
Praise and Thanksgiving or Fear and Worry... You Choose

I've been waiting two years to write this letter. It was two years ago, October of 2005, that I was holding a series of meetings in Scotland. The avian flu virus (bird flu) hit with all its force. The authorities were killing birds by the thousands in the U.K.

It dominated the news. I watched the BBC interview of a leading medical "expert" in Britain who was hitting the public panic button. When asked about the possibility of this disease mutating from birds to humans, he stated emphatically that it wasn't a matter of IF, but WHEN.

Then he said, and I quote, "It might be one or two years at the most, but one-third of the world's population will die by this avian flu pandemic." Two years were up last month, and to date, worldwide there have only been a dozen or two human deaths attributed to this avian, or bird, flu.

While it is sad that there has been any loss of life from this disease, it certainly hasn't been one-third of the world's population. This stands as yet another classic example of how we are systematically misled, or out and out lied to, on a daily basis by the all-pervasive media.

Some may think my assessment of this is a little "overboard." After all, the "expert" was only sounding a warning about what could happen, but I suggest that it was this "expert" that was "overboard." He didn't say this might happen or that this would be a worst-case scenario; he said emphatically that it would happen, and he predicted over two billion deaths in two years from this pandemic.

It is the philosophy of the world to overstate everything and predict the worst possible outcome. Anyone who has had dealings with doctors has experienced this. Liability issues cause them to state worst-case scenarios. The world considers this wisdom. They don't want to get anyone's hopes up, but it is hope that keeps this world from imploding.

We will never know how many people became depressed or lived in fear because of this report. However, we do know that these predictions had a big impact on the poultry industry worldwide. In addition, where are the animal lovers who cry "foul" (pardon the pun) at the slaughter of poor defenseless animals? All these "experts" have been issued a pass.

Moreover, it's not just the secular media that has all the doomsday prophets. Remember the Y2K scare? The secular press didn't make a big deal out of this, but all the Christian media were predicting the worst. Churches were selling six-month supplies of emergency food, generators, and were urging people to move out of the cities.

One pastor I know encouraged people to buy guns and learn how to use them for protection during the panic that was predicted to come on January 1, 2000. There were many who proclaimed this as the beginning of the Tribulation period.

The dawning of the new millennium turned out to be a nonevent. Those who led the body of Christ into the Y2K panic mode responded by saying nobody was hurt but that it was wisdom to be prepared, just in case. But I personally know people who moved, losing tens of thousands of dollars on the sale of their house. Marriages fell apart under the strain. People hoarded food and other basic necessities, suffering from fear in anticipation of the terrible things to come.

You don't spend months or years nurturing fear and panic and then just turn it off the next day. These spiritual forces are very detrimental to our spiritual, emotional, and physical health. Our world has become addicted to fear.

If there aren't enough negative things going on, then the media will manufacture something for us to worry about.

I've only used two notable examples of this, but the same thing happens hundreds of times each day. We are inundated with bad news and dire predictions that affect our overall outlook and emotions.

This is the exact opposite of how the Bible tells us to live.

Philippians 4:6 says,

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

The Greek word that was translated "careful" means, "to be anxious." We aren't supposed to be anxious about anything. Now let me ask you a question and please give an honest answer: Do you get anxious? The dictionary defines "anxious" as,

"Apprehensive; worried." Do you live with apprehension and worry? Sadly, most people would have to say yes.

The next verse, Philippians 4:7, gives us the results of a person who is careful for nothing.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

This is the scriptural test to see where you are on this issue. Is there a peace that passes all understanding keeping your heart and mind healthy? Remember, your life goes the way of your dominate thoughts (Prov. 23:7 and Rom. 12:2). If you want to control your life, control your thoughts.

This leads to the next verse in this Philippians passage. Paul said,

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

If we followed the instruction of this verse, our lives would be totally different. We certainly couldn't be as dominated by the media as we are. I don't think anyone believes that the media is honest, just, and pure, reporting the things that are lovely, of good report, have virtue, and are worthy of praise.

I know people want to be informed. So they always have the concern that if they stop listening and watching, they will miss out on something. However, the vast majority of what would be missed is fear, confusion, and discouragement. And if something really big like a war, a terrorist attack, or a natural disaster occurs, I guarantee, they would hear about it.

The question is, how do we counter the negativism of the world, even the church world, that crowds in on us from every direction?

Isaiah 26:3 says,

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Most of us long for peace, and Christians especially desire to live in this place of perfect peace. However, this scripture states very plainly that perfect peace comes from God, and more specifically from keeping our minds stayed on God and trusting in Him. Begin with that.

Then, I believe one of the greatest antidotes is thanksgiving and praise. When we thank God for all His blessings, it refocuses our attention from the negative to the positive things in our lives. Sure, all of us have problems. We live in a fallen world, but God is good, and God's goodness to us is greater than all of the Enemy's attacks.

Every one of us has much to be thankful for and more than enough reason to be praising Him. We just need to put everything into perspective. Paul praised God after being beaten, stoned, whipped, and thrown in jail. Then he said these were but light afflictions that last for a moment, nothing to be compared to eternal things (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

Paul understood that praise coming from a thankful heart has great power. It will build you up spiritually, it is a source of strength, it is a powerful weapon against the devil, and it ministers to the Lord, just to mention a few. My series and book *The Effects of Praise* will help you understand more about its effects. You will learn that it is a source of peace, joy, pleasure, and contentment in every area of your life. It will change your perspective.

The benefits of praise and thankfulness are too numerous to mention in this letter, but I think it's very appropriate to be thinking about them as we celebrate what I believe to be the most sacred holiday in America. It was set aside just to give thanks and has not been diluted with things like little rabbits and reindeer.

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