

CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

- A. Introduction: We're discussing the importance of reading the Bible, particularly the New Testament. I am encouraging you to become a regular systematic reader of the New Testament.
1. Regular reading means that you read for 15-20 minutes at least several days a week (or every day if possible). Systematic means that instead of reading random verses, you read each book in the New Testament from start to finish—and then do it over and over.
 - a. Don't worry about what you don't understand. The purpose of this kind of reading is to become familiar with the text because understanding comes with familiarity. And, familiarity comes with regular repeated reading. Systematic reading helps you see context which gives understanding.
 - b. If you become a regular systematic reader of the New Testament you will be a different person a year from now. You'll have more understanding, peace, joy, and faith.
 1. The Bible is a supernatural book because it was inspired by God. He works in us through His Word to strengthen us and change us into what He wants us to be. II Tim 3:16; I Thess 2:13
 2. I John 2:14—I have written to you who are young because you are strong with God's word living in your hearts, and you have won your battle with Satan (NLT).
 - c. In this series we're considering the reasons why we need to read the New Testament regularly and systematically as we address issues that keep sincere Christians from reading effectively.
 1. Tonight we're going to begin to discuss the fact that regular systematic reading changes your perspective or the way you see things, which in turn changes the way you deal with life.
 2. Regular systematic reading of the New Testament will help you develop an accurate view of reality which will enable you to handle life more effectively.
 2. For several weeks we've been emphasizing that all the New Testament documents were written by eyewitnesses of Jesus (or close associates of eyewitnesses). One of those authors was Paul the apostle.
 - a. Paul became an ardent follower of Jesus when the Lord showed Himself to Paul two years after the crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus appeared to Paul a number of times after that and personally taught Paul the message that he preached. Acts 9:1-6; Acts 26:16; Gal 1:11-12; etc.
 1. Paul spent the rest of his life proclaiming the gospel throughout the Roman Empire—the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection which provides salvation from sin to all who believe.
 - A. The information Paul received from Jesus dominates the New Testament since he wrote 13 of its 27 documents. (If you include the Epistle to the Hebrews, the number is 14.)
 - B. We get more details about what Paul preached from the Book of Acts which was written by Paul's ministry partner Luke, who traveled with Paul.
 - C. Almost 2/3s of Acts is a record of Paul's travels as he preached Jesus' resurrection across the Roman world. Luke also recorded many of Paul's sermons in his book.
 2. Remember one of the major points we have made thus far—the Living Word, Jesus, reveals Himself to us today through the written word, the Bible (John 14:21; John 5:39). Do you want to know what Jesus taught Paul? Then read the Holy Spirit inspired documents Paul wrote.
 - b. Paul faced numerous hardships as he took the gospel to the known world of his day—from slander, beatings, and imprisonment to the rigors of travel in the ancient world, including shipwrecks. He also faced the pressures of caring for those he won to Christ. II Cor 11:23-29
 1. In the context of those many hardships and associated sufferings, Paul made a remarkable statement. He called the many difficulties that he endured momentary and light.
 - A. II Cor 4:17-18—For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever (NLT).

- B. Paul was able to view his troubles as temporary and as ultimately working for good because of his perspective—because of the way he looked his many trials. According to *Webster's Dictionary* perspective is the power to see or think of things in their true relationship to one another. (More on this in a moment)
2. There's more in Paul's statement than we can deal with tonight. Let's focus on one aspect for now. Paul talked about looking, not at what you can see, but at what you can't see. What does this mean? The answer is directly related to regular systematic Bible reading. The only way that you can see what you can't see is through the Word of God.
- B. We must understand that there is more to reality, more to this world, than what we see and feel. Not only are there seen things, there are unseen things.
1. There is another realm that is currently beyond the perceptive abilities of our physical senses. It is an unseen, immaterial, spiritual dimension—the realm of Almighty God. Not seen doesn't mean not real. It simply means we can't contact with our five physical senses.
 - a. God not only created seen things, He first created unseen things. Almighty God, who is invisible, created and presides over an unseen, invisible kingdom—a kingdom of full power and provision. This kingdom or realm is populated by invisible beings known as angels I Tim 1:17; Col 1:16
 1. The unseen or spiritual realm has the greater reality because it preceded and then produced the visible material world. The Invisible God spoke His invisible Word and released invisible power that created not only an unseen realm, but a seen (physical) world. Gen 1:3; Heb 11:3
 2. The unseen or spiritual can affect and change the visible world. When Jesus was on earth He released unseen or invisible power that produced tangible results in the seen world. Mark 4:39; Matt 8:3; etc.
 - b. The Bible gives many examples where the veil that separates this unseen dimension from the physical world was pulled back. Awareness of this unseen kingdom not only brought peace to people, the provisions of the unseen dimension affected and changed the seen realm. II Kings 6:8-23
 1. The prophet Elisha found himself surrounded by an enemy army that was intent on capturing him. Elisha's servant was the first to see the dangerous threat and was terrified. Elisha was not afraid because he knew that he was protected by beings in the unseen realm. v16-17
 2. Both men dealt with their circumstances based on their perception of reality. Elisha's perception was accurate; his servant's was not. The servant was terrified, but Elisha had peace and confidence in the face of trouble because he had additional information.
 3. Unseen power (the power of God) changed the circumstance, delivered Elisha and his servant, and so scared the enemy army that, from then on, they stayed away from the prophet and Israel.
 2. Because our physical senses cannot perceive or access the unseen realm, we don't have all the facts in any situation. Therefore, our perception of reality is skewed since it is limited to sense knowledge.
 - a. God is the only one who knows everything about everything—past, present, and future. Because He is omniscient (all-knowing) Almighty God has all the facts about everything. Reality is everything as God sees it.
 - b. One reason God has given us the Bible is to reveal the unseen dimension to us and give us additional facts about our situation. In His written Word, the Lord tells us the way things really are. Reality is everything as God sees it.
 1. Rom 12:1-2—Christians are instructed to renew their mind. Renewing the mind is not simply learning some Bible verses. Renewing your mind involves changing your perception of reality by learning to see things as God sees them. A renewed mind sees reality as it truly is.
 2. The Bible is the vehicle through which this process of renewing the mind or the changing of your perspective is accomplished. Through the written Word of God we have a window on

reality that helps us see things the way they really are which in turn affects how feel and respond—like Elisha and his servant.

3. In one of the best known (and frequently misused) passages of Scripture, Jesus said that the truth will make us free. There's a lot in what Jesus said, but note these points. John 8:31-32
 - a. Let's first define truth. According to *Webster's Dictionary* truth is the real state of things. The Greek word that is used in this verse means the reality lying at the basis of an appearance (*Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words*). Truth is the way things really are according the One who knows everything about everything—Almighty God.
 1. Jesus made this statement to those who believe in Him: As for you, if you remain in the word which is mine, truly, my disciples you are. And you shall know the truth in an experiential way, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31-32, Wuest)
 2. Through God's Word we can know the way things really are and that knowledge will produce changes in us so that God's will can be demonstrated in our lives.
 - b. God reveals Himself through His Word. The Bible shows us what God is like as it shows us how He deals with those who belong to Him.
 1. This is reality. No matter how things look or feel at the moment, Almighty God is with you and nothing can come against you that is bigger than Him. He is an ever present help in time of trouble. Ps 46:1
 - A. God is Omnipresent or present everywhere at once. There's no place God is not. This means that wherever you are, there He is. Jer 23:23-24
 - B. God is Omnipotent or all-powerful. This means that nothing is greater or stronger than Him and nothing can stand against His power and might. Rev 19:6
 - C. God is Omniscient or all-knowing. He knows what is going to happen before it happens. This means that nothing takes Him by surprise or confounds Him. There is no problem for which He does not have a plan or solution. Isa 46:10
 2. Reality is that God (Who is good and big) is perfectly present with us loving and reigning and “upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe (all things) by His mighty word of power” (Heb 1:3, Amp).
 4. Jesus made another well known statement to His apostles the night before He was crucified: In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer—take courage, be confident, certain, undaunted—for I have overcome the world.—I have deprived it of power to harm, have conquered it [for you] (John 16:33, Amp).
 - a. Notice that Jesus prefaced His comment about life's troubles with this statement: I have told you these things so that in Me you may have perfect peace and confidence (John 16:33, Amp).
 1. Jesus had just finished a lengthy discourse as He prepared the apostles for the fact that He was soon going to leave them (lessons for another day).
 2. The point for us is that He assured them that through His words to them they would have peace even in the face of life's hardships. Peace is freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions (*Webster's Dictionary*).
 3. The pain of life's troubles is often enhanced by the mental and emotional challenges that come with them. Jesus said that His word gives peace in the midst of it.
 - b. When you know that nothing can come against you that is bigger than God and that everything you see and feel is temporary and subject to change by the power of God, it lightens the load of this life.
- C. II Cor 4:17-18—This brings us back to Paul. His view of reality was changed by the Living Word of God (Jesus) to the point where he was able to view his many hardships as momentary and light. Paul wrote the information he received in the New Testament. Jesus, through His Word will also change our view of

reality or our perspective, just as He did for Paul. Consider these points (each one deserves its own lesson).

1. Jesus said (and Paul understood) that there is no such things as a problem free life in this fallen, sin damaged world. No amount of faith can prevent troubles from coming your way. But we can be of good cheer (encouraged) because Jesus has deprived it of its power to permanently harm us. John 16:33
 - a. II Cor 4:17-18—Paul was able to call his many difficulties momentary and light because of how he viewed them (his perspective). Because he looked at what he couldn't see (through the Word) he realized that they were temporary and the good which is ahead far outweighed the hardship.
 - b. There are two kinds of unseen things—the things you cannot see because they are invisible and the things you cannot see because they are not here yet—they are future. Paul was able to see both and it affected how he viewed life. Remember, the only way you can see what you can't see is through the Word of God—the Bible.
 1. Paul knew from Living Word (Jesus) and from the written Word (the Bible) that God was with him and for him in every circumstance—and that God would deliver him. Therefore, his perspective was: Yet amid all these things we are (I am) more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory through Him Who loved us. (Rom 8:37, Amp)
 2. But Paul also knew from the Word of God (Living and written) that there is more to life than just this life—and that the greater and better part of life is ahead, after this present life: Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later (Rom 8:18, NLT).
 - c. Paul knew that the unseen or spiritual realm will ultimately transform this seen world. Because of mankind's sin, there is a curse of corruption and death in the material realm and the physical visible world is not as God intended it to be. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; etc.
 1. But in connection with Jesus' second coming, the material realm will be delivered from this bondage and restored to what the Bible calls the new earth. Acts 3:21; John 21-22; etc.
 2. We've done many lessons on this marvelous transformation. The point for our present topic is that everything we see is temporary and subject to change by the power of God either now or in the age to come—just as Paul recorded.
 3. When this fact dominates your view of reality it makes life much easier to deal with, just as it did for Paul. You recognize that in comparison to forever a lifetime of trouble is insignificant.
 3. The Greek word that is translated look in II Cor 4:18 means to mentally consider. Paul focused his attention on the way things really are. You can't keep your mind on something that isn't in your mind.
 - a. If you are not a regular systematic reader of the Bible, then the reality of the unseen is not in your mind in. You may be aware of some truths from the Bible. You may even agree with them.
 1. But when what you see and feel in your circumstance screams that you're in trouble and there is no hope, a passing familiarity with what the Bible says is not enough. Your view of reality must be changed. And that takes time and effort.
 2. Note what Paul wrote following his statement that we're victors in the midst of life's troubles: For I have come through a process of persuasion to a settled conclusion that (nothing)...will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38, Wuest).
 - b. This isn't a technique. This is a view of reality that results in an almost automatic response to what you see and feel because you are fully convinced that what you can't see and feel is bigger and available to you—Almighty God and His present and coming kingdom of power and provision.
- D. Conclusion: Regular systematic reading of the New Testament will change your perspective and give you the ability to see or think of things in their true relationship to one another. According to the Bible, every loss, every hurt and pain, every injustice and outrage is temporary and subject to change by the power of God, either in this life or the life to come. This view of reality enables you to keep your present troubles in perspective and lighten the load of life. Become a Bible reader!! Much more next week.