

REALITY AND WORRY

- A. Introduction: We are talking about overcoming in life's challenges by learning to see reality as it truly is and walking in the light of it. Part of that process involves understanding how to deal with emotions.
1. Emotions were given to us by God. But, as with every part of human nature, they have been corrupted by the fall. They can give us inaccurate information and drive us to act in ungodly ways. Eph 4:26
 - a. Emotions are not under the direct control of the will. They are spontaneous responses to stimulus such as circumstances, thoughts, memories. You can't will yourself to feel or not feel something.
 - b. We must learn how to deal with our emotions. That doesn't mean you stop feeling them. It means you let God's Word—not how you feel—determine how you act. It means you get your view of reality from God's Word.
 2. In the last lesson we discussed the emotion of fear. Fear is aroused when we encounter something harmful that is bigger than us or bigger than the power and resources at our disposal.
 - a. For a Christian, there is never any reason to fear because Almighty God Who is Perfect Love and All Power is our Father and nothing can come against us that is bigger than Him.
 1. If God is for you nothing can be permanently against you because it is temporary and subject to change by the power of God, and He is able to bring genuine good out of truly bad situations. Rom 8:31; Rom 8:28; II Cor 4:18; etc.
 2. God's message to His people is always: Fear not. Then He tells us who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do giving us reasons why we need not fear. Isa 41:10; 43:1
 - b. It isn't wrong to feel afraid. David said he was afraid (Ps 56:3). Paul encountered circumstances that aroused fear (Acts 27:23,24). But both dealt with their fear by focusing on God's Word.
 3. In this lesson we want to bring worry into our discussion. Worry is a form of fear. It is anxiety over something in the future that will be greater than the resources we have available to us.
 - a. Worry is based on fear of something that might happen: We'll miss out; we won't have; we'll be hurt, etc. It is based on speculation that doesn't take God and His Word into account.
 1. The word "worry" is not found in the King James Bible. "Care" is used instead. The Greek word means to be distracted, to draw in different directions. To worry means to be distracted.
 2. When you are worried you are distracted. Your focus is off the power, protection, and provision of Almighty God. Your attention is focused on speculating about future problems.
 - b. As with fear, most of the time, God does not take our worries away. Instead, He gives us His Word. He gives us reasons why we do not need to fear or worry. It is then up to us to take His Word and deal with our worries and fears. Phil 4:6-8
- B. Before we make specific statements about worry, let's back up and consider some general statements about the basis we have for which to fear not and worry not.
1. Dealing with fear and worry is a problem for many Christians because they have inaccurate ideas about God's power, protection, and provisions (whole lessons for another day). But note these points.
 - a. When we look at the places in the Bible where God said—Fear not—that statement is often followed with these words: For I am with you.
 - b. David, a man who knew how to deal with his emotions, said: I will fear no evil for God is with me (Ps 23:4). Consider what he knew from the Bible about what it meant to have God with him. (By David's time the first six books of the Old Testament had been recorded.)
 1. That statement first appears in connection with Jacob. God said to him: Fear not. I am with you (Gen 26:24). I will keep you until I have fulfilled all My Word to you (Gen 28:15). At the end of his life Jacob was able to declare: God has walked with me, kept me, and provided for me my entire life (Gen 48:15,16).
 2. When God commissioned Moses to secure Israel's release from bondage in Egypt He said to Moses: I will be with you (Ex 3:12). Then in v14 God revealed Himself as "I Am". The idea

here is: I Am what you need Me to be when you need it (whole lesson for another day). The end result was that Israel was dramatically delivered and protected and provided for as they returned to Canaan.

3. In Lev 26:12 God told Israel that if they were faithful to the covenant He had made with them He would walk among them, promising that their material needs would be met and they'd have peace in their land, with nothing to fear (v3-11). As we study their history we see that when Israel stayed true to God what He said came to pass.
4. When Israel reached the land of Canaan and saw walled cities and formidable enemies Joshua exhorted them: Fear not. Because God is with us we can conquer our enemies. Num 14:9
 - A. Israel refused to enter. When that generation died off and the next stood at the border, Moses exhorted them: Don't fear the obstacles ahead. God will go with us (Deut 31:6-8).
 - 8). This time they entered the land and conquered by the power of God.
 - B. When Joshua took Moses' place when he died God told Joshua: I'll be with you as I was with Moses. Fear not (Josh 1:5,9). God kept His Word to Joshua (Josh 23:14).
- b. When David said that God was with him he meant it literally. David knew that God is present everywhere at once (Omnipresent). There is no place God is not. Jer 23:23,24
 1. David wrote Ps 139:7-10. He knew that no matter where he went God was there because God is everywhere. That's what he taught his son Solomon. I Kings 8:27
 2. David wrote Ps 46:1--God is a very present help. An exceeding ready help (Spurrell); A reliable help when trouble occurs (Harrison). He also wrote Ps 42:5--Wait patiently upon God: for I shall yet give Him thanks; My Present Salvation, and my God. (Spurrell)
- c. When David wrote that he would fear no evil he didn't mean that he never felt fear; We know he did. But in the face of fearsome circumstances he proclaimed reality as it truly is: God is with me and for me, perfectly present to help. His Presence is salvation, therefore I have no reason to fear.
 1. David understood that just because he didn't initially see something happening didn't mean that nothing was happening. He knew how to look past what he could see by remembering God's Word. As we pointed out above he had many examples from scripture of what it meant to have God with him and how that played out in the lives of his forefathers.
 2. This is reality. God is perfectly present with you, loving and reigning and upholding all things with the word of His power. His presence is the salvation you need. Therefore there is no real to fear. Fear not.
2. We struggle with this because we are so dominated by emotions. When we don't feel God's presence and love we conclude that He is far from us. We reinforce these emotions by talking about "feeling" or "not feeling" God's presence in our services. All this is based on emotions, not on what the Bible says.
- a. Acts 17:27,28--Reality is that we live and move in God's presence. There's no place God is not. He's right there with you. And, as a born again believer, not only is He with you, He is in you.
 1. God is present even in the most boring and dead services because there's no place He is not. Granted, His presence may not be manifested or demonstrated, but He's there.
 2. You actually existed in God's presence before you were saved. Acts 17:27,28 was first spoken to idol worshipping heathens. You committed your worst sins in his presence. You were separated from the life in Him (eternal life) and on your way to hell because of your sin. You had no access to His help or provision, but He was right there with you all along.
- b. If God was right there with you on your worst day (any day before you were saved) and helped you with your greatest need when you believed on Jesus (salvation from your sins) why would He not help you now that you are His son or daughter through faith in Christ?
3. Just being acquainted with the fact that God is with you and has promised to protect and care for you is not enough to overcome when emotions aroused by scary circumstances are raging.
 - a. We are so used to getting our picture of reality from what we see and feel that we don't recognize we do it and therefore make no effort to stop it. It takes effort to change your view of reality.

- b. In the context of the many trials he faced Paul said nothing could separate him from God and His love for Paul (Rom 8:35-39). In v38 he tells us: For I have come through a process of persuasion to a settled conclusion...(Wuest). Paul gives us insight as to how he got to a place of persuasion.
1. Heb 13:5,6--Paul wrote that we can be content no matter what the circumstances because God has said He will never (4X) ever leave or abandon us. Content means satisfied. Paul's point is not that God's doesn't want us to have anything or desire something. It means to be at peace. Peace is the opposite of worry and anxiety.
 2. Paul said that because God has said He will never abandon me I can boldly say: The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what men shall do to me. This passage is based on Deut 31:6-8.
 3. Notice that what Paul wrote is not a direct word for word quote. Why? Paul has meditated on God's Word. He has pondered the passage in Deuteronomy and has become persuaded of it.
4. That's how this became real to David. Like Paul, he learned to get his picture of reality from God's Word rather than from his emotions and how he felt. And David also meditated on God's Word.
- a. There are two Hebrew words translated meditate. One means to murmur and by implication, to ponder or meditate. The other means to ponder and by implication, to converse with oneself.
 1. Ps 63:6--David was hiding in the desert from men who wanted him dead. But he pondered God's Word. He encouraged himself by remembering God's help to that point. He saw past his circumstances to reality as it truly is: God with him as his protection. v7--For You have been of assistance to me, and under Your mighty protection I shout for joy. (DeWitt)
 2. Ps 143:5--In another psalm written when his enemies came against him David wrote: I dwell upon the years long past, upon the memory of all thou hast done; the wonders of thy creation fill my mind (NEB).
 3. Ps 94:19--Another psalmist wrote: In the multitude of my (anxious) thought within me, Your comforts cheer and delight my soul (Amp). Thoughts means a disquieting thought, an anxious feeling. God's comfort is found in His Word. Rom 15:4
 - b. Many people are looking for a technique or a gimmick that will solve their immediate problem.
 1. But it doesn't work that way. God says that the one who meditates in His Word (thinks and talks about it) day and night is the one who will come through life's challenges in victory.
 - Ps 1:1-3; Josh 1:8
 2. Why? Because your view of reality changes and you begin to see God as He truly is and yourself as you truly are in reality to Him and work in cooperation with Him in your situation. (We'll talk more about that in the next lesson.)
- C. Consider something Jesus said about dealing with worry when He was on earth. Worry is fear about the future. Jesus gave some practical instruction about how to deal with the tendency in all of us to borrow tomorrow's trouble. Matt 6:34--So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's troubles are enough for today. (NLT)
1. Jesus told His listeners not to worry about where future provision (life's necessities) will come from. The King James Bible phrases "don't worry" like this: Take no thought (v25,27,28,31,34). The Greek word used here is translated worry or anxious in more modern translations.
 - a. According to Jesus worry is aroused by considering thoughts about where life's necessities are going to come from. Where will we get food; how will we buy clothes; I don't make enough money; they're laying people off at my work; look at the economy; gas prices keep going up; the national debt is out of control; etc
 1. v25--Therefore I tell you, stop being perpetually uneasy (anxious and worried) about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, and about your body, what you shall put on. (Amp)
 2. Notice the statement: Perpetually uneasy. That is a continuous state or state of being. Jesus didn't mean that the emotions of worry will never be stimulated and rise up. He means that when it does you must deal with it so it doesn't become your state of being. How?

A. Notice in v31 Jesus said: “Take no thought saying” indicating that these thoughts have been embraced, internalized, and are now being spoken out.

B. Meditation has taken place. Webster’s Dictionary says to meditate means to reflect or muse over; to contemplate. Contemplate means to consider carefully and for a long time.

b. Jesus said that when a thought stimulates the emotion of worry put it away. Put away anxious thoughts about food and drink to keep you alive (v25, NEB). He doesn’t just say “Don’t do it”.

1. He tells us how to do it. Put your focus on reality as it truly is. v26--“Observe intently the birds...and the flowers (Rotherham).

2. He remind us that the birds and flowers are provided for by God who cares for them and His sons and daughters matter more to God than birds or flowers. That is a present tense reality.

c. According to Jesus, focusing on the future (where will we get life’s necessities?) without the realization of the present presence, provision, and protection of God (He is presently providing for those who matter to Him) will only produce worry and anxiety.

1. Jesus had just told His audience that we are to look to God for our DAILY bread. Matt 6:11-- Give us bread for our needs from day to day (Lamsa).

2. That doesn’t mean don’t buy a week’s worth of bread or have a savings account. Jesus was communicating the attitude or idea of dependence on God in the present moment.

2. Worry arises when we are distracted from God and His Word. It is aroused by speculating about future problems and meditating on information that does not take God and His Word into consideration.

a. It begins with a thought of coming loss or harm which you accept into your mind. You then meditate on it (go over and over it, speak it out) and before long you are in a state of anxiety.

b. You must recognize when you are being distracted from God’s Word and bring your focus back to reality as it truly is, back to what God says about you and your situation.

1. When worry rises up recognize that God is perfectly present with you right now loving and reigning. Remember that His presence is salvation. He is a very present help in time of need.

2. In the face of sight, thoughts about the future, and feelings generated by them boast about and proclaim what God says and what He has done, is doing, and will do. Take your focus off of the potential (future) loss or harm and put it on His present provision.

c. We all talk to ourselves all the time. Make that work for you instead of against you. Talk about who God is and what He has done, is doing, and will do. That’s what it means to meditate.

D. Conclusion: We still have more to say about fear and worry. But consider these thoughts as we close.

1. In dealing with fear and worry we are not saying you need to deny what you see and feel. We are talking about recognizing that there is more to reality than what you see and feel in the moment.

2. We are talking about realizing that God is perfectly present with you loving and reigning and upholding all things with the Word of His power. Nothing can come against you that is bigger than God. More next week!