

Publisher's Note

Prayer or Panic?



I enjoy Facebook. Over the years that I've had a personal page, I have reconnected with dozens of friends from my childhood and college days. It has been great. I also like the political and spiritual banter that takes place in my news feed, though I admit the posts often get out of line and people are hurt by the short, snide comments. It is difficult to talk about sensitive areas of disagreement when you are not conversing face to face.

I've also noticed that on Facebook people have a tendency to display their emotions without a filter. They often say things they might not say in a personal conversation. I am not sure why, but somehow people have fewer inhibitions on the Internet.

One recent disturbing trend relates to the alarming perspectives shared about current events—and people's attempts to relate them to the need for prayer. With both the ISIS situation and the Ebola scare last fall, I was stunned by how panicked many believers were—even some leaders who should know better—and how openly they displayed that panic on Facebook.

We are living in tough times, and I sense they could keep getting worse. But as people of prayer, how should we respond with a biblical perspective? Maybe I am an odd person spiritually, or maybe it is due to my upbringing in a denomination that focuses strongly on the second coming of Christ, but I look at what is going on with interest—and even awe. No one will convince me that we are not living in the

last days before Christ's return. (Yes, I understand that others thought the same thing thousands of years ago as well.) Personally I think we are fewer than 20 years away. That's not a prediction, just my gut feeling.

So I watch and pray with interest. What is Satan doing in various places? What is God doing to bring people to Himself? What is God doing to set up history for the final days? I watch with awe because we are seeing more and more clearly the battle is "not against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12). You only have to look at the absurd anti-Semitism that is rising around the world—even in our government—to realize that Satan is controlling the minds of many people.

No matter what rapture position you hold, the tribulation will not suddenly come upon us with an overnight change in tough situations in the world. Even if believers are raptured away prior to the tribulation, evil will be running amok well before it—perhaps as evil is doing now, and worse. I don't want to panic about any of it. Instead, I want to pray. Pray for what? Mercy, certainly. Peace and comfort for suffering believers, yes. But I plan to spend more time praying for Jesus Christ to be glorified in the midst of all this turmoil. As evil tries to take the upper hand, God is going to bring many souls into His Kingdom before His return.

Therefore, I am guarded in how much I try to "pray away" hard times. Many revivals came during times of economic and social desperation. In these last days imagine what God could do with a Church that rises up and prays, "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus," instead of, "Help, get us out of this, Lord."

Maybe we should pray for more trouble, not less!

—Jonathan Graf