

REALITY AND ANGER AT GOD

- A. Introduction: We are talking about how to overcome in life's challenges by learning to see reality as it truly is. Reality is everything as God sees it. As part of our study we are discussing how to handle our emotions according to God's Word. For the past several weeks we've been talking about dealing with sorrow.
1. There are different kinds and degrees of sorrow ranging from minor disappointments to crushing grief.
 - a. Grief arises when we lose someone or something dear to us. Disappointment is aroused when we don't get what we were expecting or it is less than what we expected. Prov 13:12
 - b. Regret and guilt arise when choices we make produce negative actions and consequences that can't be undone. These choices would include bad decisions that hurt us or others as well as decisions we thought were good but turned out badly. Also included are sinful decisions.
 2. In the last few lessons we focused on sorrow or regret and guilt over choices we've made. We've seen that these various degrees and types of sorrow can overlap and all can give rise to "if onlys". If only I had done this or had not done that things would have turned out differently.
 - a. "If onlys" are generally not profitable and they can actually feed feelings of grief, guilt, and regret.
 1. If you made a mistake that can be corrected or if you can see where and how you went wrong so that you can avoid a repeat in the future -- that's one thing. But people have tendency to focus on what can't be undone and go over and over it, torturing themselves with "if only..."
 2. What's done is done. You can only deal with the situation as it is not as it should have been.
 - b. When we talk about dealing with the situation as it is we aren't saying: Adopt a fatalistic attitude.
 1. We are saying that instead of focusing on the past that can't be undone, focus on the present reality that God is with you to help every step along the way through your ordeal. Gen 28:15
 2. Recognize what the situation can become in the hands of God. Realize that even in the darkest circumstances we have hope or expectation of coming good. I Thess 4:13; Rom 15:13
 3. Our hope in grief is reunion and resurrection. Our hope in guilt and regret is remission (or wiping out) of sin and restoration of loss.
 - c. None of this means that your pain will stop instantly. It won't. Nor does this mean that you won't have to put forth effort to keep your mind from going to the "if only" place. You will.
 1. But focusing on reality as it truly is (God is with you right now as real help and He gives you hope for the future) will keep you from sinking into despair. II Cor 2:7
 2. It will keep you from feeding your pain through focusing on the "if onlys". Then, with the passage of time, as you adjust to your loss and disappoints, the pain will lessen.
 3. In this lesson we want to deal with one more aspect of the sorrow that arises from loss and regrettable circumstances, the "if onlys" we direct at God: If only God had not let this happen.
 - a. In the midst of our sorrow and pain it is possible to have anger at God. Anger at God arises when we believe He has not done things the way we think He should and that our difficulties are due to His mishandling of things.
 - b. Some say that anger at God is normal and natural and we should just let it out because He understands. Yes, He does understand, but consider these points.
 1. Anger at God is a faith destroyer. We get angry at someone when we believe they've wronged us in some way. If you believe God is responsible for your troubles either directly or indirectly how can you confidently turn to Him for help in your trouble? Heb 4:16; Ps 9:10
 2. Anger at God makes it easier to justify sin: after what He did or didn't do I deserve to do this.
 3. What you feel is often the result of what you think. You feel anger at God because of what you think about Him. The Bible makes it clear that you have no reason to be angry at God. Wouldn't it be better to correct the flawed thinking which led to those feelings of anger?
 4. In John 11 we see an example of anger at God. Lazarus, a friend of Jesus and brother to Martha and Mary, became ill. The sisters sent word to Jesus but He didn't arrive until after Lazarus was dead.
 - a. When Jesus finally arrived both women said the same thing to Him: If only you had gotten here

sooner our brother would not have died. v21, 32

b. They were indirectly blaming Jesus for Lazarus, death, implying that He had mishandled the situation. Jesus was actually too far away to get there before Lazarus died. John 11:6; 10:40; 1:28

1. Lazarus didn't die because Jesus wasn't there. He died because that's life in a sin cursed earth. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden the curse of death entered the world and the human race. All men die because of Adam's sin. Gen 2:17; 3:19
 2. Although Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, he eventually died again along with both Mary and Martha. Death is the last enemy to be put underfoot at the return of Jesus. I Cor 15:26
5. Before we go any further we need to take a brief side journey and address a common misunderstanding of this passage of scripture. Some use this incident to incorrectly say that God is glorified by sickness.
 - a. As we study the Bible we see that God is glorified when sickness goes and healing comes. Matt 9:8; 15:31; Luke 7:16; 13:13,17; 17:15; 18:43; Acts 3:8; 4:21; etc
 1. John 11:4 seems to say that God is glorified by sickness. How do we deal with this apparent contradiction? We must understand a basic rule of Bible interpretation.
 2. When one verse seems to contradict a number of others, don't throw out the ten verses that say the same thing in favor of the one that seems to contradict. Assume that you do not yet have full understanding of the verse that appears to contradict.
 - b. Having said that, John 11:4 is not difficult to understand if we read the whole story. John 11:4-- This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it (NIV). In other words, at the outset, Jesus said the end result of Lazarus' sickness will not be death. The end result will be that I am is glorified or honored.
 1. As we read the chapter we see there was no glory for Jesus while Lazarus was sick or dead.
 - A. The disciples thought Jesus' handling of the sickness was a mistake. v8-16
 - B. Martha, Mary, and others questioned His handling of things. v21,32,37
 - C. Prior to Lazarus' resurrection Jesus said they had not yet seen the glory of God. v40
 2. But, it states that after Lazarus was raised, people believed and honored Jesus. v45; 12:9-11

- B. Before we get back to Martha and Mary, we need to discuss where anger at God comes from.
1. Anger at God comes from lack of knowledge of what God is like. Many wrongly believe God is behind or approving of life's trials and hardships.
 - a. God is never the source of your troubles directly or indirectly. God is good and good means good. (For a complete discussion of all the issues raised by that statement read my book: GOD IS GOOD AND GOOD MEANS GOOD.) But consider one point right now.
 - b. Jesus, who is God and shows us God, never caused or allowed a sickness, trial, test, calamity, etc. in anyone's life during His years on earth. Therefore we know God the Father does not do so.
 - c. Jesus said: If you've seen Me you've seen the Father because I do His works and speak His words by His power in Me. I only do what I see My Father do. John 14:9,10; John 5:19,30; etc.
 2. Anger at God comes from lack of knowledge of the nature of life in a world damaged by sin.
 - a. Troubles are here because of sin, beginning with Adam's sin in the Garden. His sin had a cataclysmic effect on the human race and all of creation. Rom 12:5,19; Eph 2:1-3 etc.
 - b. We live in a fallen world with corrupted natural processes that produce killer storms and natural disasters. This world is populated by people born with sin natures who are ruled over by the devil. All of this produces great chaos and heartache in the world.
 - c. God in His sovereignty has given men free will. With free will comes not only choice but all the consequences of those choices. God does not stop either the choices or the consequences and the freewill choices of men cause much of the calamity in life.
 3. Anger at God comes from not understanding what God is working to accomplish in the earth.
 - a. God's number one goal right now is not to make life in this fallen world pleasant but rather to draw men back to Him so that they are not lost for eternity. A wonderful life in this life is

meaningless if you end up in hell for eternity.

1. It was in the pigpen, when the prodigal son experienced the consequences of his sin, that he woke up, repented of his sin, and came back to his father's house. Luke 15:14-19
2. God uses the choices of men (both good and bad ones) and causes them to serve His plan to have a family of holy, righteous sons and daughters. As He does so He works good out of evil as He brings maximum glory to Himself and maximum good to as many people as possible.

Eph 1:11; Rom 8:28

- b. When Peter betrayed Jesus the night before He was crucified Peter undoubtedly felt anger at himself and possibly at God: I should have talked Jesus out of going to Jerusalem (Matt 16:21,22). How could God let this happen to His own Son (Matt 16:16).
 1. Jesus told Peter he was going to betray him and also said: Matt 16:23--Your outlook is not God's but man's (Moffatt); you look at things, not as God does, but as a man does (20th Cent).
 2. But after Jesus was raised from the dead and explained to Peter from the scriptures what had happened and why, Peter's whole perspective was changed. Acts 2:22-24
 - A. God did not orchestrate the crucifixion of Jesus. Wicked men inspired by Satan did so (Luke 22:3; Luke 24:7; I Cor 2:8; Matt 26:45). But God in His all knowingness knew what they would do and wove it into His plan to redeem men from bondage to sin, Satan, corruption and death.
 - B. God beat the devil at his own game and brought genuine good (the salvation of mankind) out of real evil (the murder of the innocent Son of God).
 3. Peter came to see why God didn't stop it and why he had no reason to be angry with God. God doesn't stop men from making sinful choices because they have free will. And God sees how to use choices and cause them to serve His purposes as He gathers His family.
4. Anger at God comes from unrealistic expectations and the disappointment that arises when those expectations aren't met. Today, many wrongly believe that being a Christian means a perfect life.
 - a. The gospel has been watered down to: Ask Jesus into your heart and He'll fix everything. He'll fulfill all your dreams and desires. But there's nothing like that in the New Testament.
 1. The Bible says that Jesus died so that we would no longer live for ourselves but for Him (II Cor 5:15). Jesus said you must be willing to lose your life for My sake (Matt 16:24,25).
 2. That doesn't mean there's no help and provision for this life. There is. But true victory comes from seeing the way things really are: This life is temporary. We are only passing through life as it is. We'll be back to live again on this earth when it has been made new.
 - b. Many of us have lost the eternal perspective and are the worse for it. This life is only a small part of our existence. The greater and better part is ahead in the life to come. Rom 8:18; I Pet 2:11
 1. The goal of salvation is not to make this life the best part of our existence but rather to produce transformation in men and creation (turn sinners into holy, righteous sons and remove every trace of corruption and death and renew the earth) so that God can fulfill His plan to have a family of redeemed sons and daughters in a perfect world for eternity.
 2. Many of our desires and talents aren't even for this life. They're for the life to come. All loss is temporary and all mistakes forgivable and fixable either is this life or the one ahead.
5. There are some circumstances in life that can be changed as we exercise our authority in Christ. Some we can avoid. Some we have to push through. If we are living according to how we feel rather or according to inaccurate information it can be hard to determine which is which.
 - a. Most of us are motivated by fear of "what if it doesn't work" rather than by the confidence that no matter what happens, it's not bigger than God and He will get me through until He gets me out.
 - b. When you see reality as it truly is it inspires your hope even in the worst of life's trials. It also puts you in a place of faith to deal with life's challenges in the most effective way possible.

C. Back to Martha and Mary. They were true followers of Jesus (v27) but in the crisis they blamed God for

their brother's death.

1. When Jesus arrived Martha made the appropriate religious remarks (v22,24). But as events unfolded we find out what she really believed about her situation.
 - a. When Jesus ordered the stone removed from Lazarus' tomb her first words were not: Hurray!! Jesus is going to raise him from the dead. They were: Lord, he stinks (v39). According to Jesus she doesn't believe what she thinks she believes (v40).
 - b. Martha and Mary lacked the confidence that despite what they saw, despite what had gone wrong, Jesus had things under control and that He would bring maximum good out of the situation.
 1. We aren't faulting them. They didn't have all the light we now have. This is an example of what really happened to real people. It was written in scripture to encourage us by giving us hope and to help us keep from making the same mistakes. Rom 15:4; I Cor 10:6,11
 2. John, who recorded this incident, specifically said he wrote so that men would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, and have life through him (John 20:31).
 3. As the Christ, the Messiah, as Almighty God, nothing is bigger than Him, not even death. Jesus is the Resurrection and the assurance that death is a temporary situation with the promise of ultimate resurrection and restoration.
 - c. Martha and Mary reacted to their loss like many of us do and, on top of the pain of the loss of their brother, they had the anguish of believing God had failed them: If this situation had turned out differently, if Jesus had just arrived sooner, we'd be alright. But, it's too late. There's no hope.
 1. They were walking by sight and emotions, but they don't have all the facts. We all tend to look only as what we see without taking God's Word into account and we get upset with God. 2.
But Jesus had a plan in mind to use an event in this sin cursed earth (the death of Lazarus) for glory and good. Jesus raised him from the dead in front of a crowd. The sisters got their brother back and many believed on Jesus -- maximum glory and good. John 11:45; 12:9-11
 2. That's wonderful for them but my loved one is dead and buried. This where your view of reality must be accurate. You'll see them again in Heaven and you aren't going to care that you lived the rest of this life without them. That won't stop the pain of the loss but it will help you get through it.
 - a. Why didn't God heal or raise my loved one? I can't answer that (whole lessons for another day). But we mustn't let what we can't fully explain undermine what we do know nor can we water down God's Word in any way.
 - b. Like Martha and Mary we tend to focus on what we don't have and didn't get. We need to reverse that and be grateful for what God has done is doing, and will do. All loss is temporary and the life to come will surpass this one in ways we can't even imagine.
- D. Conclusion: When you know that God has never nor ever will do you wrong there is no reason for anger. Instead of being angry you can draw hope from the fact that whatever you are facing, it's not bigger than God. Much more about emotions in upcoming lessons!!