

PEACE OF MIND

- A. Introduction: We are discussing how to get to the point where life's challenges and hardships don't move us from our faith and trust in God. Nor do they move us to disobey God. I Cor 15:58.
1. Many people have inaccurate ideas about why Jesus came to earth. People mistakenly think that He came to give us an abundant life, meaning a life of prosperity with relatively few hardships.
 - a. These misunderstandings lead to false expectations about what God will and won't do for us in this life. Unmet expectations lead to disappointment when people don't experience all that they mistakenly believe the Lord has promised them. This kind of disappointment makes people more vulnerable to being moved by life's trials.
 - b. So, as part of our study, we are talking about the importance of clearly understanding why Jesus came to earth and what He accomplished for us through His death, burial, and resurrection.
 2. Jesus came to earth restore men and women to our created purpose by dying for our sins. Heb 9:26
 - a. Human beings were created to become sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ. Sin has disqualified us from our destiny because a holy God cannot have sinners as sons and daughters.
 - b. Through His sacrifice of Himself, Jesus satisfied Divine Justice on our behalf. Now, all who put faith in Jesus (believe on Him and His sacrifice, His Person and His work) are justified or acquitted and declared not guilty of sin. Rom 4:25; Rom 5:1; etc.
 1. Once we are justified, God can then treat us as though we had never sinned and impart eternal life to us. Eternal life is a type of life, the life of God, the life in God. John 5:26; I John 5:11,12
 2. When we receive this eternal life, we are born of God. This restores us to our created purpose. We become literal sons and daughters of God through new or second birth. I John 5:1; John 1:12; John 3:3,5; etc.
 - c. Jesus came to give us an abundance of eternal life which transforms us from sinners into sons and begins a process of transformation that will ultimately make us conform us to the image of Christ (or make us like Jesus in character and power, in holiness and love) in every part of our being. Rom 8:29,30; Eph 1:4,5; John 10:10
 1. Jesus came and died to meet our greatest need—salvation from our sin and its eternal consequences—so that we can have a future and a hope with God our Father, not just in this life, but in the life to come. I Tim 4:8; Matt 16:26
 2. Although there is provision for this life, God's present purpose is not to make this present life the highlight of our existence. His number one concern is that men come to saving knowledge of Jesus. Because God is Omniscient and Omnipotent (all-knowing and all-powerful) He is able to use the circumstances of life in a fallen world and cause them to serve this ultimate purpose. (We'll discuss this point in detail in later lessons.)
 3. Jesus died to bring peace between God and man. Through the Cross, Jesus made it possible for enemies of God (those who are guilty of sin) to become friends of God. Rom 5:10; Col 1:20-22
 - a. Jesus brought us peace by paying for our sin and opening the way for us to become sons and daughters of God. We now have peace with God legally and relationally.
 1. Legal: Rom 5:1—Therefore, since we are justified—acquitted, declared righteous, and given a right standing with God—through faith, let us [grasp the fact that we] have [the peace of reconciliation] to hold and to enjoy, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. (Amp)
 2. Relational: Because of the Cross and the new birth, God is our Father. We now have the same standing with the Father that Jesus (in His humanity) had and has. Eph 2:17,18; Eph 3:12
 - b. Because we have peace with God through Jesus (legal), we have the potential to walk with peace of mind through life's storms (relational) since Almighty God is now our Father and nothing can come against us that is bigger than Him. In this lesson, we want to talk about peace of mind.

- B. The night before Jesus was crucified He celebrated a Passover meal with His disciples at what we call the Last Supper. John 13-17
1. As Jesus prepared the twelve for the fact that He was soon going to leave, He promised that He would give them peace in the midst of life's troubles. John 14:27; John 16:33
 - a. Jesus said that He would give them His peace. He said that peace would come through and in Him. Peace is my parting gift to you (John 14:27, NEB).
 1. This was an astounding statement since these men had been with Jesus for over three years and had never once seen Him agitated, worried, or fearful.
 2. No matter what came His way, Jesus knew that His Father was with Him and for Him, protecting Him and providing for Him. Jesus had peace with the Father which gave Him peace in the storms of life.
 - b. Jesus gave them (and us) the same peace He has by giving us the same standing with the Father that He has (through the Cross and the new birth). This peace with God gives us peace of mind, potentially. Notice that Jesus put some conditions on experiencing or walking in the peace He has provided.
 1. Remember, in Matt 11:28-30, Jesus promised to give rest or peace to those who submit to His authority (take His yoke on them) and learn of or from Him.
 2. Then, at the Last Supper, right after Jesus promised His followers His peace, He admonished them to let not their hearts be troubled. John 14:27
 2. The word troubled means to stir or agitate. John 14:27—Do not let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid—stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and cowardly and unsettled. (Amp)
 - a. Let's analyze what Jesus was saying. He isn't saying: Don't allow yourself to feel certain emotions. Emotions are involuntary. They are the spontaneous response of your soul to what is going on around you. Emotions are not under the direct control of the will. You cannot will yourself to feel or to not feel something.
 1. When you see something worrisome or fearful, when you encounter something troubling, what you see and encounter will stimulate emotional responses in you. That is normal.
 2. Notice that troubled means to stir or agitate. Both words have the idea of "an outside agent" acting in a way that ramps up or increases. You stir something with a spoon. You churn clothes in the washing machine with an agitator.
 3. Note *Webster's Dictionary's* definition of these words. To agitate means to disturb or excite emotionally. To disturb means to interrupt the quiet, rest, or peace of. To trouble means to disturb the mental calm and contentment of. Worry and distress are synonyms of these words.
 - b. Jesus was telling His disciples (and us): Don't agitate or further stir up the emotions that you feel when you encounter life's challenges.
 1. You may recall that earlier in our series we talked about the connection between sight, emotions, thoughts, and self-talk. When we see something disturbing and our emotions are stimulated, thoughts begin to fly, and we begin to talk to ourselves.
 2. As we talk to ourselves, we feel more worried, anxious, and fearful, or we feel reassured and encouraged, depending on what we tell ourselves and on whether or not we let our thoughts run wild. This process of sight, emotions, thoughts, and self-talk happens to us all.
 - A. *Webster's Dictionary* defines peace as freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts and emotions. Peace is not first and foremost and emotion, although it can and does affect how you feel. Peace is an internal quality that isn't move by what is going on around you.
 - B. You can't avoid life's troubles, but you can avoid being dominated by tormenting and oppressive thoughts. You can let your heart not be troubled.

3. In Matt 11:29 Jesus told His followers to learn from Him and find peace for your souls. Learn comes from a word that means learn intellectually through study and observation.
 - a. 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.
 1. One of the reasons God has given us His written Word, the Bible, is to bring peace to our soul (mind and emotions). The Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the Prince of Peace, is revealed to us through the written Word. John 5:39
 2. The Bible shows us what God is like and how He works. It encourages us with real life examples of real people who got real help from God in the midst of really difficult situations. Rom 15:4
 3. In John 16:33 Jesus directly connected the peace He brings to the things He speaks. He told His disciples and us: These things I have spoken unto you so that in Me you can have peace.
 - A. Obviously, if you don't read the Bible, you don't know what it says and you have no source of peace to draw from in the midst of the storms of life. That's why we encourage you to become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament (lessons for another day).
 - B. Also included in learning God's Word is getting good teaching from a good Bible teacher. On Resurrection Day Jesus explained the Scriptures to His disciples and opened their understanding (Luke 24:45). The Ethiopian eunuch did not understand what he was reading until Phillip explained it to him (Acts 8:31-35). (Also lessons for another day.)
 - b. John 6:63—All the words through which I have offered myself to you are meant to be channels of the spirit and of life to you, since in believing those words you would be brought into contact with the life in me. (J. S, Riggs Paraphrase)
 4. Paul, who was personally taught the Gospel that he preached by Jesus Himself, admonished Christians to run our race looking unto or keeping your mind Jesus. We keep our mind on Jesus through His Word.
 - a. Heb 12:1—Looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and source of our faith (Amp).
 1. Faith, trust, confidence in God (which gives us peace of mind) comes from the Living Word of God Who is revealed in the written Word of God.
 2. The God of hope fills you with joy and peace as you trust in Him. Rom 15:13—May the God of your hope so fill you will all joy and peace in believing—through the experience of your faith—that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound and be overflowing (bubbling over) with hope. (Amp)
 - b. We are made in such a way that we are affected by what we look at and where we put our attention.
 1. Peace of mind comes from keeping our attention on the Lord through His Word. Isa 26:3—You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you. (NLT)
 2. Ps 94:19—In the multitude of my (anxious) thoughts within me, Your comforts cheer and delight my soul (Amp).
 3. Ps 119:92—Unless thy Law had been my delights, I should ten have perished in mine affliction (KJV). Ps 119:97—O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day (KJV).
 - c. This is not a technique. It is a response that comes out of a view of reality that has been shaped by the Word of God. No matter what comes against me, it's not bigger than God Who is my Father. He will get me through until He gets me out.
- C. Conclusion: In the face of life's challenges and the emotions they generate, to walk in peace, you have to call to memory or bring to your mind what God has said.
1. We see this theme repeated over and over in the Psalms. The writers of the psalms experienced great anguish because of their circumstances, but they chose to remember God—His past help, His present provision, and His promise of future help—and it brought them peace of mind.
 - a. Ps 116:7—The psalmist talked to himself: Soul, return to your rest. Rest comes from a word that

means a settled spot. It carries the idea of peace. But note why he says he can be at peace: Because the Lord has dealt bountifully with (or been good to) you. He remembered the Lord's goodness in the face of troubles.

b. Ps 42:5—The psalmist reminded himself that there is more to reality than what he could see in the moment: I have hope. I have every reason to expect good because God is with me. The phrase: for the help of his countenance literally means: His presence is salvation.

2. This idea is consistent with some things that Paul wrote. Remember, he has been our example of a man who was not moved by life's hardships and challenges. Acts 20:22-24

a. Col 3:15—He instructed believers to let the peace of God rule in our hearts. Rule comes from a word that means umpire or arbitrate. We are told to let peace be the arbitrator.

1. We must let the God of peace, through His Word of peace be the determining factor, over and above what we see and feel. The Greek word translated rule, when used figuratively means to prevail.

2. Col 3:15—And let the peace (soul harmony which comes from) from the Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts—deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds—[in that peaceful state] to which [as members of Christ's] one body, you were also called [to live]. And be thankful—appreciative, giving praise to God always. (Amp)

b. Phil 4:7—Paul also wrote that there is a peace that passes understanding and that it will guard or keep your mind and heart through Christ Jesus.

1. Note the context of Paul's statement. In v6 he told his readers not to be anxious or worried (an emotion that expresses itself in and is fed by disquieting thoughts). Instead, when something comes up that makes you feel anxious, go to God.

2. Because you have peace with Him through the Cross of Christ, you can go to Him as your Father. And, you can go to Him thankfully, with the expectation that He will hear and answer, because His ears are open to the prayers of His righteous children. I Pet 3:12

A. Jesus told us that He is better than the best earthly Father (Matt 7:9-11). And He gives His children the necessities of life (Matt 6:9 -13).

B. Jesus also told us that when you are worried (agitated, troubled, lacking peace), bring your mind back to reality as it truly is by remembering your Father's goodness and His faithfulness to take care of those who matter to Him. Matt 6:25-34

3. Paul knew that there is a battle involved in letting peace be the umpire because emotions are real, and in the moment, it can seem as though God and His provision is not. Notice, that he directs us where to put our mental attention.

A. v8—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. (NLT)

B. We could do an entire lesson on this verse. But consider one thought as we close. The Word of God fits every category Paul lists here. It may be true that you don't have money to pay your bill. But it's certainly not lovely or worthy of praise. But the fact that God is your Father and He has promised to take care of you is both true and lovely. So think on that instead.

3. God's promise is that if you keep your mind fixed on Him, in the storms of life, you will have a peace that passes understanding. Peace with God (being in right relationship with Him through the Cross) gives us peace of mind because we know that we have a heavenly Father who cares for us and because we know we have a future and a hope in Him. Lots more next week.