

EMOTIONS, THOUGHTS, SELF-TALK

- A. Introduction: Life in a fallen world is very difficult, and many things come our way that undermine our faith and trust in Almighty God. We are taking time to talk about how to become and remain unmovable.
1. In this part of our series we're talking about emotions. Life's challenges generate emotions and emotions are a major factor in how we handle life. Therefore, if we're going to remain unmoved in the face of life's hardships and pressures, we must learn how to deal with our emotions.
 - a. Far too many people base their actions on how they feel in the moment. Not only can that get us into trouble, it's contrary to how Christians are supposed to live. We're supposed to conduct ourselves, or order our lives, according to the Word of God no matter how we feel.
 1. The fact that you don't feel like forgiving someone, or feel like being kind to someone, or that you feel like tearing into someone verbally doesn't relieve you from your obligation to obey God. Eph 4:26; Eph 4:31,32; I Pet 3:8,9; etc.
 2. As with every other part of our being, emotions have been corrupted by sin and can lead us into ungodly behavior. So we must learn to recognize and control our emotions responses.
 - b. Emotions are the spontaneous responses of our soul to what is going on around us. Emotions are stimulated primarily by the information we receive through our physical senses.
 1. Emotions are involuntary. This means that they are not under the direct control of your will. You cannot will yourself to feel or to not feel something. However, you can control what you do and how you act no matter how you feel. Rom 8:13
 2. Although emotions are real (meaning we really feeling something) they can give us inaccurate information and drive us to act in ungodly ways. Therefore, we don't get your view of reality from what we see and feel.
 3. We don't deny what we see and feel. We recognize that sight and feelings don't have all the facts. There is more to reality than what we see and feel in the moment.
 2. For the past several weeks we've been looking at the connection between emotions, thoughts, and the way we talk to ourselves. We're going to continue that discussion in this lesson.
- B. Let's review some points from last week and then add to them. Emotions and thoughts work together because emotions feed thoughts and thoughts feed emotions. Then, we either fuel or calm what we are thinking and feeling by how we talk to ourselves.
1. Part of gaining control over your emotions and thoughts so that they don't move you from your trust in God or drive you to sin is gaining control over your self-talk or the way you talk to yourself.
 - a. Self-talk is that constant chatter that goes on in our head. Self-talk plays a major role in shaping and maintaining the way we view life as well as how we deal with life.
 1. In a teaching Jesus did, He illustrated how what we see, combined with emotions, thoughts, and self-talk, can work together to move us from a place of trust in God.
 2. In Matt 6:25-34 Jesus instructed His followers not to be worried about where the necessities of life will come from. In v31 He specifically instructed them to take no thought, saying.
 - A. This is the process we all experience. We see or hear something (in this case, lack) and the emotion of worry is stimulated. Then thoughts begin to come to us. We pick them up and begin to talk to ourselves: Where will we get food? Where will we get clothing?
 - B. As we talk, we either feel more worried and more anxious or reassured and encouraged, depending on what we tell ourselves. That's how we're wired, that's how God made us.

If you're experiencing emotions, you're also having thoughts, and you're talking to yourself about all of it.
 - b. Because of our fallen flesh, we have a tendency to engage and answer the thoughts and questions that come to us when our emotions are aroused based only on what we see and feel in the moment.
 1. We also have a tendency to let our emotions and immediate thoughts lead to other, even more

dire thoughts. As emotions and thoughts feed each other our self-talk gets crazier

2. We tend to embellish and speculate once our emotions get going: This is the worst thing that could happen. I'll never make it through. No one else has to deal with stuff like this.

A. If you're using words like "nobody, everybody, or always" you're probably embellishing and speculating because you don't know everybody or everything that has ever happened to everybody or what will happen to you in the future.

B. You'll recall that at the border of Canaan the Hebrew people didn't want to enter the land God gave them because they were certain they would die. Yet in the same breath, they were saying: We wish we had died in Egypt or the wilderness instead of here. God brought us out here to kill us all. Num 14:1-3

2. Several weeks ago we looked at an incident in David's life that occurred while he was on the run from King Saul. I Sam 25

a. David spent time in the wilderness of Paran where, among other things, he and his men interacted with shepherds who worked for a wealthy man named Nabal.

1. David heard that Nabal shearing his sheep, so he sent some of his men to ask if Nabal could give them some provisions. This was not an unreasonable request because sheep-shearing was a time of celebration and guests frequently participated. And, David had treated Nabal's shepherds well when their paths crossed before. v7,8;15,16

2. Nabal's refused and his response was insulting and less than neighborly and it made David so angry that he took four hundred armed men and went to kill Nabal's household. v10-13

b. 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". Instead, he fueled his anger with his self-talk.

1. v21,22--As Abigail approached, "David had just been saying, "a lot of good it did to help this fellow. We protected his flocks in the wilderness, and nothing he owned was lost or stolen.

But he repaid me evil for good'" (NLT). Then he asked God to bless his plan to kill everyone.

2. Note that David had treated Nabal's in a godly way, yet he's feeding on the fact that he didn't get the response from them he felt he deserved. So, what was his motive in helping the men? To obey God or to get something?

A. This is a lesson for another day, but sometimes the root of our anger comes out of wrong motives in us.

B. Additionally, when we're upset, we tend to talk, not just about what someone did, but about why we think they did it and further fuel our emotions.

1. We're angry, not because of what they did, but because of why we think they did it. But you can't for certain why someone did something unless they tell you.

2. Example: Someone ignores us at church and we speculate about why he did it (to hurt me, disrespect me; etc). It turns out, he ignored you because he didn't see you.

His attention was focused on some bad new he just received.

3. Consider another example found in the story of Jacob and his brother Esau. Jacob took his brother Esau's birthright (all his rights as the firstborn) and blessing (a father's blessing for his firstborn). There are many lessons in this account, but note several points for our discussion. Gen 27

a. As their father, Isaac, was dying and the time had come to give the firstborn his blessing, Jacob pretended to be Esau and tricked his father into blessing him.

b. Esau reacted to what was done to him with bitterness (wept bitterly, Gen 27:34). Bitterness is intense hostility and resentment toward someone. It was natural for Esau to feel severe pain over such a big disappointment and loss.

1. But notice how Esau talked to himself about what happened (Gen 27:36). He went through a list of offenses against Jacob: Jacob stole my birthright and now he has stolen my blessing.

A. The truth is that Esau gave up his birthright for a bowl of stew (Gen 25:29-34). We are told that he despised his birthright. He didn't value the blessing God gave to him.

- B. The hurt and pain of an offense can skew your perception of reality. That is why we have to look to the word of God for accurate information in the situation.
2. Notice also what Esau did with his emotional pain. Gen 27:41,42--He comforted himself by planning his revenge on Jacob, meditated on evil and fed the resentment and bitterness.
4. Let's go back to Matt 6 where Jesus taught His followers not to worry by exhorting them not to engage certain thoughts and feed them with self-talk.
 - a. He also directed His listeners to focus their attention, not on lack, but on their Father in Heaven by looking at the provision He gives to creatures who matter to Him: birds and flowers. v26-31
 - b. Recalling our Father's goodness and wonderful works in the face of challenging circumstances feeds our faith and trust in Him which in turn calms our emotions.
 - c. Getting control of our emotions and thoughts requires both a short-term and a long-term strategy.
 1. Short term: Control your mouth and change your focus. Instead of talking about what is wrong and how it's getting worse, acknowledge and praise God with your mouth. Recall His past help and promise of provision. Remind yourself that nothing's bigger than God.
 2. Long term: Change your view of reality so that this response becomes the way you see life and not just a formula to get immediate relief. And, let the Word of God expose the flaws in your flesh that that make you blind to the fact that the way you handle your emotions in some areas not only undermines your trust in Him, but is actually ungodly. Heb 4:12
- C. We're referred to Paul the apostle a number of times in this series because he is an example of a man who was unmoved by life's challenges. We find that he too had to deal with emotions, thoughts, and self-talk.
1. We know from his writings that he experienced fear, anxiety, sorrow, annoyance, and anger. He, like us, had to learn to control these feelings just as we do.
 - a. We mentioned in an earlier lesson that Paul compared the Christian life to an athletic competition. His audience was very familiar with this theme because such competitions were a major part of Greek and Roman life.
 1. Paul made it clear that he was determined to finish the race set before him and stay faithful to and fulfill God's will for him. Acts 20:22-24; II Tim 4:7
 2. He wrote that just as an athlete exercises self-control and discipline so that he can win the race, Paul disciplined himself (I Cor 9:27). Part of self-discipline is controlling our emotions, thoughts, and self-talk.
 - b. When we bow our knee to Jesus as Savior and Lord we receive eternal life in our innermost being. We are literally born of God. The regeneration of our spirit is the beginning of a process that will ultimately make us like Jesus in every part of our being. Rom 8:29,30 (Lessons for another day)
 1. Our regenerated human spirit always wants to do the will of God. However, our body, mind, and emotions are not directly affected or changed by the new birth. We must learn to control them by the power of God in us. Rom 6:12,13; 18,19; Rom 8:13; Col 3:5; etc.
 2. Just as you have to control your body to keep from fulfilling lusts and desires, you have to control your thoughts and emotions. We need to be as determined to do so as Paul was.
 2. We could do entire lessons on what the Bible reveals about Paul's emotions, but consider these points.
 - a. II Cor 6:10--In the context of the many trials he faced as he preached the gospel to the known world, Paul talked about being sorrowful, yet rejoicing.
 1. This can't be an emotional response because Paul said he rejoiced when he felt sorrowful. Rejoicing comes from a word that means to be "cheer"ful. Cheer is a state of mind. When you cheer some, you give them hope and urge them to continue on.
 2. When he felt sad, he encouraged himself with the reasons he had hope. He focused on God's goodness and help and fed his faith rather than his feelings. Rom 12:12
 - b. II Cor 11:28,29--And besides all those things that are without, there is the daily [inescapable pressure] of my care and anxiety for all the churches! (v18); who is weak, and I do not feel [his

weakness? Who is made to stumble and fall and have his faith hurt, and I am not on fire [with sorrow or indignation]? (Amp)

1. Paul made it clear that he felt the pressure of all the responsibility he bore. And it generated emotions in him. Note that one of those emotions was indignation which is anger or strong displeasure at something considered unjust, offensive, insulting or base.

2. He's the one who wrote: Be angry and sin not (Eph 4:26). He had to do what he told others to do or he was a hypocrite. Eph 4:26 goes on to say: Don't let the sun go down on your wrath. That means: deal with it quickly. Don't let it sweep up in rage.

A. Before Paul bowed his knee to Jesus, according to his own words, he let his anger rage.

B. Acts 26:11--And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities (ESV)

c. II Cor 11:26--Paul found himself in many situations that would generate fear in anyone. When he was on board a ship taking him to Rome, it was caught in a horrific storm and there seemed to be no escape (Acts 27).

1. An angel appeared to him and told him not to fear. Dismiss all fear (Weymouth); Do not be frightened (Amp). Note, the angel didn't say: don't feel, but rather, deal with it. Take God's Word and encourage yourself. v23,24

2. v25--We get a window into Paul's self-talk by what he told the crew when he emerged from his quarters after having seen the angel: Keep up your courage. It will be just as God told me.

3. II Tim 4:16-18--When Paul's supporters abandoned him as he faced execution, his view of reality was: God is with me. This isn't bigger than him. He will get me through.

d. Acts 16:18--Paul was annoyed by a devil-possessed slave girl who followed Paul and Silas around the city of Philippi for days proclaiming that they were servants of God.

1. Paul didn't allow his feelings to move him. Instead, he did the work of God and cast the devil out. He knew there was more to the situation than what he could see and feel in the moment.

2. v18--Then Paul, being sorely annoyed and worn out, turned and said to the spirit within her, I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. (Amp)

3. Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten and jailed for helping this girl. How would you feel? How would you think and talk if you were in their situation?

A. Note that there's no hint of them blaming each other or God, no hint of complaining and recounting all the wrongs done to them, no emotional embellishment and speculation about what was going to happen to them.

B. Instead, they chose to override their emotions and to pray and praise God in their circumstance. v23-25

D. Conclusion: By the grace of God, we can get control over our emotions and prevent them from driving us to sin or distrust. By changing our focus and our self-talk we, like Paul, can respond to troubles with praise.