

MORE ABOUT REALITY, FEAR, AND WORRY

- A. Introduction: We have been discussing how to overcome in life's difficulties by learning to see reality as it truly is and then walking in the light of it. Part of that process includes learning how to deal with emotions.
1. Emotions were created by God and are part of human nature. Emotions are spontaneous responses to stimulus around us. It is not a sin to feel a feeling.
 - a. However, our emotions have been corrupted by the fall of man. They can and often do give us incorrect information and they can and do drive us to sin. We must deal with our emotions.
 - b. That means we get our view of reality (the way things really are) from God's Word, not how we feel. It also means that God's Word determines our actions, not how we feel. Eph 4:26
 2. For the past two weeks we've been discussing fear and worry and have some concluding points to make in this lesson. We have previously said that:
 - a. Fear is generated when we encounter something harmful that is bigger than us or bigger than the power and resources available to us. Worry is a form of fear. It is fear or anxiety over something in the future that will be greater than the resources at our disposal.
 - b. There is never any reason for a Christian to fear or worry because Almighty God Who is Perfect Love and All Power is our Father and nothing can come against us that is bigger than God.
 - c. It's not wrong to feel afraid or worried. It's a natural response in many situations. Both David and Paul encountered circumstances that aroused the emotion of fear. But both dealt with it by focusing on God's Word. Ps 56:3; Acts 27:23,24
- B. One point we've emphasized in recent lessons is understanding the parameters of life in a sin cursed earth, recognizing the way things really are and how they really work so we can effectively cooperate with God.
1. God, in His sovereignty has given mankind free will and has chosen to limit Himself to human choice.
 - a. That means many things. That's a whole lesson for another day. But one of the things it means in connection with our present discussion is that God generally does not move in peoples' lives apart from their freewill cooperation.
 - b. We cooperate through faith and obedience. When we believe what God says and act accordingly, it opens the way for His grace and power to work in our lives. But you allow your emotions to dominate your view of reality and your actions you may be working at cross purposes with God,
 2. Fear is a devastating emotion. Not only does it bring great torment (I John 4:18) it can actually cut off God's power in your situation. That's what happened to Peter. Matt 14:24-32
 - a. The disciples were on the Sea of Galilee in a boat out in rough waters when Jesus came walking toward them on the water. Because it was dark (the 4th watch is 3:00 to 6:00 a.m.) they couldn't see well, didn't recognize Jesus, and figured it must be a disembodied spirit which stimulated fear.
 1. v27--But instantly he spoke to them, saying, Take courage! I AM; stop being afraid! (Amp). His words to them were: Deal with your fear.
 2. Then He gave them reasons why there was no need to fear: Perfect Love and All Power is with you. I AM all you need Me to be (Ex 3:14). Encourage yourself with this truth.
 - b. v28--Peter answered Him, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water (Amp). Jesus said "Come" and Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But there came a point where Peter began to sink and. Consider these thoughts:
 1. It was God's power that enable Peter to walk as far as he did (almost to Jesus, v29). But the power suddenly stopped (v30). Why? We know that God did not initiate the shut-off because Jesus attributed it to little faith (trust) and doubt on Peter's part (v31). To doubt means to stand in two ways. It implies uncertainty as to which way to take; to waver in opinion.
 2. We're told that Peter walked for a time to go to Jesus (v29). In other words, for a time, his focus was on Jesus. But then Peter put his attention on what he could see and feel (the wind and the waves) and that stimulated fear and doubt (v30).

3. When Peter's attention was focused on Jesus he was empowered to walk. But when he took his focus off of Jesus and then put more stock in what sight and feelings told him, he became afraid, God's power ceased to flow and he began to sink.
3. We need to make two points clear: We are not implying that if you are strong in faith you will never feel afraid. Nor are we suggesting that God withdraws His help and power from us when we are afraid.
- a. Because of the nature of life in a sin cursed earth we will encounter situations which stimulate the emotions of fear and worry. Emotions are involuntary and are spontaneously generated. But we can't allow our emotions to determine our picture of reality or how we act in any situation.
 1. Our actions and responses to life must be based on the Word of God despite how we feel.
 2. In Peter's situation reality was that he was able to walk on water because Almighty God said so. Reality was the Peter was in no real danger because the great I AM was with him so there was no reason to fear despite what he saw. He had God's Word and His Presence with him.
 3. What should Peter have done? Kept his eyes on Jesus and continue to walk. Wind and waves are not bigger than God and His power.
 - b. Our fears and worries don't cause God to withhold His help and power from us, rather they keep us from accessing it. At the edge of Canaan Israel was moved by fear and refused to enter. Fear kept them from obeying God's Word to go in and possess the land. Num 14:9; Deut 1:29
 1. Had they acted on God's Word and entered Canaan God, by His power working through them, would have defeated their enemies. (That's what happened with the next generation.)
 2. God did not withdraw His Presence and Power from Israel. He was there all the time. Their picture of reality kept them from accessing His help.
 3. Israel fed their fears by making inaccurate statements about God (He brought us out here to die), talking about how big the dangers in the land were, how small they were, and how impossible the situation was. They talked themselves out of the will and blessing of God in their lives. Deut 1:27,28; Num 13:28-33; 14:2-4
4. We are made in such a way that whatever we focus our attention on affects us. And we are made in such a way that we automatically talk to ourselves about everything which has a further affect on us.
- a. When we focus our attention on God -- His beauty, holiness, love, power, presence, and protection -- it builds our faith and trust in Him.
 1. Heb 12:1,2--Let us run with patient endurance...the race that is set before us, looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith [giving the first incentive for our belief] and is also its Finisher, [bringing it to maturity and perfection]. (Amp)
 2. When we talk about how wonderful God is and what He has done, is doing, and will do it builds our confidence in and love for Him. Rom 10:17; I John 4:19
 - b. But because of the fall those traits have been corrupted and work against us. We focus our attention on ourselves and on what we see and how it makes us feel and then we go over and over it and it gets bigger and bigger in our thoughts and in our talk, sapping our strength and cutting us off from God's power and help.
- C. When we encounter something fearsome or worrisome our natural tendency is to react: Oh my God!! What are we going to do? This is horrible! We're done for! It can't get any worse! We must learn to resist that tendency and focus on God with you and for you and God's will as revealed in His Word.
1. In His teaching about not worrying where the necessities of life will come from in Matt 6:25-34, Jesus said: Don't take worry and fear producing thoughts and speak them out. Put your attention elsewhere.
 - a. Jesus told His listeners to consider the birds and the flowers who are well provided for (Matt 6:28; Luke 12:24,27). Two Greek words translated consider mean: to learn thoroughly, note accurately; perceive clearly and fully understand. Observe intently the birds...and the flowers (Rotherham).
 - b. Jesus said that to deal with worry (fear of the future) you must stop feeding your emotions by

talking only about what you see and feel. Instead feed your faith: My Father knows I have needs (v32). My Father cares for the birds and the flowers. I matter more to Him. His promise to me is if I seek Him and His kingdom first I'll have the necessities of life (v33).

2. Jesus is not talking about denying what you see and feel. He is talking about recognizing that there is more to reality than what you see and feel. And that greater reality can and will affect and change what you see and feel. There is an invisible kingdom of full power and provision behind this material world.
 - a. Jesus recognized a spiritual cause behind the birds and flowers being provided for -- the Invisible God caring for His creation in a tangible way.
 1. David had that same view of reality. In a psalm of praise to God David said: All eyes look to you for help; you give them their food as they need it. When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every thing. (Ps 145:16-17, NLT)
 2. Paul shared that view of reality. Remember, he got his picture of reality from the Old Testament and from personal meetings with Jesus (Gal 1:11,12). Paul preached to Gentiles in the city of Lystra: In earlier days he (God) permitted all the nations to go their own ways, but he never left himself without a witness. There were always his reminders, such as sending you rain and good crops and giving you food and joyful hearts. (Acts 14:16-17, NLT)
 - b. At the edge of Canaan God did not expect Israel to deny that there were walled cities and giants in the land. He expected them to recognize that there was more to reality than what they saw and felt: I AM with you and this is not bigger than Me. Josh 14:9
 - c. This is not about pretending you feel good when you feel bad or denying you are facing something serious when you clearly are. This is about looking past what you see to reality as it truly is: God with you, perfectly present, loving and reigning and upholding all things with His Word of power.
 1. We all know how to look past something. When you buy a fixer-upper (whether it's a car, a house, or a piece of furniture) you look past it as it is to the end result. You recognize that its present condition is temporary.
 2. Mark 5:39--When Jesus went to Jairus' house to pray for his daughter who had died He said: She's not dead. She's sleeping. Jesus wasn't denying the problem. He was looking past it to reality as it truly is. He saw it as temporary and subject to change by the power of God.
3. Sadly, many have reduce faith in the Invisible God and His Presence and power to a formula: Just say the right words the right number of times and it will all be alright.
 - a. We end up with people making these kinds of statements: When asked how things are going for them they answer: Do you want the church version (meaning that I make the right confessions) or do you want the real story (meaning that I tell you what's really going on). But that's only a gimmick not a changed view of reality.
 - b. The remedy for fear and worry is changing your view of reality (your perspective, the way you see things) so that you see them as they really are according to God and then speak out of that. No one has to tell you what to say or not or how many times to say it. It's how you see your situation.
 - c. Dan 3--Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had plenty to fear when they faced being thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's statue. But an accurate view of reality gave them peace in the midst of a horrific situation.
 1. Note, they put their focus on God's presence, power, and protection declaring that God would deliver them. But notice also how they dealt with the potential to be very afraid. They looked at the worst thing that could happen (we don't get out) and decided it was not bigger than God. They were going to stay true to and obey Almighty God. v17,18
 2. They were able to do that -- not because they knew how to "make the right confession" but because they had an accurate view of reality.
 - A. They knew even if the worst happened it wasn't over for them because God is going to establish His eternal kingdom on earth and they would be raised from the dead and have a part in it because there is life after this life. Dan 2:44; 7:27; 12:2; etc.

b. The end result was that God Who was perfectly present with them in the fiery furnace. They saw Him loving and reigning. They saw Him become their salvation. v25,27,28

- D. Conclusion: Most of the time God does not take away our fears and worries. Instead He gives us reasons why we need not worry or fear. It is then up to us to deal with our worries and fears with His Word.
1. Phil 4:6-8--We could do entire lessons on this passage but consider several thoughts as we close.
 - a. v6--Be careful for nothing. Careful is the same word Jesus used in Matt 6. It means to have divided attention, to be distracted. When worry is stimulated by what you see keep your focus on God. Entertain nor worry (Berkeley); Let no care trouble you (Conybeare). Deal with the emotion when it arises.
 - b. v6--Let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving. Recognize that there is more to reality than what you see and feel in the moment. Acknowledge God and put your focus on Him as the source of your help. Thank Him before you see it because you know that He is faithful.
 - c. v7--God's peace (the opposite of worry and anxiety) will be activated in you. God's not upset about anything. This didn't take Him by surprise. He sees a way to use it for good. He'll get you through until He gets you out. He knows the end result. It will bring you good and Him glory.
 - d. v7--God's peace isn't based on sight or reasoning. It passes understanding and will guard or keep your heart and mind. Peace is freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions.
 - e. v8--Think on these things. The Greek means to take an inventory; to estimate. You must learn to assess your situation in terms of what God says. Let this be the argument of your thoughts. (Knox)
 - f. v8--The thoughts you entertain must pass this test. They must be true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and worthy of praise. Only God's Word meets all of these criteria.
 1. It may be true that you are looking at a fearful situation. But if you're entertaining thoughts of how big it is and how small and helpless you are without bringing God's Word into the discussion, that's an evil report (what the ten spies gave to Israel at the edge of Canaan).
 2. Whatever you are facing, it's not bigger than God Who is with you and for you and has promised to help you. That must become your view of reality -- not what you see or feel.
 2. It takes effort to change your view of reality. You have to take time think about God's word, to ponder it, go over it in your mind, talk to yourself about it. That's what meditation is about. The one who meditates in God's Word is the one who comes through life's challenges in victory. Ps 1:1-3; Josh 1:8
 - a. Why? Because your view of reality changes and you begin to see God as He truly is and yourself as you truly are in relation to Him and work in cooperation with Him in your situation.
 - b. Fear is aroused by what you see and hear. It remains and dominates if you then assess your situation only in terms of what you see and not in terms of what God says about it.
 - c. But if you will learn to see reality as it truly is you will be able to deal with fear and worry, keep them from dominating you, and work in cooperation with God. More next week!