Culture of Negativity
September 23, 2019

It seems as though every time you turn on the news you are faced with a constant negative bombardment of information. “Christianity is in decline” or “shootings up in US” or “more dangerous world today” tend to run the headlines. If it is not that, then when we open our social media or email or mail we are faced with toxic commentary (self-image destruction, false comparisons, or blatant envy and covetousness) that devalues our self-value and cause us to fall into depression. Maybe it is just that we and so many of our friends and acquaintances have such divisive and down beat expectations that we just want to believe that the worst is happening or will happen. Friends have sent me messages that say “Starbucks CEO doesn’t want your business” or “Christians are being rounded up in camps” or “Soon it will be against the law to preach”, none of which is true, but it almost seems that we want to believe it.

Is it true? Do we want to believe the worst of things? That implies that we have a choice as to whether we will be in joy and peace, or in sorrow and gloom. If you could choose how you look at the world, at yourself, and at the future, would it be with hope or with dread? Research indicates that people are more likely to look to the negative in life. Is that how a Christian should behave?

There is a lesson for us in the book of Numbers 13:1-33. There we hear about the report of the spies to Moses. They did not reveal anything shocking; the land of Canaan was already promised to be bountiful, and it was already known that the people in it would need to be overcome. It was how the people (and ten of the spies) chose to accept and intellectually digest that information that led to a rebellion that ended with an entire generation cursed by God. That is the danger of Negative News; it is not the news, but the way we trust God that matters.

There is another lesson for us in making false comparisons in Matthew 25:14-30. There we see the one talent man presuming that he would not be successful, perhaps comparing himself to the other men and his master’s expectations, and concluding he would fail before he started. There is a great danger in making false comparisons about ourselves to others. Paul said that it was not wise to compare ourselves against each other in 2 Corinthians 10:12.

Finally, we need to be aware of the danger of having evil expectations of the future. Here is a truth that most people forget: according to Scriptures, the greatest persecutions Christians would ever face are in our past, NOT in our future (Matthew 24:9-21, esp. verse 21). Jesus made that absolutely clear. We should not pretend to know what the future holds. In fact, we are told it is evil to think we know what is coming (James 4:13-16). God holds our fate in His hands, and evil expectations show a distinct lack of confidence in God.

As Christians we need to be people of POSTIVE attitudes as we are told in 1 Peter 3:15 (hope), 1 Peter 1:8 (joy) and Philippians 4:6-7 (peace). We need to be confident that the only future that matters to us is the absolutely certain one, the eternal one, and to be unafraid of the future (John 14:27, 1 Peter 3:14). We need to *choose* to be filled with joy, because it is a choice how we behave.

Philippians 4:11 - *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be conten*