

THE OPTIMIST, PESSIMIST AND REALIST

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” —ROMANS 8:18

Paul wonderfully explains that as Christians we can live with any burden when we live with the confident hope of a glorious future. In Romans 15:13, Paul calls God the ‘God of hope’. Hope is actually contagious. As the saying goes, there are things better caught than taught, and hope catches. In relation to our attitude towards life and our level of hopefulness, international evangelist, John Stott, said there are three kinds of Christians: the optimist, the pessimist, and the realist.

The optimist is the one who wants everything now. They not only rejoice in all that is available in Christ, but they look for everything He has promised to be in the present. As a result, they are looking for no sin, no suffering, no sickness, and no troubles! That is the optimist, and they will get frustrated, because Scripture does not promise an easy road. In fact, the optimist’s expectations will likely impede their spiritual growth, because it is often in our sin and troubling circumstances that God does His best work.

Next, there is the pessimist who focuses on the future. Life for the pessimist is simply “grin and bear it,” and one day in the sweet hereafter they will start enjoying life. But this too is frustrating, not only making for a dull and stagnant Christian life, but a fruitless one,

as the Christian life is not meant to be passive. We are not set apart to watch the world go by, but to get involved so that we may become a blessing to others.

The realists are those who live between the tension of the present and the future. They get hold of all that is available to them now, and live in the good of it, but they know there is more to come. Paul writes, “When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession...” (Ephesians 1:13-14). This is the deposit, the down payment of the firstfruits of the Spirit.

The realities of our present circumstances may appear to stand in contradiction to the things God has promised, but because we do fail and are subjected to hardships, the forgotten ingredient in many of our lives is hope. We need to be encouraged in the present by the power of God and the divine resources we have in Him. We also have wonderful hope for the future and can look forward with confidence to our heavenly home, which to the man on the cross beside Him, Jesus called “paradise”.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, keep me as the realist, enjoying all that is available in You, but looking forward to a glorious future in paradise with You. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Which of the three types of Christians do I most identify with?