difficult people. We all realize that difficult people are in our lives. In fact I am quite sure that some would even view us as difficult from time to time! The emphasis of this article is our response to those who are in our circle. It could be someone at work, someone in our family, a neighbor, or even someone in our congregation. But whatever the case the Lord is very concerned with how we respond to them.

As we think of the difficult people in our lives, it would be good to answer why we consider them difficult. If we were to categorize the behaviors that make people difficult to deal with, our list would probably include such things as ingratitude, back-stabbing, undue criticism, gossip, lack of support, insensitivity, poor social skills, bad habits, as well as many other undesirable behaviors. Sound familiar? Unfortunately, it may describe us! How to respond to them is of great importance.

The apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:20, in speaking of his role and work in the church writes,

*"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."*

While we understand that Paul was discussing his role and work as an apostle, it must be noted that in one sense we all are ambassadors for Christ. We, as we live our lives each day, are to be an example that would bring others to God. Jesus tells us,

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:13-16)

In Philippians 2:15-16, Paul admonishes us to

*"...become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life..."*

The above should serve to remind us of our responsibility to respond to difficult people as Christ would. How we respond speaks volumes about our faith, and in fact it affects how others view Christ!

We need to begin to view all of our circumstances in life as opportunities for growth in Christ-likeness as well as opportunities to reflect the redemption that we have received.

Jesus while here on earth certainly experienced His share of difficult people. In fact all humankind is problematic. But over and over again we find Jesus exemplifying how to respond. He never struck back or sought to render evil for evil. He truly responded with love. Consider some of the following examples.

Of the ten lepers He healed in Luke 17:11-19, only one returned to give Him praise and thanks. Jesus simply asked where are the nine? He could have chased them down and reminded them of what He had done for them or even struck them with leprosy once again but instead He let it go.

When the disciples fell asleep before His arrest instead of growing angry He gently rebuked them by a question. (Mat. 26:40)

As Judas made plans to betray Him, He commented, "do it quickly." (John 13:27)

When Peter denied Him, Jesus helped refocus Peter and forgave Him of his denial. (John 21)

When criticized for eating with sinners and healing on the Sabbath, Jesus reminded that the sick need a physician. (Mat. 9:12)

Example after example could be given to show that Jesus dealt appropriately with the difficult people He

encountered. Sometimes not a word was said, at other times a rebuke, but never did He respond except with love.

Jesus demonstrated an ability to focus on the purpose He was trying to accomplish. He came to seek and save the lost. That was His goal, and as such He was able to look beyond the pettiness and hurt that difficult people can bring. The reason being He focused on pleasing God, not man. If we did the same, if we made God and bringing Him glory the focus of our life, then difficult people take on a different look.

One author suggested that we can measure our spiritual maturity by how we deal with difficult people. As we grow in Christ-likeness, we should see ourselves move from seeing difficult people as barriers and annoyances, to tolerating, forgiving, and to finally serving them out of gratitude for what God has done for us!

Here are some things to remember as you seek to love the difficult people in your life.

Remember that you cannot please everybody! Seek to please God.

Refuse to play their game. Always speak the truth in love and respond as God does with you.

Never render evil for evil.

Always pray for them!

And finally, *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men"*. (Rom. 12:18)

**SAM DICK**  
(Cave City, KY)

## **SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES**

1. God gave the Israelites a deliverer named Ehud. What fact was mentioned about him?
2. In describing God's greatness, what three constellations did Job mention?

3. Who was spared from slaughter by the six men with battle-axes according to Ezekiel's vision?
4. Who became upset when Jesus healed a woman on the Sabbath who had been bent over for eighteen years?
5. In Paul's writings to Timothy, Paul said some will appear in the latter times forbidding what two things?

## **GOSPEL MEETINGS**

<b><u>DATES</u></b>	<b><u>PLACE</u></b>	<b><u>SPEAKER</u></b>
October 2 – 4	Pleasant Ridge Woodbury, TN	Hunter Bulger (Fort Deposit, AL)
October 5 – 9	Mount Zion near Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
October 12 – 16	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN))
October 15 – 17	Load Load, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
October 15 – 18	Marrowbone Marrowbone, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
October 16 – 18	Antioch Greenup, IL	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
October 23 – 25	Albuquerque Albuquerque, NM	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
October 23 – 25	Antioch Douglasville, GA	Allan Daniel (Woodland, AL)
October 23 – 25	Pine Grove McKee, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
October 25 – 28	Noble Lafayette, GA	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
October 30 – Nov 1	Ephesus Ephesus, GA	Dwight Thomas (Wedowee, AL)