

LEARN FROM ME

- A. Introduction: Life's hardships undermine the faith of many sincere Christians. So, we are taking time to talk about how to become unmovable in the face of the troubles we all encounter.
1. There are lots of reasons why life's troubles move people. In this portion of our series we're focusing on the fact that many people are moved because they misunderstand God's primary purpose in this world, and therefore have inaccurate ideas about what the Lord will and won't do for us in this life.
 - a. These misunderstandings and inaccuracies create false expectations that lead to disappointment when those expectations go unmet.
 1. Disappointment sometimes leads to anger at God when people don't experience the abundant life they believe that He has promised us.
 2. Faith can also be weakened when people don't understand why a loving and all-powerful God allows human suffering.
 - b. When people are disappointed, angry, and perplexed, they are more easily moved from their commitment to Christ. It is therefore vital that we have accurate knowledge from the Word of God about God's purposes for man, along with what He will and won't do for us.
 2. In order to remain unmoved by the trials of life, your perspective has to change. You must learn to think in terms of not just this life, but the life to come. This perspective will not only keep you from being moved, it will help you deal with life's challenges more effectively.
 - a. You are an eternal being who will not cease to exist at death. And the greater part of your existence is after this present life. When this life is matched up with forever, even a lifetime of hardship is nothing. Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:17-18
 - b. It's not what you see, but how you see what you see. Everything you see is temporary and subject to change by the power of God—either in this life or the life to come. Therefore, there is no such thing as a hopeless situation since nothing can come against you that is bigger than God.
 3. In the last lesson we made that point that developing an eternal perspective begins with knowing that God created you for a purpose that is bigger than this life and will outlast this life.
 - a. God created men and women (you and me) to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ. He made the earth to be home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18
 - b. Both mankind and the earth have been damaged by sin. Because of Adam's sin, men were made sinners by nature and the earth was infused with corruption and death. Rom 5:12; 19; Gen 3:17-19
 1. Jesus came into this world two thousand years ago to begin the process of restoring God's purpose by paying for our sin at the Cross.
 - A. Through the Cross Jesus satisfied Divine Justice on our behalf. Because of His sacrifice, sin can be removed from all who believe on Him. God can declare us righteous or right with Himself. I John 2:2; I John 4:9-10; Col 2:14; Rom 5:1-2; etc.
 - B. Once we are declared righteous through faith in Christ, God can then treat us as if we never sinned and impart eternal life to our inner being (our spirit). We are transformed from sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God by receiving eternal life from God. John 3:16; John 10:10; John 10:28; etc.
 1. Eternal life is not live forever life. All human beings have eternal life in the sense that no one ceases to exist when their physical body dies. Eternal life is a type of life. It is the life in God Himself.
 2. This is why the analogy of birth is used to describe conversion to Christ. We are born of God through receiving eternal life. I John 5:1; 11-12; John 1:12; John 3:3-5; etc.
 - c. Jesus will come again in the not too distant future to cleanse and restore the earth and establish the visible, eternal kingdom of God on earth. God and man will then live here together, in the family

home, forever. Jesus died to bring God and man back together. I Pet 3:18

1. God's plan has always been to live with His family in the family home. The Bible begins and ends with God on earth with His family. Gen 2:18-25; 3:8; Rev 21:1-3
2. The Cross and the new birth qualify all who believe on Jesus for sonship and a home in God's kingdom, first in the present invisible Heaven and then on earth when it's made new.
- d. God's primary purpose in the earth now is to bring people to saving knowledge of Himself, not to make this life the highlight of our existence. He uses the harsh realities of life in a sin damaged world and causes them to serve His ultimate purpose. (More on that in later lesson.)
 1. This doesn't mean that God doesn't care about us or help us in this life, because He most certainly does. But we must have our priorities right and keep this life in perspective.
 2. If you have a wonderful, abundant life and leave your mark on this world, but end up separated from God in Hell, then it's all for naught. Matt 16:25-26; Luke 12:16-21
4. In this lesson we're going to continue to work on clearing up misinformation about God's purpose in this life and our false expectations as we develop a perspective that will make us unmovable.

B. To sort this all out, we must first have a clear understanding of why Jesus came to earth. Let's examine the Lord's first statement as He began His public ministry.

1. Mark 1:15—Note that Jesus made four points: One, the time is fulfilled; two, the kingdom is at hand; three, you must repent; four, you must believe.

a. When Jesus said that the time is fulfilled and the kingdom is at hand, He was announcing that the time had come to begin establishing the kingdom of God on earth.

b. Fulfilled comes from a Greek word that means to fulfill or complete: "The time has come at last" (J. B. Phillips). Jesus announced that He came to complete the plan of God (a plan that is much bigger than this present life).

2. There's a lot in Jesus' statement (many lessons for another day). For now, consider these points.

a. Jesus' coming marked the beginning of the last days which will culminate in the completion of the plan of God (Heb 1:2; Acts 2:17; I John 2:18). The plan will end with the establishment of the visible kingdom of God on earth (II Pet 3:10-13; Rev 11:15; etc.).

1. When Jesus made His statement, God had not yet revealed that there would be two comings of Jesus separated by two thousand years. He also had not yet revealed that His kingdom would come in two forms—visible and invisible.

2. The kingdom of God would first take an invisible form. The kingdom (literally reign) of God would be established in human hearts through the new birth. The uncreated life of God (eternal life) would transform their innermost being from sinner to son. Luke 17:20-21

b. The visible kingdom of God will be established on earth in connection with Jesus' second coming,

1. The bodies of all who have believed on Jesus (the revelation of Jesus given to each generation) since Adam and Eve, will be raised from the dead and reunited with its original owner.

2. And God and His family of redeemed sons and daughters will live forever on this earth—the family home renewed and restored) forever. (Lots of lessons for another time.)

3. Sinners cannot participate in either form of the kingdom of God (visible or invisible). They must first be transformed into Holy righteous sons and daughters of God in order to qualify for the kingdom.

a. Jesus went to the Cross to make this possible for all who believe on Him (Col 1:12-13). In the second half of His opening statement, Jesus commanded men and women to repent and believe the gospel.

1. Repent is made up of two words: *meta* denotes a change of place or condition; *noeo* means to perceive with the mind. Repent means a change of mind, implying a feeling of regret, sorrow.

A. Mark 1:15—Have a change of mind which issues in regret for past sins and in change of conduct for the better. (Amp)

B. The essence of sin is choosing to be independent of God (Isa 53:6). Jesus' message is:

Turn from living for yourself (your will your way) to living for God (your will directed His way). II Cor 5:15

2. Gospel comes from a word that means good news. Jesus brought good news to humanity. He came to remedy our most desperate condition—separation from God because of our sin.

A. The gospel is a very specific message: Jesus died for our sins as the scriptures foretold, and was buried and raised from the dead as the Bible said He would be. I Cor 15:1-4

B. When we believe the good news and repent (turn from living for self to living for God), our sins are washed away because of the shed blood of Jesus. God then gives us eternal life and we are born of Him.

C. Jesus came to earth to pay for our sins so that we could receive eternal life which makes us literal sons and daughters of God and qualifies us to live with Him in the family home in the life to come.

1. Yes, here are benefits in this life. But the greatest benefits are in the life after this life. I Tim 4:7-8

a. We need to develop an eternal perspective and live with the awareness that we are part of an eternal plan. This perspective and awareness gives us hope in the midst of a very challenging world.

b. We will have abundant life (meaning a life of prosperity where all are dreams and desires are met) in the life to come. Part of the provision of God for us in this life is the peace and joy that comes from this certainty. Rom 15:13

2. Matt 11:28-30—Jesus invited people who labor and are weighed down by the hardships and challenges of life to come to Him. He promised to give rest to those who come to Him. He wasn't being poetic nor was He promising us a nap.

a. The Greek word translated rest means to repose or rest (literally or figuratively). Repose has several meanings, one of which is calm or peace (*Webster's Dictionary*).

b. *Webster's Dictionary* defines peace as freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts and emotions. The Greek word translated peace in the New Testament is used for peace of mind and the tranquility that comes from knowing you've been reconciled to God (*Strong's Concordance*).

1. Peace is an internal tranquility that isn't rocked by what is happening around you. It's peace of mind. It's the peace that passes understanding.

2. Through His death, burial, and resurrection Jesus has provided us with peace with God and the peace of God. Rom 5:1; Phil 4:7

3. When you live with the awareness that you've been reconciled to God through the shed blood of Jesus and you are now an actual son or daughter of God by birth, you realize that nothing can come against you in this life that is bigger than God your Father. This gives you peace of mind no matter what you are facing.

3. This is consistent with a statement Jesus made to His disciples at the Last Supper. We refer to this verse frequently, because with His words, Jesus made it clear that His followers will have trouble and trials in this world.

a. John 16:33—In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer—take courage, be confident, certain, undaunted—for I have overcome the world.—I have deprived it of power to harm, have conquered it for you. (Amp)

b. There are many points in this passage (more than we can deal with now). But notice one point.

1. Jesus prefaced the portion of the verse we just quoted with these words: John 16:33—I have told you these things so that in Me you may have perfect peace and confidence (Amp),

2. Jesus contrasted His statement about the trials of life with the fact that in Him we can have peace or rest for our souls. And, He made it clear that this peace comes to us through His Word. Jesus gave His disciples information that would give them peace in the midst of trials.

3. Hold that thought and go back to Matt 11. Jesus gave two criteria for obtaining the rest or peace or

peace He offers: One, take my yoke on you. Two, learn of or from Me.

a. Yoke in the New Testament is used as a metaphor of submission to authority. Learn is from a

word that means learn intellectually through study and observation.

- b. Jesus said that through submitting to Him, and through knowing Him, we will have peace in the face of life's hardships and trials. People who are at peace are not easily moved from their faith in God.
 1. We get to know Jesus, the Living Word, through the Bible, the written Word of God. Jesus reveals Himself through His Word. John 5:39
 2. We spend time with Jesus through His Word. We get to know the God of peace through His Word. What He reveals about Himself, what He is doing, and how He works gives us peace of mind.

A. The Bible is filled with numerous examples of people who, in the face of tremendous obstacles and hardship, were able to look past it.

B. I don't mean that they had a vision. They knew from the Word of God that there was more going on than what they could see in the moment. They knew that God was with them and that everything they could see was temporary and subject to change by the power of God either in this life or the life to come. That perspective gave them peace in the storm.

3. The Lord is called the God of peace (I Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20). The God of peace is never disturbed by or about anything, and He is bigger than what we are facing. When this becomes our perspective, our view of reality, it enables us to say "It is well" no matter what we're facing.

3. You can't gin up this kind of response in the moment. It has to become your perspective, your view of reality. That comes only through regular, systematic reading of the New Testament, along with good teaching from someone who is able to explain the scriptures to you. Acts 8:27-35

a. The Bible is a supernatural book. If you will develop the habit of reading through the New Testament, it will change your view of reality and impart peace of mind to you.

b. Don't worry about what you don't understand. Just keep reading. Understanding comes with familiarity. God's Word makes tremendous promises of peace for those who focus their attention of the Lord and the way things really are.

1. Isa 26:3—You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you (NLT). Your ability to fix your thoughts on the Lord is increased through reading His Word.

2. Ps 119:92—Unless thy Law had been my delights, I should have perished in mine affliction (KJV). Ps 119:165—Great peace have they who love thy Law (KJV). God shows Himself to us through His Word.

3. Phil 4:6-8—Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. And now, dear friends, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you. (NLT)

4. Jesus becomes more and more real to you as you learn of Him from His Word. (That's another way of saying your faith increases,) As He becomes more real to you, you become more confident of His love for you, more assured of His help in the midst of life's hardships.

D. Conclusion: We still have much more to say. But consider these thoughts as we close.

1. Jesus didn't come to make this life the highlight of our existence. In fact, He made it clear that life in this world is very challenging. But He also made it clear that we can have peace of mind in the midst of life's trials.

2. If we're going to walk in the peace that passes understanding we must submit to the lordship of Jesus and do things His way. And we must get to know Him through His Word. His promise to us is that in Him we will have peace to make it through the storms of life without being moved. Lots more next week.