

GOD WITH AND FOR US

- A. Introduction: For several months we've been discussing something Jesus told His followers: We can't escape life's hardships and troubles, but we can have peace in midst of tribulation. John 16:33
1. This peace comes to us from the Word of God. The Bible reveals what God is like and how He works on behalf of His people. This information brings peace to our mind.
 - a. The Bible is fifty percent history. It is a record of real people who got real help from God. These accounts are meant to inspire confidence and hope in us as we face the hardships of life. Rom 15:4
 - b. Based on what the Bible shows us, we can have peace of mind because God is with us, and nothing can come against us that is bigger than God. Therefore, no matter what comes our way, we don't have to fear. Isa 41:10; Isa 43:1-2
 2. For the past few weeks we've been looking at the bigness of God—the fact that nothing is too hard for God and nothing is impossible for Him, including seemingly irreversible, unfixable circumstances.
 - a. Not only is nothing too big for God, “no thought or purpose of (His) can be thwarted” (Job 42:2, Amp). To appreciate this aspect of God's “bigness”, we must know what His ultimate purpose is.
 1. God created the human race to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ. He made earth to be home for Himself and His family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. God is currently working out His plan of redemption. Redemption is God's plan to restore all who come to Him through Christ to their created purpose. He will also restore the family home (the earth) in connection with the Second Coming of Jesus.
 2. God's primary purpose in the earth now is not to end life's problems and challenges, but to bring men to saving knowledge of Himself. God is so big that He is able to use the harsh realities of life in a sin damaged world and cause them to serve His ultimate purpose. Eph 1:11
 - b. No matter what's going on in your life, you can be sure that God working behind the scenes, causing it to serve His purposes as He works to bring genuine good out of genuine bad. And, He will get you through until He gets you out. Therefore, you need not fear. You can have peace of mind.
 1. When you have an eternal perspective (or realize that there is more to life than just this life) it helps keep this life in perspective. No matter what happens, there is hope in the final outcome.
 2. Jer 29:11—For I know the thoughts and plans I have for you says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace, and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome. (Amp)
 3. Last week we referenced the apostle Paul. He had an eternal perspective and it enabled him to live an incredibly difficult life in peace and victory.
 - a. He knew that in comparison to eternity a lifetime of hardships is miniscule. His troubles didn't weigh him down. He knew God was using them to produce eternal results. Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:17
 - b. In this lesson we're going to discuss why we, like Paul can have peace of mind even in the midst of really challenging circumstances because God is with us and for us.
- B. To experience the peace that comes from knowing that He is with us we need understanding of what it means. We are comforted by the statement that God is with us because we know, on some level, it's relational.
1. We've made the point that God is with everyone in the sense that He is present everywhere at once.
 - a. But the “with” we're discussing in more than that—it's about relationship. We must understand that, not only is God with us relational, God being with us is *His* idea.
 1. This is your created purpose—to be in relationship with Almighty God, to become a son or daughter of God through faith in Christ. Our purpose predates this life and will outlast this life. II Tim 1:9; Eph 1:4-5; Eph 2:7
 2. Through the Cross, God has made it possible for sinners to enter into mutual relationship with Him and become His literal sons and daughters through faith in Christ. I John 5:11; John 1:12-13; etc. (lessons for another day)

- b. The Old Testament account of Israel’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt is a historical record—an actual event that really took place. But it also pictures the deliverance that God provided through the Cross for all who believe on Jesus. Israel’s deliverance is referred to as redemption. Ex 6:6
 - 1. Ex 29:45-46; Lev 26:12—God is very clear about the fact that He delivered or redeemed Israel for relationship, so that He could dwell with them and walk with them.
 - 2. When we read what happened to them once they were redeemed, we find that God with them didn’t mean no more problems. It meant present provision, guidance, protection, deliverance.
 - A. II Cor 6:16-18—Paul referenced these passages written in Exodus and Leviticus when he exhorted believers to separate from old sinful ways of living.
 - B. He reminded readers that God delivered us so He can dwell and walk with us. Walk, used figuratively, refers to “the activities of God in the lives of believers” (*Vine’s Dictionary*). Paul reminded them that God regards us as His sons and daughters. He cares for us as a father cares for his son, just as He did for Israel. Deut 1:30-31
- c. As with many words, with has shades of meaning, one of which is “as regards or toward; example: angry with her; on friendly terms with him.” (*Webster’s Dictionary*).
 - 1. To regard means “to look upon or think of with a particular feeling; to have or show respect or concern for; to regard a person with favor” (*Webster’s Dictionary*). Another shade of meaning in the word with is “on the side of or favoring” (*Webster’s Dictionary*).
 - 2. God with you means that God and you are in relationship and He is for you. Remember, this relationship is not because of something you have done, but because of something He has done.
- 2. Rom 8:31—Paul’s testimony was that God is for us. That reality made him more than a conqueror in the midst of life’s challenges and hardships (Rom 8:37). This was Paul’s view of reality: If God is for us, who (or what) can be against us? Note the context of Paul’s statement.
 - a. Rom 8:28—All things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose. (Amp)
 - 1. Rom 8:29—Our purpose is to become God’s son or daughter through faith in Christ. When we acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord we enter the purpose for which we were created. Now we are to grow in Christ-likeness and let His light shine through our life.
 - 3. Rom 8:30—Paul summarizes how God accomplishes His purpose for us: And those whom He thus foreordained He also called; and those whom He called He also justified—acquitted, made righteous, putting them into right standing with Himself. And those whom He justified He also glorified—raising them to a heavenly dignity and condition [state of being] (Amp).
 - b. Rom 8:31—Then Paul makes his statement that if God is for us who can be against us? This is a rhetorical question. It’s used for effect because the answer is obvious. Clearly, nothing can be against us that is bigger than God.
 - 1. But the issue is: How can we be certain that God is for us? Paul’s point is that when we see what God has already done for us the answer is obvious. In the face of all this, what is then left to say (Phillips); just this—If God is for us, what does it matter who may be against us? (Norlie)
 - 2. If God did this for us while we were sinners and enemies of His (Rom 5:6-10), why would He not be for us now that we are reconciled to Him and justified through the Cross of Christ?
- 3. You may be thinking: I know the Bible says that if God is for me what can be against me? But all sorts of things and all kinds of people are against me. How do we explain this seeming contradiction?
 - a. This verse is not a promise that nothing will ever come against you—because they certainly will. We live in a fallen world and there is no escaping life’s hardships. Jesus said so.
 - 1. John 16:33—In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer—take courage, be confident, certain, undaunted—for I have overcome the world.—I have deprived it of power to harm, have conquered it [for you] (Amp).
 - 2. Through His resurrection victory, Jesus robbed life’s hardships and harsh realities from **permanently** harming us. No matter what comes our way there’s deliverance and restoration,

- some in this life and some in the life to come. All will be made right one way or the other.
- b. This is where the correct answers to the “why” and “what” questions are so important. These nagging questions rob us of peace when we don’t know how to answer them according to the Bible.
 1. Why do bad things come our way?—because that’s life in a fallen world. What is God doing?—causing it all to serve His ultimate purpose as He brings genuine good out of genuine bad.
 2. Why doesn’t He stop all troubles before they get to anyone? God has given people free will, and with free will comes the consequences of the choices people make (good and bad).
 - A. However, because He is All-Knowing, He foresees what will happen and is therefore able to use human choices (even those He does not approve of) and cause them to serve His purposes for good.
 - B. This is where you must understand that God’s ultimate purpose is bigger than just this life and that He sometimes puts off short-term blessing (ending all troubles immediately) for long-term eternal results. But He will get you through until He gets you out.
- C. Paul’s view of reality was shaped by the Old Testament. He was well aware of David’s life. David was a man who knew that nothing could come against him that was bigger than God who was with him and for him. Like all of us, he faced troubles because that’s life in a sin cursed earth.
1. Consider David’s view of reality when he faced overwhelming challenges, and when he was on the run from both Saul who desired to kill David and his own son Absalom who incited rebellion against him.
 - a. Ps 23:4—When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will not fear no evil because you are with me. Although this verse is often read at funerals, it isn’t a reference to the time of our death. David faced the Philistine champion Goliath in the Valley of Elah (an actual place). In that valley David faced the shadow of death because he came up against overwhelming odds.
 1. But David knew that God was with him, and that God would do what he himself could not do (I Sam 17:47—the battle is the Lord’s). Therefore David was not afraid.
 2. In one sense, this present life is the valley of the shadow of death since this world is infused with a curse of corruption and death due to Adam’s sin. We often face overwhelming circumstances, but we don’t have to fear because God is with us and He will do what we cannot.
 - b. David knew that God is a ready (present) help in time of trouble (Ps 46:1) and that His presence is salvation (Ps 42:5). David knew that because God was with him, he had everything he needed to make it through whatever he was facing because nothing could come against him that is bigger than God. David knew that God would get him through until He got him out.
 2. David’s experiences show us that peace of mind in the face of life’s troubles doesn’t mean that we feel no negative emotions. David admitted that he felt fear while on the run from King Saul. Ps 56:3
 - a. But David knew there was more to the story—God with him and God for him. David’s testimony was: What time I am afraid, I will trust in You. I will proclaim and boast in Your Word. Ps 56:4
 1. David knew that God was aware of what he was facing—the threats from his enemies and his own emotional anguish (v5-8). But he was confident that his enemies would turn back because God was for him (v9).
 2. David knew how to look past what he could see to God with Him, protecting and sustaining him. I don’t mean that he had a mystical experience. He knew from God’s Word that there is more to reality than what he could see and feel in the moment—God with him and for him.
 - b. Ps 57 was written when David was forced to flee to a cave to escape from Saul (I Sam 22:1). Note that both Psalm 56 and 57 begins with David acknowledging God’s mercy (v1).
 1. The Hebrew word translated merciful had the idea of bending or stooping in kindness to an inferior. Mercy is a demonstration of love expressed to one in need who may not deserve it.
 2. David didn’t trip up on whether or not he was worthy of God’s help. He understood that God with him and for him was a relationship initiated by God before the world began and made possible through redemption. His relationship with God was initiated by God.

3. If you've done something wrong that has brought you to your present circumstance, correct it. If it can't be corrected, then commit it to God and trust Him to bring good out of it.
- c. Notice David's next statement in Ps 57:1—I'll take refuge in the shadow of your wings. This is a metaphor that comes from a hen spreading her wings to cover her young when an enemy (a bird of prey or a storm) appears. She is both a shelter and a defense to them until the troubles pass.
 1. According to sight, David's statement is ridiculous because everywhere David looked (up, down, right, left) he saw cave walls, not the shadow of God's wings (or His present help).
 - A. Under the shadow of God's wings meant David recognized that he was in God's care and under His protection. This didn't mean no trouble or pain for David.
 - B. It meant that David couldn't be permanently harmed or destroyed. It meant that God would use the hurt and hardship and work it for good as He caused it to serve His purposes.
 2. David knew that there was more to reality than what he could see and feel. David knew that God was with him, and that God with him was all he needed.
 - A. The rest of the psalm is an acknowledgement of God and a praise to God (v5-11). David made reference to hiding under God's wings in other psalms, always coupled with praise.
 - B. Praise to God before you see His help is an expression of trust or faith. Ps 63:7—For You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice. (Amp).
 1. Note Ps 57:6—My enemies set a net and dug a pit for me and fell in it themselves. Some say this means we can pray and expect destruction on our enemies—get 'em God. But this completely misses a wonderful point about God's bigness.
 2. Huntsmen in that culture used nets and pits to trap their prey. The point is that there is no trap your enemy can set that God can't protect and deliver you from. The sword brought onto the field by Goliath was the one David used to cut off the giant's head.
- D. Conclusion: II Tim 3:11—Paul's testimony at the end of his life was that he had endured many afflictions, but the Lord delivered him out of all of them. Consider what this deliverance looked like for Paul.
 1. He was thrown out of Antioch when Jewish leaders stirred up a mob (Acts 13:45-50). In Iconium an attempt was made an attempt made to attack and stone him (Acts 14:2-5). In Lystra he was stoned and left for dead. But God raised him up (Acts 14:19-20).
 2. II Tim was written at the end of Paul's life. It was his last epistle. He knew that he was soon going to be executed for his faith in Christ (II Tim 4:6-9). He was beheaded in the summer of AD 67 or 68.
 - a. Paul had been imprisoned in Rome several years earlier, but was released. When Paul was arrested a second time he was immediately questioned and had to give account for his conduct.
 1. By this time, Nero was Rome's emperor. He hated Christians and began cruel persecutions, making human torches out of them. No one was willing to stand with Paul. II Tim 4:16-17
 2. But the Lord stood with him and strengthened him to boldly proclaim the gospel. He was not killed right then. And Paul was confident that the Lord would preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, and that there was a reward awaiting him (and all who love the Lord).
 - b. Paul saw himself as a conqueror over tribulation, distress, persecution, etc. (Rom 8:35-39). How is this consistent with the facts listed above?
 1. Conquering doesn't mean that God stopped Paul's troubles or that he enjoyed them. It meant that Paul was able to call the many hardships he faced momentary and light. II Cor 4:17
 2. Paul knew that many things come against us in life, but it's all temporary. He knew that God would get him through until He got him out. Paul knew that the Lord would cause it all to serve His ultimate purpose as He worked it for good. Therefore, Paul had peace of mind.
 3. We too can have peace of mind when we become convinced that nothing can come against us that is bigger than God. God will deliver us and preserve us from permanent harm just as He did Paul. God's purpose for our life will come to pass because He is with us and He is for us. He who has begun a good work in us will complete it, and He will get us through until He gets us out!