

REALITY AND FEAR

- A. Introduction: We are talking about learning to see reality as it truly is and then walking in the light of it so we can overcome in the challenges of life. Reality is the way things really are or everything as God sees it.
1. The Bible shows us the way things really are. We must renew our minds to reality as it truly is. A renewed mind sees reality as it truly is according to the Word of God. Rom12:2
 - a. Part of the process of learning to overcome includes knowing the place of emotions and how to deal with them. Lack of such understanding is a major obstacle to overcoming in this life.
 1. Emotions are feelings generated in our consciousness--anger, fear, elation, hate, love, etc. They are a response to stimuli such as sight, thoughts, memories, experiences, etc.
 2. Emotions are spontaneously generated. You cannot will yourself to feel or not feel emotions. Something must stimulate (arouse or activate) them.
 3. The emotions we feel are often appropriate responses to genuine stimulus. If something good happens you feel elated. If something bad happens you feel sad.
 - b. Emotions are not sinful. They were given to us by God. However, as with every part of human nature, they have been corrupted by the fall. They can give us inaccurate information as well as drive us to act in ungodly ways. Eph 4:26
 - c. Christians tend to go to one of two extremes in regard to the place and purpose of emotions. Either they base everything they believe and all that they do on how they feel or they stuff their emotions and try to pretend they don't feel any emotions, especially the negative ones.
 1. Dealing with emotions doesn't mean you will yourself to stop feeling something. It means you take into consideration what God has said over and above what you feel.
 2. You get your view of reality from God's Word, not your emotions. And you allow God's Word, not your feelings, to dictate how you act.
 2. When we overcome emotions the source or stimulus doesn't necessarily go away. We learn to see things differently so that we no longer feel the same. We bring in additional information and change our perspective or view of reality which in turn mitigates the effects of the stimulus.
 - a. That's happened to all of us. Consider this example: If your car started making a funny noise that sounded like a huge, expensive problem to fix you'd feel anxiety, fear, anger--all appropriate emotions based on the facts at hand. But when you take it to an auto mechanic who immediately says: No big deal, a bolt needs tightening. It won't cost a dime. Suddenly your emotions change.
 - b. As Christians we must understand that emotions give accurate information in so far as they go, but don't have all the facts in any situation. They only have what comes through the physical senses.
 1. In addition to the visible world there is an unseen realm to which our physical senses have no access, the realm of God and His kingdom of full power and provision. It preceded what we see and will out last and ultimately change what we see. Col 1:16; Heb 11:3; II Cor 4:18; etc.
 2. A major key to dealing with our emotions is getting additional information from the Word of God about reality as it truly is.
 3. We to continue to talk more about emotions--their place in our lives and how to them under control so we can overcome. Over the next few lessons we'll discuss these issues in connection with fear, worry, sorrow, anger, and love. We begin with fear.
- B. We feel fear when we encounter danger or something harmful that is bigger than us, bigger than the power and resources that we have at our disposal.
1. Fear is based on your perception of reality. If someone comes at you with a gun and you are unarmed and defenseless you will feel fear--even if that person was carrying only a toy gun and can't hurt you. When you realize it is a toy gun your feelings change because your perception of reality has changed.
 - a. For a Christian there is never any reason to fear because Almighty God who is Perfect Love and All Power is our Father. Something may come against you that is bigger than you. But, it's not

bigger than God.

1. When we say there is no reason for a Christian to fear we are not denying the fact that there are fearful things in this world, things to be afraid of. But, none of it is bigger than God.
2. When we say there is never a reason for a Christian to be afraid we are not saying that it is wrong to feel fear or that if you feel fear there is something wrong with you.
- b. We are saying is that if God is for you nothing can be against you (permanently against you) because it is temporary and subject to change by the power of God and God is able to bring genuine good out of genuine bad.
 - c. Fear comes from assessing your situation only in terms of what you can see and not in terms of what God says about it. God's method of dealing with fear is to tell you who He is, what you are and mean to Him, and what He has done, is doing, and will do.
 1. Acts 27:23,24--That's what He did for Paul when he was on board a ship out on the ocean in the midst of a horrific storm. God sent His Word through His angel to counter the information that could stimulate fear. The angel told him: God says you will survive.
 2. Over and over, God's Word says "Fear not"--I am with you, I will help you (Isa 41:10,13); I have called you and redeemed or delivered you (Isa 43:1); etc.
2. Ps 56 gives us insight into dealing with fear. David composed it when he was on the run from King Saul. He had people pressing in on him daily (v1), enemies slandering him (v2), twisting his words and plotting against him (v5), continually spying on him (v6). All of it stimulated the emotion of fear.
 - a. But notice how he dealt with fear. v3--When I am afraid I will trust in you. Trust is the Old Testament counterpart to the New Testament word, faith. It has the idea of the confidence that is comes from knowing you can rely on someone or something.
 1. Faith in God is a trust or confidence that comes from knowing His character (what He is like) and His works (what He has done, is doing, and will do). Ps 9:9,10
 2. It comes from having an accurate view of reality and seeing the way things really are.
 - b. David gives insight into his view of reality in the statements he makes in the rest of the psalm.
 1. v4,11--They aren't (this isn't) bigger than God. v8--This didn't take God by surprise. (David also wrote Ps 139:16--You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed (NLT).
 2. v9--When I cry to you, you hear and answer me at that very moment. I know that you are with me and for me. v13--You have helped me in the past and you are and will help me now.
 3. v7--God will ultimately make things right. We need a quick note of explanation here.
 - A. David makes a number of imprecatory statements (calling for evil and destruction) in his psalms: Lord, get them, kill them. Give back to them what they've given to me.
 - B. As sons and daughters of God we are called to a higher standard in regard to our enemies (Matt 5:44). We are to bless them and give it over to God to meet out righteous justice (whole lesson for another night).
 - c. Notice that David connects all this to God's Word (v4,10). When David's sight and circumstances stimulated the emotion of fear David recalled that there is more to reality that what he could see. He remembered God's Word, God's promises to him.
 1. David says he will praise God's Word. Praise is the word HALAL. The root meaning is to shine or to shout. It means to praise, to commend, to boast, to shine. The word hallelujah (a command to praise YAH, the Lord) is derived from this word.
 2. v4--In God, whose promises I extol. In God I have placed unwavering trust (Harrison); v11--In God, whose promises I commend, in the Lord whose assurances I praise (Harrison).
 3. In the face of fear David shouted about, boasted about God and His promises and provision.
 - d. David also wrote Ps 34 when he was on the run. David went to the city of Gath (in Philistine territory). King Achish's officers made disparaging comments to him about David and David was sore afraid (I Sam 21:12). He pretended to be insane and the king let him go unharmed.

1. Sometimes wisdom in a situation is: Stand and fight. Sometimes it's: Get out. You have to learn which battles to fight and how. God's Word helps us know which is which.
 2. But note that David said he will bless the Lord at all times and keep God's praise continually in his mouth. v2--I'll boast in the Lord. Boast is translated praise in Ps 56. Ps 34:3--Let us tell of the Lord's greatness (NLT).
 3. How did this situation turn out for David? Ps 34:4--God delivered me from all my fears.
3. We learned last week that that's exactly what Paul said about how he dealt with negative emotions.
- a. He spoke of being sorrowful yet rejoicing (II Cor 6:10). That word means to be cheerful, to strengthen or encourage yourself.
 1. He spoke about rejoicing (same word) in hope (Rom 12:12) or cheering himself by calling to mind the reasons he had to hope or expect coming good.
 2. Paul also spoke of rejoicing in hope of the glory of God (Rom 5:2), of seeing God manifest or demonstrate Himself in this life and in the life to come. Rejoice literally means to boast.
 - b. Both David and Paul knew that in the face of formidable circumstances and the emotions stimulated by them they needed to boast about God. When you rejoice or praise God you brag on Him -- who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do -- and it strengthens you (and often, as a by-product, you feel better.) In the face of fear both David and Paul boasted about God.
- C. This can be a battle. We are constantly getting input about reality from what we see, what we hear, and how we feel about what we see. We don't have to put forth any effort to get that information.
1. On the other hand we have to put forth effort to seek information from God's Word about reality as it truly is, then think about it and let it change our view of reality.
 - a. We must understand that we're affected by every bit of information that comes our way. It either strengthens or undermines our faith in God and His invisible kingdom of full power and provision.
 - b. It is vital that we take note and filter information and choose to focus our attention on what God says. A preacher who had a big influence on my life said: You can't stop the birds from flying over your head but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair.
 - c. Become aware of and ask yourself: Where is this information coming from? From what I see or what I feel or from what God says?
 2. We don't deny what we see and feel. We recognize that there is more to the situation. In Mark 5, Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, asked Jesus to come and pray for his grievously ill little daughter.
 - a. Jesus went with Jairus. While they were in route, the woman with the issue of blood touched Jesus' clothing, power went out of Him, and she was healed. v25-34
 1. Jesus stopped to talk with her and while that incident was unfolding, messengers from Jairus' house came to report that his daughter had died. v35
 2. Note how Jesus dealt with the news and what He told Jairus to do. Mark 5:36--(overhearing) but ignoring what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, Do not be seized with alarm and have no fear, only keep believing. (Amp)
 - b. To ignore means to refuse to take notice of (Webster). Don't let what you see and feel dictate your view of reality or your actions. Take courage from the Word of God. Boast on God.
 3. We have a tendency to feed our emotions when we should feed our faith or trust in God. Talking about what we see and what we reason based on what we see feeds our emotions.
 - a. Gen 42:36--Jacob sent his sons to Egypt for food during a severe famine. The man in charge of food distribution was their long lost brother Joseph, whom they had sold into slavery years earlier.
 1. Joseph kept one of the brothers in Egypt and demanded they bring the youngest son back to him to secure Simeon's release as well as more food. When they told their father what happened he fed his and everyone else's emotions by proclaiming: Everything is against me.
 2. In reality everything was going extremely well for him. He would not lose any sons, would be reunited with Joseph, and would have a home in Egypt through the rest of the famine.

- b. Early in his life, before he ever had children, God made some very specific promises to Jacob.
 - 1. Fear not. I am with you (Gen 26:24). I will keep you until I fulfill all My Word to you (Gen 28:15). As an old man at the end of his life Jacob was able to look back and declare: God has walked with me, kept me, and provided for me through my entire life (Gen 48:15,16).
 - 2. What if Jacob had boasted (rejoiced) in the face of the news his sons brought him from Egypt? It was the truth. What would it have done for him to encourage and strengthen him?
- 4. David wrote in Ps 23:4 that he would fear no evil because the Lord was his Shepherd (his protection and provider). That doesn't mean he never felt fear. The Bible says there were times he felt afraid.
 - a. What did David do? In the face of fearsome circumstances he proclaimed reality as it truly is: God is with me and for me. Therefore I have no reason to fear. This isn't bigger than God.
 - b. David understood that just because you don't see something happening doesn't mean that nothing is happening. He knew how to look past what he could see by remembering God's Word.
 - 1. v6--David said goodness and mercy followed him all the days of his life. Why didn't he say: Goodness and mercy are with me? Because there are times in life when you can't see evidence of God's help and provision yet you know it's there and that you will see it.
 - 2. David understood that and proclaimed God's goodness before he saw it and was strengthened and encouraged in the face of trouble. When he looked back at his life he, like Jacob, could see physical proof that God had been with him. Unlike Jacob, David knew how to feed his faith not his fear in the face of trouble.
 - c. You can't pull that out of a hat when you need it. Boasting in God, rejoicing in the Lord, has to come out of your perception of reality. You have to put forth effort to get to that point.
 - 1. David spent time meditating on and thinking about God's Word and His promises to Him. Ps 63 is another "on the run" psalm written when David was hiding out in a desert wilderness.
 - 2. v6--When he was on night watch, instead of feeding his emotions (How did I end up like this? How could God let this happen to me? I'm so tired of running. This isn't fair. God helps everybody but me. I don't know what's going to happen to me.), he fed his faith. v7-11
- D. Conclusion: We haven't said all there is to say but consider these points as we close. In this sin cursed earth we do encounter formidable and dangerous circumstances. God's message is always: Fear not.
 - 1. Looking at challenging circumstances only in terms of what you see produces fear. The solution to fear is to change your perception of reality or learn to see reality as it truly is.
 - 2. Deal with fear by choosing to look at your situation not just in terms of what you see but in terms of what God says. Answer them by bragging on God with the help of His Word.
 - a. Reality is: This may be bigger than me but it's not bigger than God. It did not take Him by surprise. He has a plan to deal with this. He will get me through until He gets me out.
 - b. Reality is: This is temporary and subject to change by the power of God. God is at work behind the scenes. God will bring good out of this bad situation. More next week!