**Pessimism, Optimism, and Realism**

For most of my life, I’ve really wanted to be an *optimist.*  By both nature and nurture, I am probably more inclined to *pessimism.* But the truth is, sometimes *realism* is as much as I can manage. So, here we go again with the “half-full” versus “half-empty” bottle of water. The *pessimist* views and says it’s “half-empty,” the *optimist* views and says it’s “half-full,” and the *realist* views and says it’s “a half a bottle of water.”

However, there are a couple of *facts* we may need to consider:

1. In *reality,* how the container is *viewed* and what is *said* about it doesn’t actually change *how much* water there is.
2. But, how the container is *viewed* (and I suppose what is said about it) does change how we *think, feel,* and *react to it…*
   1. The *pessimist* thinks/feels/reacts as if it is *lacking-* that it is not and can never be enough.
   2. The *optimist* thinks/feels/reacts as if it is *superfluous-* that it is and will always be more than enough.
   3. The *realist* thinks/feels/reacts as if it is *sufficient-* that it is sufficient/enough for now, Matt.6:11,34, and drinks it instead of arguing about how much is or isn’t there!

What does any of this have to do with things *spiritual?* Our views and how we express them often indicate how we think, feel, and react to more than just a container of water. But how we view and what we say usually does not actually change the *realities* of the situation.

Consider these biblical examples:

* John 1:46, *“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”* Nathanael’s question was probably rhetorical, likely asked with sarcasm, and definitely *pessimistic.* Well “Yes,” at least ONE did, v.49!
* Titus 1:12, *“Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”* Really? Because vv.1-5 and the whole letter to Titus and the church **at Crete** seems to indicate otherwise!
* Had *bad things* come from Nazareth? Apparently so, since that seemed to be the general consensus. But was *everything* that came from Nazareth bad? Not at all, despite the fact that the *pessimist* thought so. Did Jesus (the ultimate “Good,” Acts 10:38) change the fact that evidently a lot of “bad” come from Nazareth? No. And the same could be said for Crete. The *reality* was that at least *One* good thing did come from Nazareth, and that was sufficient for everything, John 1:16-17,29!

Some Practical Applications…

* The *pessimist* sees only the “bad,” and the *optimist* sees only the “good.” The *realist* realizes that both exist in the same space and time- that the bottle contains both *emptiness* (air) and *sustenance* (water)*.*  Neither precludes the reality of the other. Both Nathanael and the Cretan prophet were both wrong. So also are those who see only “good” people being treated “badly” or “bad” people being treated “well”! Both exist and neither precludes the existence of the other. The *reality* is that we should be the ones treating *everyone well* (even better than they deserve, Matt.18:21-35) and refusing to *return evil for evil,* Rom.13:17-21.
* The *pessimist* sees only “bad” police and “good” protesters. The *optimist* sees only “good” police and “bad” protesters. The *realist* sees the “bad” police, but is not blinded to the “good” ones. And, the *realist* sees the “good” police, but is not blinded to the “bad” ones. (NO ONE despises a “bad” policeman/lawyer/doctor/plumber/preacher more than a “good” policeman/lawyer/doctor/plumber/preacher!) The *realist* also sees “good” protesters who are genuinely concerned and/or affected by racism, but is not blind to “bad” protesters (rioters, brutal, thieves).
* While both those who use and generate stereotypes are “bad,” those who break and avoid spawning them are “good.” The *reality* is that stereotypes exist in our world, but we don’t have to use or be the cause of them.
* “This” world is flawed and doomed and devoted to destruction (anathema). It is not, and will never be, a utopian panacea, 2Pet.3:7. *Realistically,* such ONLY occurs in one place, 2Pet.3:13. So in the mean time, we should *understand, feel,* and *act* accordingly, 2Pet.3:9-12. Such is neither *pessimism* nor *optimism,* just *reality.* Are you ready for this *reality?*