

HOPE, FAITH, FEAR, AND PERSPECTIVE

- A. Introduction: We're talking about the importance of perspective as part of a larger discussion on the value of becoming a regular Bible reader. Perspective is the power to see or think of things in their true relationship to each other (*Webster's Dictionary*). It's not what you see—it's how you see what you see.
1. The Bible helps you see things the way they really are because its words were inspired by Almighty God who sees and knows everything.
 - a. The Bible gives you an eternal perspective—a perspective that recognizes there is more to life than this life. And the greater and better part of life is ahead, after this life.
 1. Almighty God is currently working out His plan to have a family with whom He can live forever. The Lord created human beings to become His sons and daughters and He made this world to be a home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5; Rom 8:29-30; Isa 45:18; etc.
 2. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin so that all who put faith in Him as Savior and Lord can be transformed from sinners into holy righteous sons and daughters of God. He will come again to restore the family home by renewing and restoring this planet to a fit forever home for God and His family. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; I Pet 3:18; John 1:12-13; Rev 21-22; etc.
 - b. When you know that everything you see is temporary and subject to change by God's power either in this life or the life to come, it lightens the load of life in a fallen world. II Cor 4:17-18
 1. This present life is temporary. We are only passing through this world as it is. When we have this perspective it influences our priorities which then affect our behavior. I Pet 1:17; I Pet 2:11
 2. You recognize that what matters most is that people come to saving knowledge of Jesus so they can have a part in the family and a life after this life. The most important thing you can do with your life is to shine the light of Jesus in your corner of the world. I Cor 7:29-31; Phil 2:15-16
 3. Whatever your circumstances, keep an eternal perspective. Don't become too attached to this world. Remember the big picture—a plan is unfolding, and the best is yet to come.
 - A. Ps 39:5-6—An entire lifetime is just a moment to you (God), human existence is but a breath. We are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. We heap up wealth for someone else to spend (NLT).
 - B. Rom 8:18-21—Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day...All creation anticipated the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay (NLT).
 2. All of this talk about the life after this life can make it sound as though there is no help for us in this life. But that's not the case. God has made numerous promises to His people—some for this life and some for the life to come. Regular reading shows us these promises and helps us see which are for this life.
 - a. Many mistakenly believe that becoming a Christian means no more problems. However, there's no way to avoid life's hardships. Regular reading gives you an accurate view of life in a fallen world.
 1. Some circumstances can be changed by the power of God. We find numerous examples of this in the Bible. However, other circumstances can't be changed. Some mountains move; some you must go around or climb over. Others you can avoid completely (lessons for another day).
 2. The bottom line is that there is no such thing as a problem free life in a sin cursed earth. But God will get you through until He gets you out—whether that is sooner or later.
 - b. There are many examples in the Bible of the balance between present help and future help. These accounts reveal that knowing there is life after this life gave people confidence in the face of life's hardships. That's our topic in tonight's lesson—the relationship between present and future help.
- B. Several weeks ago we looked at some statements that Paul made in his epistle to the Hebrews. Our purpose

- was to show how an eternal perspective helps you live this life. There is more to learn from Paul's epistle.
1. This epistle (letter) was written to Hebrew (or Jewish) Christians about AD 64. They were facing increasing pressure to abandon their faith in Christ, repudiate Jesus and His sacrifice on the Cross, and return to the old system of animal sacrifice under the Law of Moses.
 - a. Their circumstances weren't going to go away. In fact, they would get much worse. The nation of Israel was on the verge of rebellion. The Roman Empire conquered Israel in 63 BC and made it part of their empire. By AD 64 contention between Israel and the empire was brewing
 1. In AD 66 Israel did rebel again Rome. The Romans worked to put down the rebellion and actually held Jerusalem (Israel's capital city) under siege for several years.
 2. In AD 70 a Roman army destroyed Jerusalem, pulling down its walls and burning the Temple to the ground. As many as 1,000,000 Jews were killed. Those who survived were ultimately forcibly removed from their land and scattered throughout the Roman Empire.
 - b. When Paul wrote, in addition pressure to return to Temple worship, the Hebrew Christians were being pressured to join the revolt. They refused and were considered traitors by their fellow countrymen. (Jesus had previously warned Christians that when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by soldiers they should leave immediately. No Christians died because they heeded His warning. However, they also lost their homes when Rome put down the rebellion. Luke 21:20-21).
 - c. Every point Paul made in the epistle to the Hebrews was aimed at motivating his readers to stay faithful to Christ no matter what. He used a number of strategies to achieve his purpose.
 1. Heb 10:32-34—One tactic was to remind them how they handled the challenges they'd already experienced because of their faith—public ridicule, beatings, property loss, imprisonment: When all that you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew you had better things waiting for you in eternity (v34, NLT). Eternity is the life after this life.
 2. These Hebrew Christians got their view of reality from the Old Testament, the portion of the Bible completed at that time. They knew that this world will one day be made new and that God's people will be reunited with their bodies raised from the grave to live on earth forever. Isa 65:17; Job 19:25-26; Isa 26:19; Ps 37:11; 19; etc.
 2. After reminding his readers of their previous response to hardship, Paul wrote: Do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord no matter what happens. Remember the great reward it brings you (Heb 10:35, NLT)...but we are certainly not like those who are held back by fear and perish; we are among those who have faith and experience true life (Heb 10:39 TPT). Note contrast between fear and faith.
 - a. Paul continued his thought in Heb 11:1—What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see (NLT).
 1. Each time Paul uses the word faith or believe in chapters 10 and 11 it is a form of the same root word. It means persuasion or to convince by argument. God persuades us of things we can't see through His written Word to convince us to the point where we believe and act accordingly.
 2. Remember, there are two kinds of unseen things: Things we can't see because they are future (not here yet) and things we can't see because they are invisible (Almighty God with you and for you—a very present help in trouble; Ps 46:1). We see the unseen through God's Word.
 - b. Then, as part of his goal to encourage his readers to stay faithful to Christ, Paul referred to people well known to his Jewish readers—real people who endured hardship but stayed faithful to God.
 - c. Paul showed how their perspective gave them hope for the future that made them fearless in the present and enabled them to accomplish exploits through faith. Heb 11:2-40
 3. Paul stated that: by faith (they) overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, received what God promised... shut the mouths of lions...quenched fires, escaped death...weakness became strength...put whole armies to flight in battle, received loved ones back from death (Heb 11:33-34, NLT).
 - a. Paul gave many examples. Consider two: Sarah received strength to conceive and deliver a child

when she was too old because she judged God faithful to His promises (Heb 11:11). The walls of Jericho fell down because of faith (Heb 11:30). They both received present help through faith.

- b. But Paul made it clear that as well as faith for provision during their lifetimes, these people also had an eternal perspective and recognized that they were only passing through this life as it is.

1. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Heb 11:13, KJV).
2. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he had prepared a heavenly city for them (Heb 11:16, NLT).
 - A. These people recognized that something bigger was going on that included people and events that would come after them. They didn't have all the details, but they understood God's plan was unfolding and they wouldn't see the full benefit until the life after this life.
 - B. Heb 11:39-40—All of these people we have mentioned received God's approval because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God promised. For God had far better things in mind for us that would also benefit them, for they can't receive the prize at the end of the race until we finish the race (NLT).

- c. The fact that there is life after this life (a plan is unfolding) gave these Old Testament saints confidence in the face of life's hardships.

4. Consider another example of how perspective and priorities based on unseen information influenced behavior in the life of Moses—another great man from Israel's history.

- a. Moses was born a Jew in Egypt. At that time his people were captive slaves and Pharaoh ordered all males to be killed. Moses parents hid him for three months and he ended up raised by Pharaoh's daughter as a prince of Egypt. Ex 2

1. He turned his back on Egypt's riches because of his priorities which came from his perspective. He knew that he belonged to God and his people must return to their ancestral land (Canaan). Moses left Egypt by faith and had no fear because he kept his attention of the Invisible God.
2. Heb 11:24-27—It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be treated as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of the Messiah than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the great reward that God would give him. It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt. He was not afraid of (Pharaoh). Moses kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible (NLT).

- b. God preserved Moses' life and empowered him to do exploits in His name—stand up to Pharaoh, overcome Egyptian sorcerers, command plagues to come and go, get water from rocks, guide a multitude of very difficult people, etc. (many lessons for another day). The point is that Moses had provision and power in this life as well as hope for the life to come.

1. His loss of privilege and prestige in Egypt along with the hardships of the journey back to Canaan produced eternal results. Among other things, the line through which Jesus would one day come was preserved and restored to the land where He was ordained to be born.
2. In the end, Moses wasn't permitted to enter Canaan (Deut 32:48-52). If you don't have an eternal perspective this may not seem fair. But, after his death, Moses did stand in Canaan when Jesus was transfigured (Luke 9:28-31). Moses and Elijah stepped out of the unseen realm to discuss with Jesus His upcoming crucifixion. When Jesus returns Moses will be with Him (along with everyone else who has put faith in Him) to live once again on earth in Canaan.

- C. All the people Paul referenced in Hebrews 11 overcame challenges in this life through faith. But notice that in this chapter, in addition to faith, Paul mentions hope and fear. What is the connection?

1. Hope and faith comes to us through the Word of God. The Bible reveals the God of hope (Rom 15:13). Jesus, the Living Word, is the source of our faith (Heb 12:1-2; Rom 10:17) and He is revealed through the written Word (John 5:39).
 - a. You can't possibly have real hope or genuine faith apart from the Word of God—another reason why regular Bible reading is critical.
 1. Faith begins with hope or an expectation of coming good based on something that God has said. Faith is a persuasion that comes from God's Word. Faith is the assurance that what we hope for (expect) will happen.
 2. Through His Word, God tells us what He has done, is doing, and will do—none of which we can see yet. But, because we know His power (He can do it) and His willingness (He wants to help) and His faithfulness (He keeps His promises) we have hope (an expectation of coming good). Everything is going to be alright.
 - b. For many of us, our faith is actually fear masquerading as faith—if we do and say the right things (pray enough, fast enough, declare and confess enough) then everything will go as we want it to.
 1. This supposed faith doesn't come out of persuasion. It is a technique to try to get God to act on our behalf. Faith and hope don't function properly until you deal with fear.
 2. Fear is banished when you have real hope and genuine faith—or a firm persuasion produced by the Word of God. You are convinced that you can trust God to keep His Word to you.
 2. An eternal perspective is a vital element in genuine hope and faith that overcomes fear. In the same chapter where Paul listed men and women who triumphed in this life through faith he made an amazing statement: But others trusted, preferring to die rather than turn from God and be free. They placed their hope in the resurrection to a better life (Heb 11:35, NLT).
 - a. Remember the Old Testament account where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to worship an idol built by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon? Dan 3
 1. When given a final chance to comply or die they replied: We don't have to defend ourselves before you...the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power... But even if he doesn't, Your Majesty can be sure that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up (Dan 3:16-18, NLT)
 2. You can only respond this way if your perspective and priorities are right. They recognized that there is something more important than this life—a God in Heaven they were accountable to. They knew that if they chose to stay faithful to Him they would have a life after this life.
 - b. The root of all fear is the fear of death, the fear that this life is all there is and that death is the end. Earlier in his epistle, Paul reminded his readers that Jesus died to free us from this root fear and thereby free us from all fear.
 1. Heb 2:14-15—Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he deliver those who have lived all their lives as slaves to the fear of dying (NLT).
 2. Because of the Cross of Christ, death is not the end. It is a temporary departure from this world to a beautiful place called Heaven where we live wonderful lives until we all return to this earth with the Lord to live here forever—earth restored and life as it was always meant to be.
 - c. You can't face your giant or your mountain or your walled city with genuine hope and faith until you are persuaded that nothing can defeat you—not even death. Therefore, you have no reason to fear.
- D. Conclusion: An eternal perspective inspires hope which bolsters faith enabling you to stand confidently in the face of life's hardships. It gives the certainty that God will come through for you, and no matter how it looks right now, the end result will be good. Please read the Bible!! Lots more next week!