

GET CONTROL

- A. Introduction: In this series we're working on learning to remain unmoved by life's challenges. I Cor 15:58
1. All sorts of things come at us in this fallen world that undermine our confidence in God and cause us to doubt His love and care, moving us away from our trust in Him.
 - a. Last week we began to talk about the fact that when we encounter difficulties in life, it's not just the hardships themselves that challenge our trust in God. It's the thoughts and emotions generated by the difficulties that challenge us.
 - b. Emotions and thoughts can be so overwhelming that we seem to have no control over them and we let what we see and feel in the moment move us from a place of trust and faith in God.
 2. Therefore, we must learn how to deal with thoughts and emotions that arise when we encounter troubles. So, in this lesson, we're going to continue to discuss dealing with our emotions and thoughts as we face life's hardships.
- B. All human beings have an inward and an outward portion. The outward part is the physical body. The inward or immaterial portion is made up of spirit and soul. II Cor 4:16; Heb 4:12
1. The body is the home of our senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell). The spirit is capable of direct communion with God. The soul is made up of our mental and emotional faculties.
 - a. Emotions are the responses of our soul to what is going on around us. They are stimulated by the information we receive through our physical senses and the thoughts we entertain in our mind.
 - b. Emotions are not under the direct control of the will. They are involuntary. This means that you cannot will yourself to feel or to not feel something.
 - c. Although emotions are a reaction to stimulus that that is possibly outside of our direct control (what's going on around us), as Christians, we can control what we do and how we act no matter how we feel. Rom 8:13
 2. Emotions, in and of themselves, are not wicked. They are part of who God created us to be. However, there are several problems with our emotions.
 - a. First, as with every part of our being, they have been corrupted by sin and are often out of balance with the rest of our makeup. For many people, everything they do is determined by how they feel.
 1. How many times have you heard someone say, "I'm just going to follow my heart (meaning how they feel)", and it ends in disaster.
 2. Prov 28:26--He who leans on, trust in and is confident of his own mind and heart is a [self-confident] fool, but he who walks with skillful and godly Wisdom shall be delivered. (Amp)
 - b. Second, emotions can and often do give us inaccurate information. And, they are affected and influenced by our own misperceptions of reality and the strongholds (learned thinking patterns) we have built up over our lifetime.
 1. Every one of us has had an experience like this: We just had a feeling that someone was mad at us (perhaps our spouse or a co-worker). And, everything they do that day seems to support our feel: their facial expressions, their seeming to ignore us, etc.
 - A. When we've finally had enough, we confront them over what we think they are feeling toward us. It turns out that they ate some bad pizza the night before and their insides were churning all day long. That's why they were acting different. It had nothing to do with us.
 - B. Yet we let our feelings determine our view of reality and our actions, and had a terrible day as a result.
 2. Emotions are real in that you really feel them. But they don't have access to all the facts in any situation because they are limited to the information given them by your physical senses.
 - A. When only the light in your room is the nightlight, and it looks like there is a mouse in the corner, fear is stimulated in you. However, when the ceiling light is turned on, you

can see that the “mouse” is a crumpled up sock.

B. Your senses gave your emotions less than all the facts in your situation, so your view of reality was skewed and you drew an inaccurate conclusion.

3. In every situation, there are always more facts involved than what we perceive with our physical senses because there is more to reality than what we see and feel. We could do an entire lesson on this, but consider several thoughts as part of our discussion of dealing with emotions.

a. There is a dimension beyond what we perceive with our senses, the realm of Almighty God and His kingdom and power. This unseen realm created the seen world, and can and will affect and change what we see and feel. II Cor 4:18; Col 1:16; I Tim 1:17; Heb 11:3; etc.

1. Only God has access to all the facts in any given situation. Not only does He know and preside over the invisible realm, He sees human hearts and knows the beginning and the end in every circumstance. Reality is everything as God sees it

2. Nothing surprises the Lord and He is able to cause everything to serve His purposes of maximum glory to Himself and maximum good to as many people as possible. He sees how to get us through until He gets us out.

b. God has given us the Bible to reveal this unseen kingdom to us and to give us examples of how He uses His power and All-knowingness on behalf of those who trust Him. II Chron 16:9

4. As Christians, we are called to walk by faith and not by sight. This means that we order our lives according to the unseen realities of God and His kingdom. II Cor 5:7

a. To put it another way: We don't order our lives according to what we see or feel. We learn to live by what God says. We are only moved by what He says in His Word (Matt 4:4). The order in the God's kingdom is believe to see. If you believe, you will see.

b. Because we are talking about trusting a Being we cannot see or feel for things we don't necessarily see or feel yet, we are vulnerable to things we can see and feel — sight and sense challenges that stimulate our thoughts and emotions.

1. However, we don't have to let emotions and thoughts determine our view or reality or our actions in any situation. We don't “refuse to feel” because it can't be done. We refuse to be moved from what God says because of what you feel and think based on what we see and feel.

2. I feel fear but I choose to trust God (Ps 56:3). I feel anger, but I choose not to sin (Eph 4:26). I feel sad, but I choose to rejoice (II Cor 6:10; Hab 3:17,18).

c. When Jesus was on His way to Jairus' house to heal his grievously ill daughter, word was brought to Him and Jairus that it was too late. The little girl had died. Mark 5:22-24; 35,36

1. This kind of information will produce a rush of emotions and thoughts in anyone who hears them and can potentially move them from a place of trust and faith in God.

2. Note what Jesus said: (Overhearing) but ignoring what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, do not be seized with alarm and have no fear, only keep believing (v36--Amp).

C. For the rest of the lesson we're going to look at two examples of people who experienced thoughts and emotions as they faced challenging circumstances. Some dealt with them in a way that produced good results and others did not. We can learn from their examples.

1. Before we look at our examples, we need to make some brief points about the Bible itself in order to get maximum benefits from its record.

a. As you know the Bible is a collection of sixty-six books and letters written by men inspired by God that, together, tell the story of God's desire for a family and the lengths to which He has gone to obtain His family through Jesus. It is 50% history, 25% prophecy, and 25% instruction on how to live.

1. The Old Testament (Genesis to Malachi) is primarily the history of the people group through whom Jesus came into this world, the descendants of Abraham or the nation of Israel.

2. The apostle Paul, whom we've referred to as an example of a man who was unmoved by life's

challenges said that the Old Testament was written to teach us, and give us reasons to hope as we endure (or stay firmly in place) in the challenges of life. Rom 15:4

b. The Old and New Testament are redemptive history. The Bible records events and people that were directly involved with or related to God's unfolding plan of redemption (His plan to deliver men and women from sin, corruption, and death through Jesus).

1. The Bible doesn't relate everything that happened to every body. For example, the four gospels cover only about fifty days of Jesus' life and ministry even though He was on earth for over thirty-three years.

2. There are no references to the United States or China or South America, not because God doesn't care about the people in those countries, but because the events connected with His plan to provide redemption through Jesus took place in the Middle East.

c. The Bible has a representative sample of how God works in the earth and with His people as He gathers His family, chosen by the Holy Spirit as He inspired the authors who penned the word.

1. What has been recorded is purposeful, in that it is meant to reveal God to us and produce faith, trust, obedience, and hope in us.

2. Therefore, when we look at some of the same examples over and over, recognize that they were specially selected by the Holy Spirit to give us maximum insight and help.

2. Num 13,14--This particular incident is referred to numerous times in Scripture as an example of what not to do in the face of life's hardships. It is an excellent example of how and how not to deal with a challenging circumstance and the thoughts and emotions stimulated by it.

a. God delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt by His power under the leadership of Moses. The exploits God accomplished were meant to inspire trust in Him and His faithfulness to keep His promises in His people. Ex 14:31

b. Once Israel was safely through the Red Sea and the pursuing Egyptian army was destroyed, Israel had a marvelous praise celebration. Ex 15:1-21

1. At that point, everything looked good (the enemy was gone and they were free, about to begin the trip back to their homeland. In that atmosphere, the people proclaimed their trust in God and His promises.

2. When they reached Canaan, at the border, before the entire company crossed over, Moses sent twelve spies into the land on a reconnaissance mission.

c. They returned to Moses and the rest of Israel forty days later with a report. All the spies agreed that it was a beautiful, bountiful land. And all agreed that there were formidable obstacles: walled cities, war-like tribes, and giants. Num 13:26-33

1. Because of the way human beings are wired, that kind of information would automatically stimulate emotions in everyone who saw the land and heard the report.

A. The primary emotion would be fear since what they could see was bigger than the resources available to them if they looked only at what they could see. Israel looked like grasshoppers compared to the people who lived in the land. Num 13:33; Deut 1:26-28

B. Sight and emotions would lead to thoughts or conclusions about what this might mean for Israel: If we cross the border into that land, we're going to die. Num 14:3

2. If emotions and thoughts generated by sight are left unchallenged they can move us to act. That's exactly what happened in this instance. The people refused to enter Canaan.

A. Joshua, Caleb, and Moses challenged the emotions and the thoughts with reality as it truly is or the way things really are according to God. Num 13:30; Num 14:7-9; Deut 1:29-33

B. Israel didn't listen. But we can look at this example and see the importance of refusing to let emotions and thoughts determine our actions. We must let God's Word determine what we do.

C. The voices of Joshua, Caleb, and Moses show us how this is done: You make a choice to bring up what God says in the face of what you see and how you feel.

1. Because most of us are used to letting our emotions run wild, this seems impossible. But remember, we are free-will agents. We always have a choice in any situation.
 2. We can exercise our will and refuse to act on what we feel. And God, by His power in us will strengthen us inwardly to maintain our stand when we side with Him.
3. I Sam 25--While David was on the run from King Saul, he spent time in the wilderness of Paran.
- a. David heard that a wealthy man in the area (Nabal) was shearing his sheep, so David sent some men to ask if Nabal could give them some provisions. (This was not an unreasonable request. Sheep-shearing was a time of celebration and guests frequently participated.) David told Nabal that his shepherds had been well treated by him and his men when their paths crossed before.
 1. Nabal's response was insulting and less than neighborly (v10-12) and it made David angry. He was so angry that he took four hundred armed men and went after Nabal to kill him (v13).
 2. There's no indication that David did anything to try to quell his anger or think in terms of: How would God want me to act in this situation.
 - b. Meanwhile, Nabal's servants went to his wife Abigail and alerted her to what was going on. She prepared a gift for David and his men and rode out to meet them to try to stop bloodshed.
 1. There's a lot in this account we aren't going to discuss now, but notice how she talked David out of doing what his anger dictated.
 2. Abigail talked to David the way he should have talked to himself (v23-31): Don't let a man like Nabal drive you to act in an ungodly manner. God is your defender. No man can destroy your reputation. The Lord will keep His promise to you and you will one day be king. Don't let this rash act be a black mark on your record of integrity. Don't shed needless blood.
 - c. v32-35--Her words calmed David down as he recognized the wisdom in her words. We can learn from this example of the kind of talk that can keep us from acting on the emotion of anger until that initial rush subsides.
- D. Conclusion: We haven't said all there is to say, but consider these thoughts as we close this lesson.
1. Not being moved from trusting God is intentional in that we can refuse to give into the challenges from our emotions and thoughts that arise in the hard times. We can learn to recognize them and deal with them before they sway us, before they move us.
 2. II Chron 20--Jehoshaphat and Judah faced an overwhelming enemy force, but God promised to help them. He told them to set themselves and stand their ground because they would see His help.
 - a. To keep their focus on God's Word, they employed praise and thanksgiving. They went into battle praising and giving thanks to His loving-kindness that endures forever. Praise and thanksgiving helped those people stand against emotions and thoughts until they saw their deliverance.
 - b. Acknowledging God in the face of emotions will do the same for us. Get control of your emotions before you act on them. Don't feed the emotions. Acknowledge God by thanking and praising Him for His goodness and wonderful works.