

DON'T LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED

- A. Introduction: Life's hardships can sometimes move sincere Christians from a place of faith and trust in God into fear, doubt, anger, and even disobedience. So, to help us become unmovable, we're examining what we can do to help us hold steady in the face of life's trials. I Cor 15:58
1. We've covered many aspects related to this topic since the beginning of the year. In this portion of our study, we're focusing on the fact that many people get moved because they misunderstand God's primary purpose in this world. Consequently, because they don't understand God's primary purpose, they have inaccurate ideas about what God will and won't do for us in this life.
 - a. These misunderstandings create false expectations which lead to disappointment, frustration, and anger at God when those expectations are not met and they agonize over what they're doing wrong.
 1. Much of the popular teaching in some Christian circles today says that Jesus died to give us an abundant life, meaning a life where all of our dreams and desires are fulfilled. John 10:10
 2. When people encounter the hardships of life, they agonize over why this is happening to them, as they try to figure out what they're doing wrong.
 - b. Added to this is the fact that God truly is a loving Father Who is better than the best earthly father. This sometimes leads sincere people to wonder how a good God could let bad things happen to people He loves, especially when He has the power to stop it.
 - c. If we're going to become and remain unmoved by life's trials, we must be able to rightly answer these issues and the questions that arise from them.
 2. Thus far, we have addressed the first concern. Jesus came to earth to die for our sins so that we can be transformed from sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God, which restores us to our created purpose. Eph 1:4-5; I Pet 3:18; etc.
 - a. God's primary purpose in the earth right now is to bring people to saving knowledge of Himself through Jesus—not make this life the highlight of our existence.
 - b. Although there are benefits in this life when you serve God (I Tim 4:8), Jesus did not die to give you a life of blessing and prosperity. He died to remedy your greatest need, the fact that, without Him, you are guilty of sin before a holy God with no way to help yourself.
 1. We are eternal beings who do not cease to exist at death, and the greater part of our existence is after this present life. If you have a wonderful, prosperous life and end up in hell, it's all for naught. Matt 16:26
 2. This doesn't mean that there is no help for this life. But you must understand that God is working out a plan that is bigger than this life. This present life is not actually His main concern.
 3. To become and remain unmoved by life's trials, your perspective has to change. You must learn to think in terms of not just this life, but also the life to come.
 - a. This perspective will enable you to deal with life from a place of confidence in God which in turn opens the door to His help, strength, and provision in the midst of life's trials.
 1. The end result is that we have peace in the storms of life. Peace is an internal quality that isn't moved by what is going on around you. Peace is freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts and emotions (*Webster's Dictionary*).
 2. This doesn't mean that you never have disquieting thoughts or feel oppressive emotions. It means that you're not moved by them because you know that nothing can come against you that is bigger than God. You know that all pain and loss is temporary. You know that all will be made right, if not in this life, in the life to come. Therefore, you have peace of mind.
 - b. Jesus promised peace of mind in the midst of life's hardships to those who submit to Him. Matt 11:28-30; John 14:27; John 16:33
 1. Experiencing peace of mind isn't necessarily automatic. Jesus said that we have to "Let not

our hearts be troubled". John 14:27—Do not let your heart be troubled...stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed (Amp).

2. We are made in such a way that we are affected by what we look at and where we put our attention. Peace of mind comes from keeping our attention on the goodness and bigness of God. We do this by focusing in what He says in His written Word. Isa 26:3; Ps 94:19
 4. Paul (who was personally taught the message he preached by Jesus Himself, Gal 1:11-12), wrote in Phil 4:6-7 that Christians aren't to worry (be agitated and disturbed) about anything.
 - a. Instead, with thanksgiving, we should take our concerns to God. And the peace of God that passes understanding will keep our hearts and minds. Notice that the thanksgiving comes right at the beginning, when you go to God. Consider these points.
 1. You thank someone before you see their help when you are confident that they will help you.
 2. Your mind returns to rest or peace only because you know they will come through for you.
 - b. Here's the problem: Probably everyone listening to this lesson could say: I've asked God to help me in the past and He didn't do what I asked. How can I have any confidence that God will help me now? How can I be at peace?
 - c. In order to be at peace, we have to be able to answer these questions because they are the kinds of disquieting thoughts that keep us from experiencing peace of mind. We agitate our own soul when we can't answer questions about why God does and doesn't do certain things. For the rest of the lesson, we want to begin to address these issues.
- B. To keep your heart from being troubled by agitating and disturbing thoughts, there are a number of things you must know about God and the nature of life in a fallen world
1. You must understand that there is no such thing as a problem free life in this life. We live in a fallen world that has been damaged by sin. Even if we do everything right, trouble still comes our way.
 - a. Jesus said: In this world we will have tribulation (trials, distress, and frustration, John 16:33—Amp). He said that in this world, moths and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal (Matt 6:19).
 - b. When Adam sinned, his disobedience affected the human race resident in him as well as the earth itself. A curse of corruption and death infused all of creation. Gen 2:17; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12-19; Rom 8:20
 1. Consequently, we are born with bodies that are mortal which means they are subject to sickness, injury, old age, and death.
 2. All human beings are born with a sin nature which we freely express. We must deal with the consequences of each other's sinful choices and wicked actions.
 3. Natural laws have been affected, resulting in killer storms, earthquakes, weather extremes that produce famine and flooding. Animals now kill man and each other.
 - c. It's not wrong to ask why. But you must be able to accurately answer the question. Why does bad stuff happen? Because that's life in a sin cursed earth. (For a more detailed discussion of this topic, read my book: *Why Did This Happen? What Is God Doing?*).
 2. It must be a settled fact in your mind that God is not behind the trials and hardships of life. Otherwise, you won't have peace of mind because you'll be resentful and angry as you agonize over why a loving God could do this to you.
 - a. God is not behind the trials of life. He doesn't orchestrate circumstances to teach us, test us, or perfect us, or make us patient. We could do hours of teaching on this, but consider one point.
 1. Jesus shows us what God is like and how He treats people. He said: If you've seen me, you've seen the Father, (not because He is the Father, but because He did the works of His Father by the power of His Father in Him). Jesus said: I only do what I see my Father do. (John 14:9-10; John 5:19)
 2. If Jesus didn't do it, then the Father doesn't do it. When we read the Gospels we find that Jesus

tested no one with circumstances. He sent no storms to strengthen people. He caused no donkey cart crashes to teach people a lesson. If Jesus didn't do those kinds of things, then neither does the Father. (For a more detailed discussion of this topic, read my book: *God Is Good and Good Means Good*.)

- b. Much of what we think we know about how God works comes from misquoted verses, verses taken out of context, and statements not found in the Bible. However, these saying have been quoted so much that many people believe they're passages from the Scriptures.
 1. Here's a short list: God won't give you more than you can bear (I Cor 10:13). Trials make us patient (James 1:3). God tests us with trials (John 6:6). This is your cross to bear. This is your thorn in the flesh (II Cor 12:7). What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Everything happens for a reason (Luke 10:31).
 2. We could do (and have done) lessons explaining these verses in context (at another time). But note one point. This is another reason why it is so important to become a systematic Bible reader (as opposed to a verse reader)—so you know for yourself what it does and doesn't say.
3. To have peace of mind, you also must rightly understand the phrase "God allowed it". This statement is not found in the Bible. And, it has been loaded with meaning not consistent with Scripture.
 - a. Implicit in the phrase "God allowed it" is the idea that, because God did not stop something from happening, He is for it, approving of it, or behind it in some way. If you think God is behind your troubles in any way it is difficult to have peace of mind because you can't be certain what He might do to you next.
 - b. Why does God not intervene and stop all the evils in this world? (He will do so in connection with the Second Coming of Jesus. That's a discussion for another day.) Note this point for now.
 1. When God created human beings, He gave men and women free will. With free will comes not only the freedom to choose, but also all the consequences of the choices made.
 - A. When you have to deal with a weather event such as a tornado or flood, or when your tire goes flat or your car won't start, it's ultimately because of a choice Adam made. As we said above, as a consequence of his choice to disobey God, a curse of corruption and death entered creation and altered the laws of nature. Gen 2:17; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12-19; Rom 8:20.
 - B. When you see someone with a physical impairment or an illness or watch the body of a loved one be lowered into the grave, it's ultimately because of a choice Adam made.
 - C. In this world, we must daily deal with the consequences of billions of free will choices made since time began.
 2. Much of the trouble in our individual lives is the result of other people's choices—an obnoxious boss; a rebellious child; a spouse who cheats on their partner, etc. So our prayer to God is: Stop that person from doing what they're doing. However, you're asking Him to do something He has not promised to do.
 1. God does not stop people from making choices. Think about it. If He was going to overrule someone's will, He'd do it for their eternal salvation, not so you can get a promotion on your job.
 2. This doesn't mean that there is no help from God in these kinds of circumstances (we'll get to that). But if your mind is focused on—why did God do this; why is He letting this happen to me; why doesn't He stop it?—you won't go to God with thanksgiving, as Paul admonished believers in Phil 4:6.
 3. And you won't experience the peace of mind that passes understanding because you're letting your heart be troubled by agitating and disturbing thoughts. Phil 4:7-8
 - c. Why doesn't God stop all the hell and heartache in this present evil world? At this point in time, no one can answer that question fully in connection with every instance of suffering. But consider several thoughts.

1. God's present purpose is not to end all human suffering and make this life the highlight of our existence. His ultimate goal is to bring men and women to saving knowledge of Himself through Jesus.
2. Then they can have life after this life—first in the present invisible Heaven and then on earth after it is made new and God's family returns to this world to live forever. Life will finally be as God always intended. II Cor 5:8; Rev 21:1-3
3. Because God is All-knowing (Omniscient) and All-powerful (Omnipotent), He is able to use the hardships of life and cause them to serve His ultimate purpose. Eph 1:11; Rom 8:28

- C. Conclusion: The Bible is filled with examples of God using the harsh realities of life in a sin cursed earth and causing them to serve His ultimate purposes as He cared for His people in the midst of their difficulties.
1. These examples were recorded to give people like us hope and peace in the midst of the storms we face. Rom 15:4—For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (ESV).
 2. We'll look at several of these accounts in some detail over the next couple of weeks. And when we do, we will find that God works according to certain precepts in the difficulties of life.
 - a. God does put off short term blessing (like ending your trouble now) for long term eternal results.
 - b. God has perfect timing. And, at the right time, His people see results. Just because you can't see something happening doesn't mean nothing is happening. It simply means you can't see it yet. Much of His work is invisible until, at the right time, we see results.
 - c. God works to bring maximum glory to Himself and maximum good to as many people as possible. And He brings genuine good out of genuine bad as He causes circumstances and choices people make to serve His purposes.
 - d. God never abandons His people. He can cause us to flourish in the midst of trouble. He gets His people through until He gets them out.
 3. In the face of life's challenges, we must learn to let not our hearts be troubled or agitated by disturbing and anxious thoughts. How is that possible?
 - a. You must know that God is not the source of your trouble. You must understand that He has not promised to stop life's hardships yet, but that He will get you through until He gets you out.
 - b. You must know that He will bring genuine good out of bad as He causes it all to serve His purposes. He'll bring maximum glory to Himself and maximum good to you and to others as you trust Him.
 - c. You must make the decision to let not your heart be troubled so you can walk in peace.
 1. He has promised peace to those who keep their mind focused on Him. Isa 26:3—You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you (NLT).
 2. We focus on God, we fix our mind on Him through His Word. We'll look at examples of what God does in the hard times we all face.
 - d. But we already have enough information to begin to put this into practice right now. Back to Phil 4:6-7. When Paul told Christians not to worry but to go to God with prayer and thanksgiving, he was familiar with all the accounts we're going to examine in upcoming lessons.
 1. We thank someone for their help before we see it when we're confident that we will see it, and that the help will be what we need. We have peace of mind.
 2. Don't pray: Make this trouble stop now Lord! He hasn't necessarily promised to do that for you. But He has promised you that He will get you through until He gets you out. He will care for you until He gets you out. And, He will bring genuine, eternal good out of all of it. That's what you pray: Thank you Lord, this isn't bigger than you. You will get me through until you get me out. You will take care of me. You'll cause this to work for good and produce eternal results.
 4. When you learn to pray like that, your heart won't be troubled. You'll have peace of mind. More next week!!