

BE MINDFUL OF GOD

- A. Introduction: I Cor 15:58—We are working on learning how to become unmovable in the face of life’s hardships because the trials of life move many sincere Christians. They move from faith and confidence in God to doubt, worry, fear, unbelief, and even anger at God.
1. In this part of our series, we’re looking at the fact that people get moved by their inability to answer certain questions that come up in the face of life’s hardships and sufferings. We all wrestle with them: Why is there so much suffering in this world, and why doesn’t a loving God do something about it?
    - a. To answer these questions we must start with the big picture or the overall plan of God. Almighty God created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ. And, He made the earth to be home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18
      1. The Lord’s plan from the beginning was that His family would flourish with joyful contentment in the home He made for us (another way of saying: Be blessed). Gen 1:28
      2. God’s ultimate plan has not yet been fully realized because mankind—beginning with Adam in the Garden—has rebelled against our Creator through sin.
        - A. Consequently, neither humanity nor this world is as God intended them to be. God’s creation has been damaged by sin. Because of man’s sin, this world is infused with a curse of corruption and death, making life on this planet very difficult. Gen 2:17; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12-19; Rom 8:20; etc.
        - B. However, life on earth won’t always be this way. In connection with the Second Coming of Jesus, the Lord will end all suffering, pain, loss, and death in this world, and life on earth will finally be as He intended. (Lots of lessons for another day.)
    - b. To answer these questions, we must understand that there is something bigger going on than this present moment. God is in the process of unfolding His plan of redemption—His plan to deliver His creation (all who bow their knee to Jesus as Savior and Lord, along with the earth) from bondage to sin, corruption, and death.
      1. His plan includes all who, since Adam and Eve, have put faith in the revelation of Jesus Christ given to their generation. All of us are only passing through this world as it is. All the pain, hardship, and loss are temporary and subject to change—if not in this life, in the life to come.
      2. We must develop an eternal perspective because this present life is only a tiny portion of our existence. The greater and better part of our life is ahead, first in the present invisible Heaven, and then on this earth after it has been restored. The sufferings of this life don’t begin to compare with what is ahead in the life to come. Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:17; etc.
      3. The Lord’s primary purpose right now is not to end life’s troubles. His goal is to bring people to saving knowledge of Himself so that they can have a part in the life to come. Matt 16:26
  2. There is help and provision from God in this life, but His greatest promise to His people is peace in the midst of life’s hardships and suffering.
    - a. Jesus told His followers that He would give us peace. In this world we’ll have tribulation (pressure, affliction, suffering, and trouble), but in Him we have peace. John 14:27; 16:33
      1. The word translated peace is *eirene*. It means a state of peace or tranquility (*Strong’s Concordance*). Our English word serene comes from this word. Serene means calm, peaceful, tranquil (*Webster’s Dictionary*).
      2. Peace is freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts and emotions (*Webster’s Dictionary*). Peace doesn’t mean that you never have disquieting thoughts or feel oppressive emotions. Peace means that you aren’t moved by them.
    - b. Notice two things that Jesus said about the peace He provides. He connected this peace to His Word and He instructed His followers to let not our hearts be troubled (agitated or disturbed).
      1. God’s Word gives us peace because it shows us what He is like and how He treats people. It

shows us how He works and what He does in the midst of a fallen world.

2. We must then use this information to counter the troubling emotions and disquieting thoughts that are generated when we encounter trouble.
  - c. This Bible is filled with accounts of real people who got real help from God in the midst of real trouble as He furthered His plan of redemption. These examples illustrate how God uses the harsh realities of life in a sin cursed earth and causes them to serve His ultimate purpose as He cares for His people in the midst of their difficulties.
    1. These accounts help us have peace of mind in the midst of life's hardships because they show us how God worked behind the scenes in real-life situations and caused circumstances and choices to serve His ultimate purposes as He cared for His people.
    2. Because the entire story along with the end result is recorded, we can clearly see how what seemed like a loss or a setback was actually a stepping stone to victory. We can see how God brought genuine good out of genuine bad, sometimes using the problem to solve the problem.
  3. In the last two lessons we've been looking at the account of the generation of Israel whom God delivered from slavery in Egypt. We've seen how God used the challenges those people faced both for their good and the furtherance of His eternal purposes.
    - a. We noted how He brought maximum glory to Himself and maximum good to multitudes of people as He brought genuine good out of genuine bad. We saw the Lord protect and provide for His people in a harsh environment and carry them through to the land He promised them.
    - b. We also noted that this particular group is cited as an example of what we shouldn't do in the face of life's trials if we want to walk in peace. As we read the account, we find that not only did this group not have peace of mind on their journey through the wilderness they never entered Canaan, the land God gave them. They refused God's plan for them. I Cor 10:6-11
      1. Although four issues are cited, we specifically focused on their murmuring or complaining. To murmur means to grumble or mutter in discontent. Complaining talks only about what is wrong and about what it sees and feels—without taking God's Word into account.
      2. When we read the Bible record of their trip from Egypt to Canaan, we find that instead of using God's Word to quiet agitating thoughts and troubling emotions, they fed the thoughts and emotions through complaining.
  4. In this lesson we're going to see what else we can learn from this particular account. Don't hear this as a Sunday school story. These are historical accounts of real people.
    - a. We've all heard this story so many times that it's easy to miss the impact of it. But realize that the Holy Spirit inspired Moses (the human author of the Book of Numbers) to record this information.
    - b. Remember, these accounts were written to encourage future generations and to help us not repeat certain mistakes. When Paul exhorted Christians of his day not to be moved by the hardships they faced, he referred to this group as an example of what not to do. Heb 3:1-19; Heb 4:1-2
- B. When this generation of Israel reached Canaan after their two year journey from Egypt, the decision was made to send twelve spies into the land first before the entire company crossed the border. Num 13:17-25
1. The spies spent forty days in Canaan. They travelled together, so all the spies saw the same things. When the reconnaissance party returned to the rest of Israel with their report, everyone agreed that Canaan was a beautiful, bountiful land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And they all also agreed that there were walled cities, warlike tribes, and giants. Num 13:26-29
    - a. But they differed on what to do. Ten of the spies determined: We can't go up against these people because they are stronger than us. We look like grasshoppers compared to them. We'll die if we enter the land. Two of the spies said: We are well able to take the land because God is with us. Moses sided in with Joshua and Caleb. (We'll get to them momentarily.) Num 13:30; Num 14:6-9
    - b. Both reports were given in the presence of all the people of Israel. Moses sided in with Joshua and Caleb (Deut 1:29-31). But the people believed the ten spies and reacted to their report with

murmuring and complaining.

1. Num 14:1-2—Then all the people began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of compliant against Moses and Aaron. “We wish we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness” (NLT).
  2. Remember, they had a well developed habit of murmuring and complaining, built up over the last two years of travel. They let what they saw and felt dominate their thoughts and talk. That made them irrational in their conclusions about their situation and God’s intentions.
2. How did people who have seen God’s power and provision for the past two years get to this point? We get insight into the answer to this question in the Book of Nehemiah.
- a. Almost a thousand years after the incident at the edge of Canaan, a man named Nehemiah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was recounting Israel’s history and made this comment about the generation God delivered from Egypt and led to Canaan. He pointed out what those people had witnessed by the time they reached Canaan:
    1. Neh 9:10-15—They saw the signs against Pharaoh and Egypt, the dividing of the Red Sea, where Israel was saved and Egypt destroyed; God manifesting Himself as a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night; the Lord appeared on Mount Sinai, spoke with them through Moses and gave them His Law; God gave them manna and water.
    2. Nehemiah concluded this list by stating that Israel was not mindful of God’s wonders. v17—neither kept in mind thy wonders (Rotherham); thy wonderful deeds with them they forgot (Moffatt); were not mindful of your wonders (Amp); nomemory of the wondrous protection (Knox); did not remember the miracles (NEB).
  - b. How could they forget what they saw? Mindful comes from a verb meaning to remember, to mention, to recall, or to think about. The basic meaning indicates a process of mentioning or recalling (*Strong’s Concordance*). *Webster’s Dictionary* says that mindful means to bear in mind, be aware, heedful.
    1. There are times when we have to choose to recall or remember. We are made in such a way that what we see and feel in the moment seems more real than anything else, more real than something you can’t see because it happened at another time.
    2. There was nothing wrong with Israel feeling fear (the emotion stimulated by the information the ten spies gave). But they didn’t choose to recall what God had already done for them. They didn’t bring to mind His promise to bring them into the land of Canaan. Ex 6:8
  - c. Joshua and Caleb, on the other hand, chose to be mindful of God’s wonders. They recognized that God with them was bigger than all the defenses and power of the people in the land. They remembered God’s promise to settle them in Canaan. Therefore, their report was: We can do this!
3. Back in Num 14:22-24 Moses recorded something God said about the whole situation. Israel (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb) would not enter the land.
- a. Israel missed the land because they did not listen to God’s Word and they tempted Him ten times. Ex 17:7 defines tempting God as doubting His presence among them: (they) “tested the Lord by saying, “Let’s see if the Lord is going to take care of us or not?”” (Lamsa)
  - b. Caleb (and Joshua as well) had another spirit and fully followed God. Num 14:24—My servant Caleb was of another mind; he took my part. (Knox).
    1. All of Israel followed the Lord in that when the cloud moved, they moved. But Caleb took Him at His Word. Everyone in Israel had the same information available to them. Caleb and Joshua chose to be mindful of it.
    2. Caleb was of another mind. His actions and attitudes came out of his view of reality. He knew and believed that God was with them and would help them.
      - A. Josh 14:7—Over forty years later, when the next generation was ready to enter Canaan, Caleb said of his report so many years earlier: I brought Moses word as it was in my heart—brought back a report according to my convictions (Berkeley).

B. Conviction is defined as the state of mind of a person who is convinced that what he believes or says is true. (*Webster's Dictionary*)

4. You may recall that after Israel made it through the Red Sea they had a victory celebration and sang a wonderful song about how big God is and what He had done and was going to do for them. Ex 15:1-21
  - a. Ex 15:22-24--Three days later, when they ran out of water, Israel began to murmur (grumble in discontent). It is perfectly normal to have an emotional reaction to the circumstances they encountered. This would have been a perfect time to be mindful of (recall) what God had already done for them.
  - b. If they would have sung their victory song all the way to Canaan, their view of reality would have been altered and they, like Joshua and Caleb, would have recognized that despite how things looked there was more to the situation than what they could see and feel in the moment—God with them and for them.
    1. We must choose to let peace rule in our hearts by recalling what God has said and done (Col 3:15). We have to let not our hearts be troubled by addressing troubling thoughts with the truth of God's Word (John 14:27). God's promise to us is that He will keep us in peace as we keep our mind on Him (Isa 26:3). We keep our mind on Him by recalling His Words and His works.
    2. Developing the habit of gratefulness expressed through thanksgiving to God is one of the surest ways to keep from being moved by troubling thoughts and emotions. It helps you be mindful of what He has done for you.

C. Conclusion: We have more to say on this subject, but consider several thoughts as we close. Caleb, Joshua, and Moses did it right. Yet they were affected by the ungodly choices of everyone else. Joshua and Caleb had to wait forty years to enter Canaan and Moses didn't get to go in at all. Why? Because that's life in a sin cursed earth. This might seem unfair unless you have an eternal perspective.

1. Num 20:1-13—I t was the first month of the fortieth year after Israel departed Egypt, and as had happened before, they had no water. God told Moses to take rod and speak to the rock. He hit it twice and water came out (Ex 17:1). For this, Moses was permitted to see but not enter Canaan (Deut 34:4).
  - a. Moses was clearly upset with the people and was provoked by their attitude. He shouted at them before he struck the rock. Must we bring you water (NLT). He was moved by his emotions, not his faith in God.
  - b. Moses did get to go into the land when he stepped out of the unseen realm to talk with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:1-4). And he will get to live in Canaan when he returns to this earth in connection with the Second Coming of Jesus.
  - c. God was building into the consciousness of His people (both through not allowing them to enter Canaan through their initial refusal and by not allowing Moses to enter) that disobedience is costly.  
You must do it God's way because there is only one way to eternal salvation: God's way through Jesus.
2. Joshua and Caleb, although still strong, were no longer young men when they finally entered Canaan. But they too will live in Canaan again at the return of Jesus. And when their bodies are raised from the dead they will be young again.
  - a. Recognizing that there is more to life than just this life, realizing that there are more important things being worked out than your personal wants in this moment, along with learning to be grateful for what God has done, is doing, and will do will give you peace in the wilderness.
  - b. Be like Caleb and Joshua. Be like Moses. Be mindful of God's wonders. Lots more next week!