

GOD WITH US

- A. Introduction: We are talking about how to become steadfast and unmovable in the face of life's hardships so that we aren't shaken and moved from our faith and confidence in God. I Cor 15:58
1. We live in a fallen world that has been damaged by sin. Consequently, there is no such thing as a problem free, pain free life for anyone. Part of provision for His people in the midst of life's hardships and pain is peace of mind. Peace of mind keeps us from being moved. John 16:33
    - a. Peace of mind is freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts and emotions. This doesn't mean that we never have such thoughts or emotions. It means we aren't moved by them.
    - b. Peace of mind comes to us through God's Word because His Word shows us what He is like and how He works in the midst of life's trials. This information gives us hope and encouragement in the hard times.
  2. In the past few lessons we've been looking at the accounts of real people who got real help from God in the midst of really difficult circumstances.
    - a. We found that God sometimes puts off short term blessing (ending the trouble now) for long term eternal results. As He works, He brings maximum glory to Himself and maximum good to as many people as possible, and He brings genuine good out of genuine bad. God has perfect timing, and He gets His people through until He gets them out.
    - b. Last week we looked at Joseph's story as an example of how God works in and with the hardships of life in a fallen world.
      1. In Acts 7:9-10 we have a Holy Spirit inspired comment about Joseph and his ordeal. Note that it says: God was with Joseph.
      2. In this lesson we want to talk about what it means to have God with us and how knowing He is with us brings peace of mind.
- B. The idea of "God with us" is a Bible theme. That means this concept is found repeatedly in Scripture. 1. The phrase "God with us" is often coupled with the statement "Fear not". Fear is defined as anxious concern. Concern is a state of uncertainty and apprehension (*Webster's Dictionary*).
- a. When you fear, you have no peace. Fear is an emotion that is stimulated when we encounter a potentially harmful circumstance that is greater than we can deal with. It isn't wrong to feel fear. It's natural.
  - b. However, the Bible instructs us that when we feel fear we are not to let it determine our view of reality or move us from our faith and trust in God. David said: When I am afraid, I will trust in you. I will proclaim Your Word. Ps 56:3-4
    1. This isn't a technique like waving garlic in front of a vampire. It's about having an accurate view of reality. Reality is the way things really are. This is reality: Nothing can come against you that is bigger than God who is with you.
    2. When Israel reached the border of Canaan they encountered obstacles that were much greater than themselves: walled cities, warlike tribes, and giants. Their natural reaction was fear. But Joshua and Caleb's response was: Fear them not because God is with us. Num 14:9
  - c. The Bible makes many statements about what it means to have God with us. Consider two of them.
    1. Isa 41:10—Fear not; [there is nothing to fear] for I am with you; do not look around you in terror and be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen and harden you [to difficulties]; yes, I will help you; yes, I will hold you up and retain you with My victorious right hand of rightness and justice. (Amp)
    2. Isa 43:1-2—Have no fear, for I have paid your ransom; I have called you by name and you are my own. When you pass through deep waters, I am with you, when you pass through rivers, they will not sweep you away; walk through fire and you will not be scorched, through flames

and they will not burn you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your deliverer. (NEB)

- d. These verses are well known verses. They speak to our emotions and give us comfort. For the moment, forget about how they make you feel and notice what they say. Revealed facts about God and His plans can strengthen us when we don't feel the "good" emotions.
  1. This is God revealing Himself to man. This is what He wants us to know about Him and His character and how He plans to deal with us: I am with you. Therefore, you need not fear. This is not bigger than Me and I will help you. Don't look at the fearsome and discouraging circumstances (don't be distracted). Look at Me. I am with you.
    - A. The word "with" means in mutual relationship (*Webster's Dictionary*). Relationship or relation means an aspect or quality that connects two or more things as being or belonging or working together or as being of the same kind (*Webster's Dictionary*).
    - B. I have called you and made you Mine. Almighty God created us for relationship with Himself. Through, redemption, God has done what is necessary to make mutual relationship possible.
  2. Although we can look at examples in the Old Testament where God literally brought His people through water and fire untouched (Ex 14:26-30; Josh 4:1-11; Dan 3:20-27), fire and water is used in Scripture as a metaphor for overwhelming trouble.
- e. Remember, these verses aren't little good luck charms that we hold up to ward off trouble. This is about changing your view of reality so that you live with the awareness that God, Who is greater than everyone and everything, is with you.
  1. Therefore, for you, there is no such thing as an impossible or hopeless situation because nothing can come against you that is bigger than God.
  2. II Kings 6:16—That's why Elisha the prophet was unafraid in the face of an overwhelming challenge. He knew that he had more resources on his side because God was with him.
2. As was pointed out earlier, we've been looking at Old Testament examples of how God worked with His people in the midst of trouble. Those accounts were written in part to give us peace of mind in the midst of trials.
  - a. We've looked much at the generation whom God delivered from bondage in Egypt. They were real people who were really enslaved by the Egyptians and then delivered by God.
    1. But what happened to them is referred to as being redeemed (Ex 6:6; Ex 15:13) because it pictures what God would ultimately do for all men through the Cross of Christ—redeem all who put faith in Christ.
    2. To redeem means to purchase through payment of a ransom. The New Testament refers to believers as purchased people because Almighty God paid the blood of Christ to deliver us from sin and make us His sons and daughters. I Pet 2:9
  - b. When we look at Israel's story we see that after God redeemed them, He made it clear to them that He was with them. That's one of the benefits of belonging to God through redemption.
    1. He visibly and continuously manifested Himself to them as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire to make it clear: I am with you. Ex 13:21-22
    2. Once they were delivered from Egypt, the Lord directed them to construct the Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting to be set up in the middle of the camp so that He could dwell with them.
      - A. Make a sanctuary where I can dwell among you (Ex 25:8). I will meet with you and speak with you (Ex 29:43). I will dwell among you and be your God. That's why I delivered you (Ex 29:45-46).
      - B. Although the Tabernacle was a real structure where the presence of God would manifest, it was also a picture (type) of the presence of God with His people.
3. Let's consider several other examples of what it means to have God with you.
  - a. Ps 23:4—David wrote: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no

evil because God is with me.

1. This psalm is often quoted at funerals because people mistakenly think that David was referring to God being with us at the time of our death, that's not what it is talking about.
2. Yes, God is with us when we die, but this a reference to the fact that we live in a world that is tainted by sin, corruption, and death. The valley of the shadow of death is this present life.
  - A. David may well have had the valley of Elah in mind when he composed this psalm. It was in the valley of Elah that David fought Goliath, the Philistine champion. God with David enabled him to defeat a much larger and more powerful enemy.
  - B. And, the sword brought on the field by Goliath became the sword that David used to remove Goliath's head. I Sam 17:37; 51
- b. Ps 46:1—God is a very present help in trouble: God is our shelter and strength; an exceeding ready help in time of distress (Spurrell); God is our protection and strength; a reliable help when trouble occurs (Harrison).
  1. v2-3—The psalmist then refers to catastrophe. The earth moving and shaking, with the waters roaring and troubled is a picture of physical catastrophe. The images of water roaring and mountains shaking are also used in Scripture to indicate political upheaval and all that it entails.
  2. Yet we will not fear. Note that two times the psalm says: God, our refuge (lit: cliff or inaccessible place; fig: defense, high tower) is with us. v7; v11
- c. Ps 42:5—David said that God's presence with him was salvation. The KJV says it this way: I will praise God for the help of His countenance.
  1. The word translated countenance literally means face. However, most of the time, it is used in a figurative way to mean the entire person. Ex 33:14-15
  2. The word translated help means salvation, deliverance, help, victory, prosperity. The primary meaning is to rescue from distress or danger.
  3. Help of His countenance literally means: His presence is salvation. When God is with you, you have everything you need to make it through whatever you are dealing with because He will get you through until He gets you out.
4. Acts 7:9-10—Let's go back to Joseph's story. This New Testament comment leads off with: Joseph hit a huge trial, but God was with him and delivered him.
  - a. When we look back at the Bible record of Joseph's ordeal, the first Holy Spirit inspired comment we have about him after his brothers sold him into slavery was: God was with him.
  - b. This chapter goes on to recount what happened to Joseph once he was in Egypt. It notes three different times that that God was with him. Gen 39:2; Gen 39:21; Gen 39:23
    1. These passages reveal that for Joseph, the Lord with him meant that meant: he was prosperous because the Lord made everything he did to prosper. v2-3; v23
    2. The word prosper is one of several Hebrew words that can be translated prosper. This one means to push forward. It is translated: break out, come (mightily), go over, be good, be profitable, be prosperous.
    3. Note also that the Lord showed Joseph mercy and gave him favor (grace) in the sight of Potiphar and the prison keeper (v21; v4).
      - A. Mercy means that God extended kindness to Joseph. Favor means grace, acceptance.
      - B. Joseph was going to be in this place, this land, for a long time. But God with him resulted in acceptance amongst his captors and Joseph's acceptance of his circumstances which gave him peace.
      - C. In other words, God provided what Joseph needed to survive. God got him through until He got Joseph out.
        1. Because God was with Joseph, what was meant for harm to him worked for good for him, and brought great good to multitudes.
        2. God with Joseph, He caused Joseph's circumstances to serve His purposes as the Lord

brought genuine good out genuine bad and maximum glory to Himself.

- C. The fact that God is with us as a very present (ready, reliable) help in time of trouble and that His presence the salvation and deliverance that we need has little impact on many sincere Christians.
1. People tend to listen to sermons and read the Bible (if they read at all) to feel better in the moment or to find an immediate solution to their most pressing need. But it doesn't work like that.
    - a. Victorious Christian living comes out of changing your view of reality so that you respond to life's issues with faith in God expressed through praise to Him. Because you know that He is with you and for you, you are confident that you will see His help so you praise Him before you see.
    - b. Far too many of us get our view of reality (or the way things really are) from what we see and feel in the moment. Therefore, our picture of reality is inaccurate.
      1. We labor under the certainty that God is far from us because we don't see or feel Him. We struggle believing that He would help someone like us.
      2. And the fact that our circumstances are terrible is the final proof that He is far away. My circumstances are bad.
    - c. However, God is present everywhere at once (Ps 139:7-8; Jer 23:23-24). Paul preached to idol worshipping heathens that in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:27-28).
      1. There's no place God is not. Wherever you go, there He is. You committed your worst sin in the presence of the Lord.
      2. The problem is that we don't live with the awareness or consciousness that God is with us. Consequently, even though He is perfectly present with us—loving and reigning, and upholding all things by the Word of His power—we live as though He were far from us. And we have no peace in the storm.
  2. Let's go back for a moment to Ps 46 and Ps 42. They give us insight into how we can learn to walk in the peace that comes from knowing God is with us.
    - a. Note that Psalm 46:10 admonishes us to be still and know that God is God. And it says two times: Selah (v3,v11). Selah means to pause and think about this. Still means to become slack, to relax, to cease, to desist.
      1. v10—Stop your striving, and recognize that I am God (Harrison); Pause a while and know that I am God (Jerusalem).
      2. We must take time to think about these things and go over them in our mind until we become persuaded of things we cannot see, become persuaded of the fact that God is with us.
    - b. Note that in Psalm 42:5 David talked to himself. Why are you cast down, O my inner self? And why should you moan over me and be disquieted within me? Hope you in God and wait expectantly for Him, for I shall yet praise Him, my help and my God (Amp).
      1. This is an example of someone not letting their heart be troubled as Jesus instructed us. John 14:27
      2. Instead of stirring his emotions and thoughts by reflecting on the troubles facing him, he acknowledged God with him.
  3. We have a natural tendency to focus on the problem and what we see and feel. We obsess over how we're going to fix it and what we're going to do.
    - a. Instead, let's focus on God and the fact that He is with us to help us. Let the power of His supernatural Word do its work and persuade you of what you cannot yet see or feel.
    - b. The bottom line is that God is with us and He will get us through until He gets us out. When this becomes your view of reality you will experience the peace that passes understanding.
- D. Conclusion: We haven't said all there is to say about God with us. Lots more to say next week!!