

Do not be anxious ... about anything!

After decades of relative peace and prosperity the world in general, and Britain in particular, seems to have entered an era of unpredictability and uncertainty, resulting in many becoming anxious about the future.

What will life be like outside of Europe?

An anxiety which is inflamed by much of the media focusing on those things which could be to the detriment of life in Britain.

Two thousand years ago Paul visited Philippi, a very Roman city with so few Jewish males (less than ten) that there was no synagogue there, and from this small gathering an active and generous church emerged.

However, some ten years later he wrote a letter to them, primarily to thank them for gifts they had sent but also to calm their fears of the future.

When we read in the New Testament of persecution of Christians, this was not at the hands of the Romans.

Primarily it was the persecution of Jewish Christians by Jewish authorities who, on occasions, did get the Roman authorities on their side – as they did with Pontius Pilate in the crucifixion of Christ.

Being in such a Roman city, the Philippian Christians were spared such trauma but Caesar Nero was now on the throne, and rumblings were coming out of Rome.

Christianity was not a registered religion and was now seen as different and distinct from Judaism.

What was Nero going to do?

How would the Philippians, in such a Roman city, fare?

They were fearful and Paul's advice to them was:

“Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation,
by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.
And the peace of God,
which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

(Philippians 4:6-7)

In other words, he wanted them to focus on the good things in their lives and be thankful for them and in that way they would have peace of mind.

However, we know that sometimes prayer does not work for us, so Paul followed this up with further advice.

“Finally, brothers and sisters,
whatever is true,
whatever is noble,

whatever is right,
whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely,
whatever is admirable

– if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice.

And the God of peace will be with you.”

(Philippians 4:8-9)

So at the start of this year, and not knowing what Brexit will bring, are we anxious about the future and what could go wrong?

If we had stayed in Europe there would have been advantages, but there would have been disadvantages also.

And now that we are coming out there will be disadvantages, albeit different ones, but there will also be advantages.

So, following the spirit of Paul’s advice ...

I will focus on the advantages which are likely to accrue –

all the time knowing that the disadvantages will be nowhere as drastic as those the Philippian Christians eventually suffered at the hands of Nero.

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