

Time to Panic?

by Bryan Gibson

The economy has dominated the news lately, and the news has not been good. No need to rehash the details here—the media has done a good enough job of that. Like everyone else, I'm not happy about it and it has already had adverse effects on me. But, knowing that "one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15), I don't plan to spend too much time stewing over it. Wall Street may be in a panic, but I'm not, and here are just a few of the reasons why.

Let me first say that I don't buy into all the doom and gloom forecasts for the economy. I do believe the economy will rebound, but let's just say for arguments' sake that things get worse, perhaps even far worse. I'm still not going to panic because I know God will provide me with the things I need—IF I seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). David said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread" (Psalms 37:25).

Secondly, if I am reduced to the necessities of life, my attitude must be one of contentment, not panic. "And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1 Timothy 6:8). Hopefully I will learn, as Paul did, to be content "in whatever state I am" (Philippians 4:11). Perhaps I will even learn the lesson so eloquently expressed by the prophet Habakkuk: "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Thirdly, economic hard times may turn out to be a boon for me spiritually. If I can't buy as many things, if I can't go as many places, I may just give more attention to the things that matter most. Many of us have seen our stocks decline in value, but there are other riches that are not subject to the ebb and flow of the market—the "exceeding riches of His grace" (Ephesians 2:7), or the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). In other words, I'm not going to panic if I become poor, because I will still be rich (Proverbs 13:7). I'm very aware of what the Bible says about the uncertainty of material riches (1 Timothy 6:17; Proverbs 23:5), but it's hard to think that way when my investments seem secure. Believe me, I understand now just how insecure they can be, and maybe, just maybe, that will cause me to put more trust in God.

"Trust in Him who will not leave you, whatsoever years may bring...build your hopes on things eternal, hold to God's unchanging hand" (*Hold to God's Unchanging Hand*, Jennie Wilson, F. L. Eiland).