

THANKSGIVING BRINGS PEACE

- A. Introduction: The Bible instructs Christians that we are to be steadfast and unmovable as we serve the Lord (I Cor 15:58). We need this exhortation because there are many things that can move us from a place of faith and confidence in God into worry, fear, and doubt. We're discussing how to keep this from happening.
1. Recently, we've been focusing on the fact that many are moved by life's trials because they don't understand the nature of life in a fallen world or how God works in the midst of a fallen world.
    - a. Inaccurate information about these issues can give people the idea that victorious Christian life means few if any problems, along with quick a resolution to any troubles they do encounter.
    - b. However, there's no such thing as a problem free life in this world. You can do everything right, and things will still go wrong, because that's life in a fallen world. John 16:33; Matt 6:19
      1. This world is not as God created it or intended it to be. We live in a sin cursed earth, a world that has been damaged by sin, beginning with Adam's sin in the Garden. Gen 2:17; 3:17-19; Rom 5:12-19; Rom 8:20; etc.
      2. And, although there is provision and help from God in this life, ending the troubles of life is not His primary purpose in the earth right now. His main goal is to bring people to saving knowledge of Himself through Jesus so that they can have a future and a hope in the life to come. I Tim 4:8; Matt 16:26; II Tim 1:10
    - c. God is not the source of life's hardships. Much of the hell and heartache in this world is due to the choices of people and the ensuing consequences of those choices, going all the way back to Adam.
      1. God gave mankind free will in the hope that we would choose to serve Him. Free will open the possibility of people making choices contrary to God and harmful to themselves and others.
      2. Because God is All-knowing (Omniscient) and All-powerful (Omnipotent) He is able to use the hardships of life in a fallen world and cause them to serve His ultimate purpose—salvation from sin for all who put faith in Jesus.
  2. God's promise to His people is peace of mind in the midst of life's hardships (Matt 11:28-30; John 14:27; John 16:33). This peace comes to us through God's written Word.
    - a. The Bible shows us what God is like and how He works. It records numerous examples of real people in real trouble. From their stories we see how God works in the midst of life in a fallen, sin damaged world.
      1. When we examine these various accounts, we see that God often puts off short term blessing (ending the trouble right now) for long term eternal results.
      2. We find that He works in the hard times to bring maximum glory to Himself and maximum good to as many people as possible, bringing genuine good out of genuine bad.
      3. These accounts assure us that God gets His people through until He gets them out. And they show us that God has perfect timing.
    - b. In these accounts, we can look at the whole story and see how God worked the behind-the-scenes, causing choices and circumstances to serve His purposes. And, we can see how the story ends.
    - c. This information gives us peace of mind when we are in the middle of our own trouble because God is not a respecter of persons. What He did for those mentioned in the Bible, He will do for us. The Lord does not change.
  3. In the last lesson we looked at the account of the generation of Israel that God delivered from in Egypt as an example of how the Lord works His purposes and cares for His people in the midst of a fallen world (Ex 1-16). Let's briefly review some key points.
    - a. During a time of famine, the family of Abraham left the land God promised to give them (Canaan) and went to Egypt for food. Why was there famine? Because that's life in a sin cursed earth.

- b. At first, Israel was welcomed in Egypt and prospered. But as the years passed, the Egyptians became afraid of Israel's increasing numbers and enslaved them. Why? Because that's life in a fallen world. Men with sin natures, motivated by fear, choose to rule over other men. But God used Egypt's free will choice and Israel's time in Egypt for good.
  - 1. Abraham's descendants grew from 75 family members to over 3,000,000—enough people to actually possess and hold on to Canaan when they returned. Gen 46:27; Ex 12:37
  - 2. The years in Egypt gave the Lord additional time to work to draw the inhabitants of Canaan to Himself before Israel returned and dispossessed them of their land. Gen 15:15-16
  - 3. Through the power demonstrations needed to persuade Pharaoh to release the captive Israelites, many idol-worshipping Egyptians came to faith in Jehovah. Ex8:19; Ex 9:20; etc.
- c. As soon as Abraham's descendants left Egypt they found themselves trapped at the Red Sea. Why? Because that's life in a sin cursed earth.
  - 1. Impassable bodies of water and human bodies which are vulnerable to drowning, along with fallen men trying to capture and re-enslave other men, are part of life in a fallen world.
  - 2. But God used the problem to solve the problem. He parted the waters and Israel walked through on dry ground. The sea closed over the Egyptian army, destroying what would have been a constant threat to Israel once they reached Canaan.
- d. Even though Israel was redeemed (or delivered from bondage), there was no easy way for them to get from Egypt to Canaan. Why? Because that's life in a fallen world.
  - 1. One route was quicker and easier, but the war-like Philistines lived along that route. The other route took them through a mountainous desert region. But God led them on the route that produced maximum results. Ex 13:17-18
    - A. Not only was the army of Egypt destroyed, because it was a route through the desert, it provided opportunities for Israel to exercise and strengthen their faith and trust in God since they had to depend on Him to provide water, food, clothing, shelter, and protection.
    - B. It also gave them time to receive His Law and set up a functioning society after 400 years in slavery.
  - 2. Even though an eleven day trip took Israel two years to make, we see God's timing (Deut 1:2; Num 10:11-13). The two year delay gave time for word of the Egyptian army's defeat at the hand of God to spread to Canaan. By the time Israel reached Canaan, the tribes in the land were afraid of them, giving them a strategic advantage. And, it produced eternal results as people like Rahab the harlot came to faith in Jehovah. Josh 2:9-11
- 4. Although Israel's story was recorded in part to give peace to those who came after them, peace in the hard times isn't automatic. To experience peace we must let not our heart be troubled (John 14:27). Troubled means agitated and disturbed.
  - a. Peace of mind doesn't mean that troubling, disturbing thoughts never come to us. It means they don't ensnare us and move us from faith and trust in God.
    - 1. Even though these biblical accounts show us how God works in the midst of a sin cursed earth, we still have to deal with thoughts and emotions that arise when we encounter challenges.
    - 2. We have to answer thoughts and emotions with the truth of God's Word: God didn't cause this circumstance, but He is at work causing it to serve His purposes. This isn't bigger than Him. He will get me through this until He gets me out.
  - b. This same generation that came out of Egypt is also cited as an example of what we shouldn't do in the face of life's trials if we want to walk in peace. For the rest of the lesson we'll look at what they did and learn from their mistakes.

B. I Cor 10:1-13—Note that what is recorded about these people is written for future generations so that they (we) don't make the same mistakes they made (v6; v11). This passage identifies four specific actions that

redeemed people are not to do: commit idolatry (worship false gods), fornicate (commit sexual sin), tempt Christ (try or challenge God), murmur (grumble, discontently complain). vXX

1. We're going to focus on the last action (murmuring), but before we do, we need to address two other points. They deserve mention in connection with our present topic.
  - a. v13 is often used to support the idea that God is behind life's trials, but won't give us more than we can bear. This interpretation is an example of taking a verse out of context. When we read the entire passage we find that the context is temptation to sin, not the trials of life. The idea is that all of us get tempted with the kinds of things Israel faced (v12). But we don't have to sin like they did because God always provides a way of escape—if we will take it.
  - b. Note that these people tempted Christ, or as the Amplified Bible says, try His patience, become a trial to Him, critically appraise Him and exploit His goodness (v9). This is talking about something that happened before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. So, how did they tempt Christ?
    1. The Bible reveals that Jesus was very active with His people in the Old Testament. I Cor 10:4 makes it clear that Jesus went with Israel on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. Followed (v4) is literally "went with them". The Old Testament records many pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus. Pre-incarnate means before Jesus took on flesh (a full human nature) in the womb of Mary.
    2. The title most often given Jesus in these appearances is the Angel of the Lord—not AN angel, but THE Angel. He wasn't given the name Jesus until He was born in Bethlehem (Matt 1:21). Jesus is not a created being. He is the Creator of all, including angels (Col 1:16).
    3. In His Old Testament appearances, the Angel of the Lord is identified as God, but He is distinct from the Father. The word angel means messenger. Jesus is the Word made flesh, the visible manifestation of God, Old Testament and New (John 1:14; Heb 1:2; etc.).
2. Now, let's look at Israel's murmuring or complaining. To murmur means to grumble or mutter in discontent (*Webster*). To complain means to express grief, pain, or discontent (*Webster*). Murmuring, grumbling, or complaining is the first step to troubling your soul.
  - a. Ex 14:10-12—When Israel was trapped at the edge of the Red Sea with Pharaoh pursuing them, they were afraid. That feeling was and is completely normal. In their fear, they cried to God for help.
    1. At that point, a process began—the same process we all experience when we encounter fearsome circumstances. We see something that stimulates our emotions. Thoughts begin to race through our mind and we begin to talk to ourselves. However, if we allow sight and emotions set the pace (without taking God's Word into account) we can quickly become irrational in our thought processes and actions.
    2. That's what happened to Israel. Note how they talked about their situation: Why did Moses bring us out here to die? (Remember, God sent Moses to them.) Slavery in Egypt was far better than death in the wilderness. Yet in slavery they were afflicted, life was bitter, and they had sorrow and anguish, Ex 1:11; Ex 1:14; Ex 3:7
  - b. Their reaction was completely irrational because, not only had they themselves cried out to be delivered from Egypt, by this point, they know and have seen the following.
    1. God's power and protection clearly displayed over a nine month period through the plagues which challenged the gods of Egypt. Egypt was afflicted, but not them. Ex 8:22-23
    2. From the time God called Moses to lead Israel out of bondage, He promised to bring them out of Egypt and then bring them into Canaan (Ex 6:7-8). Why would He bring them this far and then abandon them?
    3. They would have known about their ancestor Joseph, the first of the family to come to Egypt 400 years earlier. He died declaring that God would bring them back to their land in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. Joseph made his people swear to carry his bones back to Canaan with them. Gen 50:24-25; Ex 3:19

4. They could literally see that God was with them. Preincarnate Jesus had already begun to manifest Himself in their midst as a pillar of cloud and fire. Ex 13:20-22
  - c. At the edge of the Red Sea Israel could have, should have brought peace to their souls by recounting these facts about God's promises and provision in the face of sight, emotions, and thoughts.
    3. God helped them anyway and delivered them from Pharaoh's army through the Red Sea. Once through the waters, Israel held a marvelous victory celebration. Ex 15:1-19
      - a. Everything looked and felt good. They were out of Egypt, the Red Sea was behind them and the Egyptian army was at the bottom of the sea. It was easy to be joyful and confident.
        1. They praised God for the victory, clearly stating that nothing is too big for God (v1-12). They boldly proclaimed that God would guide them to His land and bring them in. The people of Canaan (Palestina) would hear what God had done and be afraid (v14-17).
        2. But their emotional excitement and confidence didn't last. Three days out of Egypt and they couldn't find water. And they began to murmur again.
      - b. Ex 15:22-24—What shall we drink? It's natural to feel like that in the face of lack, and it's natural and for those kinds of thoughts to fly through your mind. It's part of living in a fallen world.
        1. But you have to be able to correctly address these kinds of thoughts. Our natural tendency in our fallen flesh is to talk about how bad things are and how they are bound to get worse. That's what murmuring is: discontented complaining.
        2. The antidote for discontent is gratefulness to God expressed through thankfulness to God. At this point, Israel had plenty to thank God for, without mentioning that He had just solved a major water problem for them three days earlier at the Red Sea.
      - c. Ex 16:1-3—Two and a half months out of Egypt, they again murmured against Moses and Aaron: You've brought us all out here to kill us with hunger. Wish we had died in Egypt; "at least we had plenty to eat" (v3, NLT).
        1. Which is it? You're upset because you don't have food in the wilderness so you're going to starve. But you wish God would have killed you in Egypt. He wasn't trying to kill them. Note that they've already survived for two months in a desert wilderness. But that's where uncontrolled emotions, thoughts, and self-talk will take you.
        2. v4-5—God was patient and helped them anyway. He showed them His help to build their confidence in Him. He promised to give them bread from Heaven.
          - A. We find another test from God, and once again, His test is His Word, not the circumstance. Would they follow His instructions for gathering the manna? Pick what you need for the day—an omer or two quarts per person. v16
          - B. God's purpose in testing them was to teach them the blessing of obeying His Word. If they took too much it spoiled. If they didn't get enough, they had no lack. v17-18
        3. They should have thanked God for His past help, present provision, and promise of future care. It would have brought them peace of mind in the wilderness as it strengthened their confidence in Him. We can learn from their mistakes.
- C. Conclusion: We haven't said all that we need to say, but consider these thoughts as we close this lesson.
1. The account of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and journey to Canaan was written in part to give us peace by revealing how God works in a fallen world.
  2. If you want to experience peace, you must learn to get your emotions, thoughts, and self-talk under control with thanksgiving to God.
    - a. Instead of talking about the trouble you see and letting your mind and emotions run wild, begin to thank God for His past help, present provision, and promise of future help and provision.
    - b. Remind yourself that God is working to bring maximum glory to Himself and as many people as possible as He brings genuine good out of genuine bad in your circumstances. Thank Him that He

will get you through until He gets you out.

- c. Even though you don't know yet how your situation is going to turn out, you can rest in the fact that when your entire story is written and the end result is visible, your story will be just as encouraging as Israel's. Nothing can come against you that is bigger than God! Thank and praise Him for this unchanging fact!! More next week!