**WE’RE ONLY HUMAN**

***You’ve Taken All The Humanity Out Of The Cockpit***

**by Kenny Chumbley**

“***He knows what we are made of, He remembers that we are dust***”

(Psalm 103:14)

A couple of weeks ago I watched ***Sully***, the movie depicting the ditching on January 15, 2009 of US Airways Flight 1592, piloted by Captain Chelsey “Sully” Sullenberger, on the Hudson River, after both engines of his plane had been disabled by bird strikes. Sully’s handling of the situation saved all 156 souls on board, and he was immediately hailed a hero. Some, however, accused him of mishandling the situation and tried to hold him culpable for the loss of the plane, claiming he had enough altitude and power to make it back to the airport.

At the public hearing, the National Transportation and Safety Board announced that pilots flying simulators – programmed with all the settings of Sully’s plane at the time of the incident – had been able to safely return to LaGuardia Airport, which seemed to sustain the charges against Sullenberger. Here is what ensured:

SULLY: “Can we get serious? We’ve all heard about the computer simulations, but I can’t quite believe you still have not taken into account the human factor.”

NTSB Chairman: “Human pilots and simulation showed you could make it back to the airport.”

SULLY: “No they did not! These pilots were not behaving like human beings, like people who are experiencing this for the first time. No one warned us. No one said you are going to lose both engines at a lower altitude than any jet in history. No one has ever trained for an incident like that. No one! You have allowed no time for analysis or decision making. In these simulations **you have taken all of the humanity out of the cockpit**!”

It turned out that even though the simulator pilots knew beforehand what was going to happen and what to do when it happened, it still took 17 tries before they could get the plane back to LaGuardia. When the human factor was added to the test, and 30 seconds were allowed to elapse between the time of the bird strike and the turn to the airport, the simulator plane crashed short of the runway every single time!

Am I off base in guessing there have been times when all of us have taken humanity out of the cockpit and judged a situation on the basis of ideal conditions apart from the human factor? How many preachers have shamed struggling saints for their anxiety and worry, accusing them of little faith and backing it up with Matthew 6:25-34 or Philippians 4:6-7? When admonishing the anxious how often has the human factor been forgotten or ignored?

C. S. Lewis notes that when the torments were unleashed on Christ, He became anxious. Not only that, but in Gethsemane Christ asked for the very thing He said a few days before He would not ask for. "*Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour*” (John 12:27).

Eliminate the human factor and you will never understand Gethsemane, or why Paul turned to the high priest and yelled at him when struck on the face (Acts 23:3), when Jesus said to turn the other cheek.

Before criticizing another for mishandling a situation, remember the human factor. Doing so will make us more patient and kind. After all, we’re only human.