

REALITY AND EMOTIONS

- A. Introduction: We are talking about learning to see reality as it truly is. Reality is the way things really are. Reality is everything as God sees it. God has given us the Bible to show us how He sees things. If you learn to see reality as it truly is and then walk in that light you'll overcome in life's hardships. II Cor 2:14
1. To overcome does not mean you stop all trouble or keep all pain out of your life. There's no such thing as a trouble-free, problem-free life in this world because it has been radically altered by sin. John 16:33
 - a. Part of seeing reality as it truly is, is understanding the nature of life in a sin cursed earth. People who don't understand this end up confused, frustrated and angry at God when trials come.
 - b. We used this example last week: If you live in Siberia and spend your time trying to grow palm trees you'll be frustrated and ineffective. But if you accept the parameters of life in a frozen world and work with them instead of against them you'll be less frustrated and more effective.
 2. These are the parameters of a sin cursed earth: Some circumstances can be changed and some can't.
 - a. Generally speaking, you always have the right to command sickness to go from your body and material lack from your life. But circumstances arising from another person's freewill choice cannot necessarily be erased or undone. (Whole lesson for another night.)
 - b. Victory in some situations means using your authority to change the circumstance by God's power. In circumstances that can't be changed and victory comes through God's grace enabling you to rise above and endure until you through it.
 1. You have to know which battles to fight and how. God's Word helps us make those determinations. With that knowledge you can overcome no matter what life brings your way.
 2. You'll have the confidence to activate God's power in places where you are authorized to bring change as well as the confidence to activate God's grace to endure by His power in the things you can't change.
 3. The Apostle Paul wrote that Christians must be transformed by the renewing of their mind (Rom 12:2--A renewed mind sees reality as it truly is). We've been looking at an incident in Paul's life that shows us how this plays out in the life of a real person.
 - a. Acts 28:1-10--While being taken by ship to Rome as a prisoner, Paul was able to survive a horrific storm and shipwreck and then access God's power to throw off a poisonous snake bite. Then he healed numerous people in the name of Jesus and preached the gospel to them.
 - b. Paul was in that situation because of persecution and unwise choices made by other people. Because he understood the nature of life in a fallen world he knew how to deal with his situation.
 1. He didn't try to override freewill choices (try to change what he couldn't change) through wasted prayers. Instead he believed that God would cause it all to serve His eternal purposes as He brought genuine good out of real evil. Eph 1:11; Rom 8:28; etc.
 2. Because he knew God was not the source of his troubles (they're part of life in a sin cursed earth) and because he knew who he was through his union with Christ (authorized to tread on snakes, preach the gospel and lay hands on the sick) he was able to demonstrate the power of God and see people healed and saved, bringing glory of God.
 - c. In a circumstance he could not change (persecution and unwise choices made by others) Paul changed what he could and was sustained by the power of God in what he couldn't.
 4. A major obstacles to walking in victory in this life is lack of understanding of the place and role of emotions and how to deal with them. That is what we want to consider in this lesson.

B. Emotions were given to us by God and are part of human nature. God made us with the capacity to feel.

 1. Emotions are feelings generated in our consciousness (anger, joy, hate, fear, love, etc.). They are a response to stimuli such as sight, thoughts, memories, experiences, etc. They produce physiological changes in the body--increased heart rate, rise in temperature, and glandular activity-- and prepare the body for action.

- a. Emotions are not volitional (the result of choosing or willing yourself to experience them). They are spontaneously generated. You cannot will yourself to feel or not feel emotions. Something must stimulate (arouse or activate) them.
- b. Emotions are not sinful. The Bible says: Be angry and sin not (Eph 4:26) indicating that it is not wrong to feel the emotion of anger but we must not let it drive us to sin.
 1. As with every part of human nature emotions have been corrupted by the fall. They can give us incorrect information and motivate us to act in ungodly ways.
 2. We can't base our view of reality on what we feel nor can we allow our feelings to dictate how we act. God's Word shows us reality as it truly is as well as how we are to behave.
 3. We are not to be controlled by our emotions. They must be brought under the control of and transformed by the power of God.
2. As a human being, Paul had to deal with emotions. When Paul the midst of the storm an angel of God appeared to him with a message. His first words to Paul were: Fear not. Acts 27:23,24
 - a. That tells us there was the possibility of feeling fear in the situation. Something was occurring that could stimulate fear in human nature. Fear is aroused when the force coming against us is bigger than the resources we have available to help and protect us.
 1. So the angel said: Fear not. Dismiss fear (Weymouth). Refuse to fear. We just said that you cannot will yourself to feel or not feel something. How could Paul refuse to fear?
 2. The angel gave Paul something with which to counter the fear and the information stimulating the fear, God's Word: You will survive this storm.
 - b. Dealing with emotions does not mean you will yourself to stop feeling something. It means you take into consideration what God says over and above what you see and feel. You don't pretend you aren't feeling something. You overcome your emotions with God's Word
 1. When you overcome fear (or any emotion) the source or stimuli of the fear doesn't necessarily go away. You simply learn to see things differently so that you are no longer afraid.
 2. You bring in additional information which changes your perspective or view of reality. That in turn mitigates the effects of what you are looking at that is stimulating the emotion of fear.
 - c. Fear may be the appropriate emotional reaction based on what you see. But there is more information available in every circumstance: unseen facts revealed in God's Word.
 1. What we see gives us information. God's Word gives us information. Both effect us. Paul gave God's Word to the others on board ship.
 2. In that context he told them to be of good cheer or "keep up your courage" (v22,25, AMP). Courage is mental or moral strength to persevere and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.
3. In the context of describing the many hardships he faced as he preached the gospel Paul spoke of being sorrowful yet rejoicing. II Cor 6:10--Sad men that rejoice continually (Knox). Our hearts ache but we always have joy (NLT).
 - a. Rejoicing cannot be an emotional response to the situation because Paul said: When I am sad (an emotion) I rejoice. He was sad because something stimulated or generated that feeling in him.
 1. Paul was a real person whom we will really meet in Heaven. He experienced the pressures and pain of circumstances and the emotions generated by them just like we do.
 2. In II Cor 11:23-27 he listed the many challenges he faced as he preached the gospel, adding in v28,29: Apart from the external trials I have the daily burden of responsibility for all the churches (Phillips). Who is weak, and I do not feel [his] weakness? Who is made to stumble and fall and have his faith hurt, and I am not on fire [with sorrow or indignation]? (Amp).
 - b. What does it mean to rejoice? The Greek word (CHAIRO) means to be "cheer" full; calmly happy or well off; to rejoice or be glad. It is an action or state of being as opposed to a feeling. Be glad, rejoice, not feel glad or feel joyful.
 1. Christians get confused because they think that to rejoice means to make yourself feel good. That's not possible when you are looking at something bad.

2. Rejoicing is not an emotion. It is an action that can and will ultimately affect your emotions. But that's not where it starts.
- c. In Rom 12:12 Paul spoke of rejoicing in hope. Let hope keep you joyful (NEB). Let your hope be a joy to you (Moffatt). Hope is confident expectation of coming good.
 1. Paul said: Rejoice because you have hope. Cheer yourself with information that gives you hope or expectation of coming good. In the face and feeling of trouble Paul strengthened or cheered himself by calling to mind the reasons he had hope. In other words, he rejoiced.
 2. You can't have hope unless you see reality as it truly is according to God's Word. Paul wrote in Rom 15:4 that hope (expectation), along with patience (strength to endure) and comfort (encouragement), come from God's Word. Why? Because His Word shows us what God has done, is doing, and will do. It reveals His will, plan, and purpose for our lives. It gives examples of real people who got real help in the midst of real trouble.
4. Paul wrote in Rom 5:2 that we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God--The hope of sharing the glory of God (Goodspeed); the hope of beholding the glory of God (Norlie); We confidently and joyfully look forward to actually becoming all that God has in mind for us to be (TLB).
 - a. God's glory is God manifesting Himself (we could do entire lessons), but consider these points.
 1. To see God's glory means to see Him face to face in the life to come.
 2. It means we'll be glorified or fully conformed to the image of Jesus in the life to come.
 3. It means that in this life we'll see Him glorified as He moves in our situation on our behalf.
 - b. Paul was able to rejoice in the face of trials because this is how he viewed reality: Tribulation works patience or endurance. Endurance brings experience. Experience gives us hope. v3,4
 1. Some people mistakenly believe that trials produce patience. If they do, why isn't everyone patient because everyone has trials? Trials don't create patience, they work it in the same way exercise works muscles.
 2. Patience is actually a fruit of the recreated human spirit. It is part of God's provision in the circumstances you cannot change. It goes to work in the midst of trouble to help you endure until you get out. When you make it through a trial it gives you hope that you'll survive whatever is ahead.
 - c. Back to the word rejoice in v2. The Greek word used by Paul means to boast. He used the same word translated glory (in tribulation) in v3. Paul is telling us that we rejoice by boasting in the Lord, by talking about what He has done, is doing, and will do.
5. How did this play out in Paul's life? In Acts 16:16-26 Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned for casting a devil out of a servant girl. She brought her masters money through telling fortunes by the devil's power. Her owners were outraged and turned the two over to city officials for causing trouble.
 - a. At midnight, in stocks in the deepest part of the prison, Paul and Silas prayed and praised God. Paul took his own advice. Praise in its most basic form means to acknowledge God, to make your boast in the Lord by talking about who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do.
 - b. In this account there is no hint of: "Why did God let this happen? We must have displeased Him somehow. What is He trying to say to us? After all I've done in His service, how could He let this happen? Silas (Paul), this is all your fault. (These are the kinds of reactions we have when our emotions and/or a faulty view of reality is dictating our actions.)
 1. These men understood the nature of life in a sin cursed earth and responded to God and their circumstances. Praise is not an emotional response. It is the appropriate response. It's always appropriate to praise God for His goodness and wonderful works. Ps 107:21
 2. Both men had hope of God's help. That hope came from God's Word and its numerous examples of God helping His people in their time of trouble. Praise lifted them up and opened the door to God's overcoming power in their circumstance. Ps 119:62; Ps 50:23
 - b. Back to the storm in Acts 27. As they approached the island where they would be shipwrecked Paul exhorted the men to eat a meal. They had not eaten in days because of the storm. v33-36

1. Note that Paul gave thanks to God. This was not a religious ritual. Paul didn't have a religious bone in his body.
2. Paul was thanking God for His Word to protect and preserve them through what was ahead because he believed that what God said would come to pass. v25

C. Conclusion: We haven't said all that we need to say about the emotions that arise as we face life's troubles. But consider these thoughts as we close.

1. It isn't wrong to feel bad when you are facing something bad. Such feelings are appropriate emotional responses to the stimulus being presented. But you must always remember that there are more facts to the situation than what you can see.
 - a. You cannot let what you see and how you feel about what you see paint your picture of reality nor can you let it determine what you do or how you respond to your situation.
 - b. Bring in additional information from God's Word. Cheer yourself with God's Word. Change your perspective, your view of reality, and begin to rejoice in hope or boast about God.
 - c. Rejoicing in hope is not a gimmick. It comes out of your perception of reality: This trouble is not from God nor is it bigger than Him. It didn't take God be surprise. He sees a way to use it and cause it to serve His purposes as He brings genuine good out of it. He will sustain me through it.
2. You may be thinking: Yes, but I am facing a situation that could cause me permanent harm or loss. You must understand that even if the worst case scenario happens, for a Christian, all loss, pain, suffering, injustice, etc. is temporary. All will be made right in the life to come.
 - a. You might ask: Isn't that a very fatalistic way of looking at life, especially life's biggest troubles? No, it's accepting and understanding the way things are in this sin cursed earth. (It's cold in Siberia.)
 - b. That doesn't mean there is no help, provision, or deliverance in this life. There is. But to access that provision you must come from a place of faith and confidence, not fear and worry. That happens as you learn to see reality as it truly is according to God and respond based on that rather than react based on what you see and feel.
 1. Faith is not sight (II Cor 5:7). Faith is believing what God says above what you see and feel. What did Paul see? A deadly storm with no way of escape.
 2. But his stance which was based on a view of reality shaped by God's Word was: I believe it shall be as it was spoken to me. Acts 27:25
 - c. It's easy to dismiss the instructions the Bible gives to rejoice because it doesn't feel right.
 1. Rejoicing in hope is not an emotion or a feeling in the moment. It's not a gimmick or a technique you use to solve you immediate problem.
 2. It's an action that comes out of a perception of reality that has been developed by the Word of God. More next week!