Blessed optimism is not to be confused with the modern day “positive thinking” or the latest “name-it-and-claim-it” charade. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace, I give unto you... Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” His peace is not an escape mechanism, but real steadiness and calmness beneath the troubled waters of life. When we are not sure of the direction we are to take, let’s calm ourselves in the ‘sacred hush’ of God’s presence. The presence of God does not overlook our circumstances; it simply overrides them.

In recent years, we’ve seen a steady rise in “fear” and “mistrust” among people of all ages. Our society is inundated with fear, and it has introduced a sense of “negativism” and a feeling of abandonment, which negate hope, faith and charity. The new “negativism” is brilliantly reflected in our literature, is visible in our politics, and is clearly seen in our religious attitude, and is vociferously proclaimed by the common individual the world over. Consequently, noble goals have been abandoned and spiritual motives forgotten as we have seemingly adopted a dog-eat-dog philosophy. Since we are stuck in the mud, and seem to be going nowhere, it matters little how we seek to get there. While we’re singing the praises of modern technology, our nation is experiencing a “spiritual blackout” and sliding into a “moral and social” abyss. Folks are saying things for shock value, but God is not shocked no matter what they say or do. Let’s get hold of God’s reality, and the “reality of God” is the ultimate reality in the world that is far from myth!

In a world filled with diverse ideologies, stifled by the inability to combat “national and international terrorism,” and confused by false religious teachings, multitudes are belittling and questioning the true virtue of Christianity, and are ready to climb on a cliffhanger to end it all. Certainly these are trying times for many, but in a world of spite, hate, confusion, fear, frustration and doubt, Jesus brings a message of deliverance, of peace, of love and of faith.

Our faith in Jesus Christ is not a gullible optimism, nor a make-believe farce, but a powerful and life-changing force that sustains us as we travel through life’s journey. The man who walks on the “highway of holiness” can never be a pessimist, or a pandemic doubter; his sinful past is under the blood and his carnal nature has been subjugated by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian is secure in his knowledge that the best is yet to come. There is a blessed optimism in Jesus Christ, our Lord. The truth of the Christian faith is that God sustains His people, and calls them to a level of repose in which there is undeniable hope for the future.

For example, when Dr. James Guthrie was facing execution, he looked through his prison window and said, “This is the day which the Lord hath made: I will rejoice and be glad in it.” That is ‘Christian optimism’ in its finest! Friend, God is neither frustrated nor is He in a quandary as we are. He is not caught napping on the horizon. He is constantly vigilant on our behalf. Our part is to remember past blessings, and give heed to God’s Word as Moses spoke to the children of Israel when they were confronted with the Herculean task of crossing the Red Sea: “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more” (Exodus 14:13). America must return to God, if she is to have a bright future, and if not, she will continue to slide beyond anything we have ever seen. Are we in agreement here?

When trials and severe testing come, we have to do what we need to do—ride it out! That is a radical idea for a generation entrenched in its own imagined power, but sometimes it’s the perfect will of God for us to stay calm and composed without gravitation. God does not gravitate toward famous people. We have a tendency to gravitate toward people of power, position and influence, that’s our human nature which is clearly seen in politics and religion more than anywhere else. When you have power, you command influence and when you are out of power, no one cares, and you are nothing more than an ex-person! Popularity is fickle and you can never build your life on it. Fame is a delusion and a snare! There is a cultural shift in America, and Christians are unable to go up against the “social Niagara” of our time because we have not captured the “purity and holiness” of God. Let’s remember the immortal words...
of Thomas Carlyle, the 18th century Scottish poet and essayist, “Holy living is the best argument that tells for God in an age of fact.” Spiritual truth is learned from obedience to God through humility, not through intellectual reasoning and human bravado.

Ours is no absentee God; or an inanimate, death-like abstraction as some would have us believe; but He is an active, controlling, personal Presence deeply involved in human affairs. The God of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps and He is wide awake and His eyes are on the inhabitants of the earth. There is an instability looming over the horizon which reminds me of Jeremy Taylor’s picture of a man “clapping his shoulder to the ground trying to stop an earthquake.” In a culture of narcissism and pride, we tend to maximize our strength while minimizing God’s power and strength. It’s our ego that propels us to place ourselves on a pedestal, not realizing that our God reigns supreme, and you and I are not. God was, is and forever shall be the supreme ruler of the universe and evil does not have the final word; it belongs to our glorious El-Shaddai (God Almighty) who holds infinity in the palm of His hand.

Let’s never forget that we have a solid foundation, one that can withstand against any recrimination from Satan. Our faith in Christ is our foundation, and we desperately need this foundation as we face many challenges today. When we speak about our Lord, we are speaking about “Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, today and forever.” We are citizens of a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and that which is created by the hand of God cannot be destroyed by the hand of man.

The apostle Paul was an extremely optimistic person. He rejoiced in the Lord when he had every reason to complain. The words of Dr. William Barclay, the well-known British theologian, come to mind: “If I wake up in hell . . . I still believe in God.” What a positive affirmation of the power and the Presence of the living Christ!

To the early Christians, life was an exuberant expectation, always filled with undying hope but never despairing. A victorious Christian rarely accepts defeat and never majors on the word “impossible.” He simply learns to trust God at all times regardless of who claims to be in control. “Live as if Christ died yesterday, arose this morning, and is coming back tomorrow.”

The number one killer in our world is depression, sadness, discouragement or low spirits. The profound words of Dr. Carl Jung, the eminent psychiatrist, come to mind. “The central neurosis of our time is emptiness.” People are empty regardless of what they are or what they possess in life. Satan uses discouragement as an effective weapon to derail many from their spiritual destination. There are thousands looking for a hurricane where there are only a few looking for the sunshine. Many are crepe hangers but only few see the gorgeous roses. Robert Browning once said, “Tis looking downward that makes one dizzy.” When you find yourself in fear that the world is heading in the wrong direction that doom is just around the corner, stop and look up and look out and put your faith in the sovereign God who does have the whole world in His hand. Look up and say with the hymn writer of old: “This is my father’s world! Oh, let me never forget, that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.” That is something to celebrate!

Joy produced by “faith” is deathless. Our God is holy—an undivided Trinity, manifested to us in Jesus Christ. God is transcendent Father, indwelling Spirit, and Incarnate Word. He is King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise and true God, who has purposed that He will certainly vindicate Himself with or without us. Let us rid ourselves of fear and paranoia! Cheer up, Christians, “Troubles may come and troubles may go, we trust in Jesus.” That’s the future for you and me. The immortal words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer are worth remembering. “We should never allow ourselves to be consumed by the present moment, but should cultivate that calmness that comes from noble thoughts, and measure everything by them.”

Remember, our earthly journey will soon be over and God still reigns in heaven! Hear, O, inhabitants of the earth, “God is greater than man.” (Job 33:12) and “our God is a consuming fire.” and He will judge the world in righteousness. To escape God’s judgment, may we flee to His mercy and grace!

At all cost, let us keep calm! Let’s remember the profound words of Victor Hugo, the French poet and novelist, “I am like a forest which has been more than once cut down. The new shoots are lovelier than ever. I am rising toward the sky. The sunshine is on my head. The earth gives me its generous sap, but Heaven lights me with its unknown worlds.” As I’m challenged daily, when unexpected situations arise, and they do arise, the wisest response is often very simple: “Who is like unto our God who reigns supreme and who dwells on high?” When things are at their worst, let’s remember whose we are and whom we serve! We serve a “risen” Christ! There is victory in the Cross; it “towers over the wrecks of time,” as we plough through life’s doubts, skepticism and fear. “With Christ in the boat, we smile at the storm.” Have no fear beloved; God is with us, and “if God be for us, who can be against us?” May God give us a “voice of clarity,” and “moral probity,” that will address the “social and moral depravity” of our time, is my prayer!

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“I am very happy to write you this letter. My name is Peter Cornelius, and I am 11 years old. I want to tell you that I was very happy to read one of your books, Crispy Christians. Please send me your other books.”

—Peter Cornelius, Togo, W. Africa

“I bought one of your books, Talk Less and Pray More. It has helped me so much in my prayer life. Please, I would like to receive your monthly publication, Prayergram.”

—Besong Daniel, Cameroon, W. Africa

“I am a young man from the country of Ghana, West Africa. I was deeply moved when I read your book, Talk Less and Prayer more. Now, I am involved in “evangelism and prayer ministry” in my village.”

—Amankong Evans, Ghana, W. Africa

“I read your book, Talk Less and Pray More with great interest. I would like to join with the WPB ministry of intercession. Also, I am requesting your monthly publication.”

—Afrve Ahoh, Head Teacher, Cameroon, W. Africa

“I would like to receive your monthly Prayergram for the purpose of improving my life. Many in our country are being challenged by your writings on prayer and Christian purity.”

—Sunday Apuamaga, Delta State, University, Nigeria

“Your book Talk Less and Pray More is an eye-opener. I was deeply challenged as I read the various accounts of men and women of prayer. After reading the book, I made a solemn commitment to become an intercessor for the world. It is my desire and prayer to help raise an army of intercessors among College Students who are the future of our nation. We need your Prayergram.”

—Cyprian Ogar, Faculty of Arts, University of Jos, Nigeria

“I would like to receive your monthly Prayergram. We are deeply challenged by your call to intercession and holy living.”

—Prince Cliff, University of Nigeria

“It was with great joy I read your book, Talk Less and Pray More. In fact, towards the end of the book ‘tears’ flowed freely from my eyes. I would like to subscribe to receive the Prayergram.”

—Jerome Okorfor, Corporate Commissioner, Abuja, Nigeria

“I was greatly challenged by your book, The Forbidden Zone. I’ve never seen a book like this one. It is so powerful and penetrating. The Lord has used this book to break me and expose a lot of things in my life. I now know what it means to live a crucified life. Please send me your publication, Prayergram.”

—Ikpara Chinedum, Secondary Education Management Board, Abuja, Nigeria

“I read your book Talk Less and Pray More which I borrowed from a friend. I thank God for what the book has accomplished in my life. I am making frantic effort to get a copy of my own.”

—Ogunleye Sola, Faculty of Engineering, University of Ado-Nigeria

“I would like to be a part of the WPB Prayer Force. Your book Talk Less and Pray More is changing lives in my country.”

—Evang. Sunday Samuel, Anambra State, Nigeria
Many years ago, I made a prayerful commitment in the area of “asking and receiving” funds for the work of the One Who called me into His glorious service. Everything must come from God as a result of “seeking” His face in earnest prayer. God supplies our needs not grudgingly but in full measure. Isn’t it better to ask God for help than man? God’s blessings manifest in obedient children. Our joy comes from what we give as grace fills our heart. It is an honor and a pleasure to depend upon Jehovah God, the Provider and Patron of this ministry, who is always on time with manna from on high.

Long ago, I ceased to care about the opinions of those who advocate or promote a hypothetical faith. I know my Lord by personal experience and not by hearsay or theological expediency. Suffice it to say, there is a loving God who cares for His children. Never mind the unbelief and sarcasm of the world. God will do great things for us if we depend on Him. He is the divine facilitator and supplier and there is none beside Him. Beloved, let’s draw heavily upon God’s resources!

Faith produces trust. Trust produced by faith is unconquerable. “Have faith in God.”

Brother Matthew: I read your material with a very hungry heart. God has given you a gift to communicate your heart in such a simple, yet very powerful way. Last evening, June and I shared part of it in our devotional prayer time. Thank you for being a useful instrument in God’s hands to arouse God’s people from their lazy, casual, approach to the Christian Life.

I have read your book, Crispy Christians very thoroughly. I plan to read it again. What a challenge to my ministry. I especially loved the last chapter on the “value of affliction.”

—Pastor Jack and June Palmer, Spring Mills, PA

Prayer has become a ‘theological mantra,’ something we often ‘lecture’ rather than something we ‘practice.’ Practice prayer daily, and you shall ‘experience’ the majestic and explosive power of God. Something is everlastingly lost when prayer is neglected.

—Matthew Skariah

My Journey of Faith with God
by Matthew Skariah

The Blessed Side of Serving God