

Responding to Economic Turmoil

by Coty Pinckney 10/25/08

Gyrations in the stock market. Banks losing billions. Dire predictions unless Congress does X. Congress does X, yet the situation deteriorates.

What does it all mean? How should Bible-believing Christians respond?

We should respond by trusting in God and in His Word.

Paul tells Timothy to know that hard times are ahead (in his case, from persecution and evil deceivers), but to “continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

Just so for us. Remain steadfast. Remind yourself and others of the truths of Scripture. God does not change. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His Word is our anchor; His promise is our hope, a “sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:19).

His promise includes these words:

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:31-33).

Our God will give us everything that we need to fulfill His purposes for us, to enable us to accomplish the task He assigns us. At the right time – indeed, at the perfect time – He will take us to Himself, to His eternal kingdom, to our great joy. So do not be anxious.

But while we are trusting in His sovereign rule, what should we think about the turmoil around us?

First: God often uses stress and hardship to expand His kingdom.

Remember the persecution of believers in Jerusalem after the murder of Stephen (Acts 8:1). Our brothers and sisters suffered much in those days. But God used that very persecution to advance His kingdom. In the last sixty years, we have seen something similar in China. Who would have thought that the terrible persecution that followed the Communist takeover of China would in the end result in the phenomenal growth of the church? So pray for the suffering – and pray that God, once again, will use hard times for His good and wise purposes.

Second: All men are sinners – even government regulators.

Some analysts speak as if the solution to this upheaval is increased government regulation. There are indeed areas of additional regulation that will make sense. But too often analysts speak as if government regulators are the good guys and private agents in the financial sector are the bad guys. The Bible tells us that, yes, those private agents are sinners, but so are those government regulators. They too are subject to greed, to pride, to lust

for power. Indeed, in the development of the present crisis, failure of existing regulators played an important role.

Third: All men are sinners – even politicians (of both parties).

Particularly in the middle of a campaign, politicians of both parties face tremendous temptations to distort reality when discussing such turmoil. They all are tempted to blame their opponent (or their opponent's party) for the problems; they all are tempted to say that they know exactly what to do and if you will only elect them (and their fellow party members), all will improve. Furthermore, those holding office at present have a strong incentive to claim that apart from the legislation they've passed, the country would be ruined.

In my opinion, politicians from both parties have heightened hysteria and made matters worse through their rhetoric. Frankly, anyone who claims to know exactly what to do to solve the present turmoil is either lying or naïve.

So don't believe the propaganda. Understand the incentives facing politicians, take account of their sinfulness, and take all they say with several grains of salt.

Fourth: All men are sinners – even those in the news media.

Those in the news media try to attract readers and viewers. If they don't, in the end they lose their jobs. So they face incentives to hype big stories and, not surprisingly, those incentives drive many stories. Remember that when you read the next story about this turmoil – particularly when you read nonsense telling us why the stock market moved one way or another (read carefully over several days and you will see these explanations are either tautological or contradictory); or when you read that a change in price is an unmitigated disaster (when the price goes up, it's good for owners and bad for buyers; when the price goes down, it's good for buyers and bad for owners); or when you read predictions of huge future price changes (if the analyst really knew such things, he could make a fortune in futures markets).

So: Believe in God, and read with discernment. God is on the throne. Trust Him. Labor for Him. He remains at your right hand - even through economic turmoil.