

# Facing The Future

**Introduction.** If I am being honest, I am a bad worrier. It is one flaw of mine, among many. It is a temptation with which I constantly struggle, in light of clear, encouraging passages to the contrary (Matthew 6:34; Philippians 4:6-7).

With all of the changes in society at large, it is clear that Christians are being confronted with difficulties that would have been unimaginable even ten years ago. As a result, there is discouragement and skepticism. People are concerned about our country, about world conditions, and about the core values that have made America great. After laying out several concerns about world conditions and religious conditions, I would like to conclude with five reasons why we can face the future with confidence.

## I. **World Conditions**

- A. Terrorist attacks have occurred on American soil. Muslims have expanded their presence in the United States and in cities around the world, like London most recently. Immigration is changing the composition of our nation. Crime is rampant. Drugs pose serious problems for young and old. Moral standards are crumbling. The home and family are under constant attack. Society is becoming more secular day by day. The influence of the Bible is being excluded more and more from the public consciousness.
- B. The economy is reeling not only in the United States but also in many other countries. Many people have chosen to continue working because retirement funds are not sufficient. Real estate values have gone down at a time when residential ownership has been the main investment for many families. Many individuals are straining to pay their bills. Homes have gone into foreclosure. Food prices have gone up due to weather conditions, the cost of fuel in transporting goods, and the shortage of certain items. Gasoline prices have made it difficult for some to commute to work or to enjoy any leisure time involving travel.
- C. There is political unrest all over the world. Egypt and Libya have deposed their leaders. Some regimes have clamped down on the populace to discourage rebellion and uprisings. Even in our country, political strife and partisanship have surpassed anything we have seen in the past. Among many citizens, there is anger, dissatisfaction, and unhappiness with the processes of government.
- D. Public education seems to be in decline. Students in South Korea and Finland excel far above students in the United States in math and science. Discipline lags in our schools. Learning is more difficult because of disruptive classrooms. Teachers are leaving the profession,

and prospective teachers are being driven away from majoring in education.

## II. **Religious Conditions**

- A. Movements in society have always had an impact on religious thinking. Several years ago a charismatic climate invaded religion. Even among formalistic Episcopalians, there were those who claimed to speak in tongues. Churches of Christ did not escape the influence of this movement. Some preachers began to claim charismatic gifts. Some contended the Holy Spirit was speaking directly to them, separate and apart from the word of God. Just as the religious world at large became fascinated with these emotional claims, so some within the church began to boast of miraculous powers.
- B. The feminist movement burst upon the scene a few decades ago. At the beginning, the cry of "equal pay for equal work" seemed fair enough, but the movement did not stop there. Some attacked the family structure, some belittled marriage, and eventually there were those who challenged religious convictions. The idea of the husband being the head of the wife fell into disfavor among feminists. Churches began to react to the tensions, ordaining women to roles of public ministry.
- C. In recent years, the religious world has been affected by the "gay pride" movement. At one time, homosexuals preferred to remain "in the closet." Many apparently were ashamed for others to know of their sexual propensities. That has now changed. States are being urged to legalize same-sex marriages. As with other societal movements, there has been an overflow into the religious world.

## III. **Points To Remember**

- A. We are not the first generation to confront challenges from the world.
  - 1. As we contemplate all of the changes in the world, knowing many of them are unfavorable to faith, we should keep in mind that others have faced the same battles.
  - 2. Paul had to deal with hostile governments (Acts 24:27), and with hostile people where he preached (Acts 9:22-25; 19:23-30).
  - 3. People can change (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). We can overcome the world and rise above the temptations and allurements of the world (2 Timothy 4:10; cf. 1 John 2:15).
- B. The sinful state of the world can help Christians to shine.
  - 1. The darker it is around us, the more a light can be seen (Philippians 2:14-16). The world tends to be skeptical about religion, but what a difference we can make!

2. Manifest genuine faith and pure lives before a world that is tainted with sin and often immersed in darkness (Micah 6:8).
- C. We must teach, train, and prepare our children to remain faithful.
1. This is the world in which we live, the world in which our children grow into adulthood, and the world in which we walk day by day. If left alone without training or strong family influence, our children will drift with worldly tides (1 John 5:19).
  2. In all too many cases now, children grow up without a strong commitment to the truth, without knowing the difference in the church and denominationalism, and without a sense of being different from the world (Galatians 6:14).
  3. We teach our children to play sports, to seek a professional career, and to be successful in life, but are we overlooking the most important lessons (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)? What impressions are being left about what is most important in life? Is our faith relegated to the church building and only on periodic occasions? Teach and train your children about the centrality of faith in Christ as the focus of their existence.
- D. We cannot overlook the importance of righteousness.
1. Christ said His followers are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). Salt is a preservative. The presence of righteous, God-fearing, and Christ-honoring people is a benefit to society, no matter what others may think (Proverbs 11:11; 16:12).
  2. While righteous influence has been compared to salt, a preservative, sin has been likened to leaven (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9). Leaven would spread quickly throughout an entire lump of dough. Sin, likewise, tends to spread and contaminate.
  3. The influence of righteous people has always been a blessing (Genesis 18:23-33). Think of the positive effect on Sodom and Gomorrah if only ten righteous people could have been found there (Genesis 19:24)!
- E. There is a reason for faith, hope, and optimism as we look to the future.
1. Technology has changed the world. Radio, television, and now the Internet can reach into every corner of the globe. These advancements can be used as instruments of evil, but they also can be harnessed for truth and righteousness.
  2. Travel has been streamlined so that no location is inaccessible to us. We have more means to carry the gospel to the whole world than we have ever had before in the history of mankind (Mark 16:15; 2 Timothy 1:8; cf. 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Ephesians 6:19; Revelation 3:8).

3. By recognizing the opportunities afforded us to teach and be benevolent, we can walk by faith, build ourselves up in the most holy faith, and trust God for the future (2 Corinthians 5:7; Jude 20; Psalm 46:1-5).

**Conclusion.** We all know that everything is not bright on the horizon, but neither is everything gloomy and hopeless. There are challenges, threats, and dangers to the faith, but there also are opportunities, blessings, and open doors. Our responsibility is to remain anchored in the word, with Christ at the center of our lives, being aware of the dangers that lie before us, and to be faithful against all the wiles of Satan and the pressures of the world.