

CONFIDENT ASSURANCE

- A. Introduction: In this series we're talking about the importance of becoming a regular systematic reader of the New Testament. This means that you read it over and over from start to finish until you become familiar with it. Understanding comes with familiarity and familiarity comes with regular repeated reading.
1. For the past several weeks we've been focusing on the fact that this type of reading will change your perspective or the way you see things. Perspective is the power to see or think of things in their true relationship to each other (*Webster's Dictionary*). Let's review some main points we've made thus far.
 - a. Regular systematic reading will give you an eternal perspective. An eternal perspective recognizes there is more to life than this life. And the greater and better part of life is ahead, after this life.
 - b. An eternal perspective changes your priorities which then affects your actions. You recognize that everything you see is temporary and subject to change by the power of God either in this life or the life to come. You know that we're only passing through this life as it is. You recognize what is most important—that people come to saving knowledge of Jesus so they can have life after this life.
 1. Regular systematic Bible reading helps us understand the relationship between this life and the life to come. This life is not unimportant, but it's not all important.
 2. God has made many promises to His people—some for this life and some for the life to come. Regular Bible reading helps us see which promises are for now and which are for the life ahead.
 - c. Last week we looked at several groups of people mentioned in Scripture who faced real problems in this life. They had an eternal perspective that helped them deal with life's challenges effectively.
 1. Heb 10:32-34—We referred to Christians who endured public ridicule, beatings, property loss, and imprisonment, but were able to deal with it because they knew that they had better things waiting for them in the life after this life. They knew that they would get back all that they lost.
 2. Heb 11:3-40—These men and women were encouraged by Old Testament accounts of people who did exploits in this life through faith in God. But they also recognized that they would not receive the fullness of everything that God had for them until the life after this life.
 2. We also learned from these passages that there is a connection between hope, faith, fear, and an eternal perspective. An eternal perspective gives you hope which helps you deal with fears that can undermine your faith in God and His help and provision in this life. We have more to say tonight.
- B. Regular Bible reading helps us see that this life, this world, is not as it should be, not as God intended it to be because of sin. We live in a fallen, sin damaged world and bad things happen to everyone.
1. Jesus said that in this world we will have tribulation, but we can be of good cheer because He has overcome the world. He has conquered death. John 16:33; Heb 2:14-15
 - a. Through His resurrection victory at the Cross, Jesus opened the way to life after this life for all who put faith in Him. And in the life ahead there is reunion, restoration, and resurrection. Knowing what is ahead mitigates the challenges of this life. Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:17-18
 - b. This does not mean there is no provision in this life. Some restoration does occur in this present life. But the ultimate reversal of life's tragedies and losses is ahead, in the life to come.
 - c. This knowledge doesn't take away the pain of hardship, loss, and missed opportunities in this life, but it gives us hope in the midst of it that will sustain us. It also takes away the fear that can keep us from operating in faith (confident assurance) in circumstances that can be changed.
 2. The Old Testament men and women referred to in Hebrews 11 overcame in this life by the power of God through their faith: By faith (these people) 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 11:33-35, NLT).
 - a. God works in our lives by His grace through our faith (many lessons for another day.) For now,

consider one point. Faith is the persuasion that God will do what He said He'd do. When we believe what God says about something, He brings His Word to pass in our lives by His power.

- b. For many of us, our faith or confidence that God will help us is undermined by fear. We're plagued with these thoughts: What if He doesn't come through for me? What if this circumstance doesn't turn out the way I want it to?
 1. We made the point last week that much of our faith is simply 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.
 2. This supposed faith doesn't come out of persuasion. It is a technique to try to get God to act on our behalf. How do you know if this true for you? Regular Bible reading will show you.
- c. Faith that brings results doesn't function properly until you deal with fear. I don't mean that you can stop the feeling of fear. Fear is a natural response when we are threatened by something destructive, hurtful or harmful. I mean that you reach the point where fear doesn't shape your view of reality or move you to act in a way that is contrary to God (many lessons for another day.)
3. Hebrews chapter 11 opens with a definition of faith. 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 (Heb 11:1, NLT).
 - a. Faith begins with hope or an expectation based on something that God has said. You can't have faith without hope, without the expectation that all will be made right.
 1. The Bible reveals that some things are made right in this life and some in the life to come. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are the most miserable of men. I Cor 15:19
 2. The Bible helps you see that there is more to life than just this life, and there is coming a day when all will be made right. In connection with the second coming of Jesus the earth will be renewed and restored. Life will finally be all that we want it to be. The ultimate stage for reunion, restoration, and recompense is in the life to come.
 - b. We get an important fact about the men and women who were commended for their faith in Heb 11.
 1. All of them recognized that there is life after this life, and although many did exploits in this life by God's power through faith, "others trusted God...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).
 2. Last week we talked about the three Hebrew men who refused deliverance from a fiery furnace because they would not worship an idol. Dan 3:16-18
 - A. Their perspective was that God will deliver us. But, even if He doesn't we won't bow down. Their priorities were based on an eternal perspective: There is a God in Heaven and the life to come is more important than this one.
 - B. The men knew from God's Word that they will one day be reunited with their bodies raised from the grave and live on earth again, once it is renewed and restored. Dan12:3; Isa 26:19
 - C. They knew that in connection with the second coming of Jesus, "the Lord Almighty will spread a wonderful feast for everyone around the world. It will be a delicious feast of good food, with clear, well-aged wine and choice beef. In that day he will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death than hangs over the earth. He will swallow up death forever" (Isa 25:6-8, NLT).
 3. When you realize that every hardship, loss, and pain is temporary and will be reversed either in this life or the life to come, it removes the nagging "what if" questions that undermines your faith and confidence in God's present help and provision.
 - c. The definition of faith in Heb 11:1 connects faith with hope. Hope is an expectation of coming good. Faith is a persuasion or certainty that what you expect (hope for) will come to pass.
 1. Hope and faith come from God's Word. You can't have real hope or genuine faith without the Word of God—another reason why regular Bible reading is so important. Rom 10:17; Heb 12:2

2. Through His Word, God tells us what He has done, is doing, and will do—none of which we see yet. But, because we know His power (He can do it), His willingness (He wants to do it), and His faithfulness (He keeps His promise) we have hope (an expectation of coming good).
- C. Most Bible scholars believe that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by Paul to Christians who, like himself, were born and raised as Jews. This means that they got their view of reality or their perspective from the Old Testament, the portion of the Bible that was completed when Jesus came to earth the first time.
1. A quick side note: I've encouraged you to get familiar with the New Testament before you tackle the Old Testament because the Old is easier to understand when you are familiar with the New. (We'll see an example of this a little later in the lesson.)
 - a. But this doesn't mean that the Old Testament is unimportant. All Scripture is God-breathed or given by inspiration of God and is profitable—or produces results in those who read it. II Tim 3:16
 - b. Notice what Paul wrote about the Old Testament in Rom 15:4—Whatever was written beforehand (the Old Testament) is meant to instruct us on how to live. The Scriptures impart to us encouragement and inspiration so that we can live in hope and endure all things (TPT).
 1. In other words, there is information in the Old Testament that will give us an expectation of coming good that will help us stay strong (or endure) in the hardships of life.
 2. Just a few lines down from that statement Paul wrote these words about hope: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith, that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you whole life and outlook may be radiant with hope (Rom 15:13, J. B. Phillips).
 - A. The Bible is 50% history. The Old Testament records accounts of real people who faced real problems but overcome by the power of God.
 - B. These accounts reveal that there is no such thing as a hopeless situation for those who serve the God of hope, the One for whom nothing is too big and nothing is impossible.
 - c. These Old Testament accounts are inspiring because they show us the entire story. We see the end result. We can see that even though certain situations looked hopeless, with no solutions, God came through for His people. These accounts give us hope. When we examine them we see that:
 1. God is able to use the hardships of life in a sin damaged world. He will get you through until He gets you out. The Lord is able to bring genuine good out of genuine bad.
 2. God can cause everything that happens to serve His purposes of maximum glory to Himself and maximum good to as many people as possible.
 3. Every circumstance is temporary and subject to change by the power of God. All loss is temporary. Missed opportunities are merely postponed opportunities.
 2. We could do an entire series on what the Old Testament record show us. But for now, consider one example of an account that gives hope for present help and future restoration—the story of Job.
 - a. People greatly misunderstand his story. Job was a man who experienced great calamity and loss. But, none of his suffering was from God. It was simply the result of living in a sin damaged world.
 1. He lost his wealth to thieves. In a sin cursed earth, wicked men earth make sinful choices that hurt people (Matt 6:19). Job lost his sons and daughters when a building collapsed due to wind storm. Destructive storms are the result of a curse of corruption in the earth due to Adam's sin (Rom 8:19-21). He lost his health because human bodies are mortal and subject to sickness—also the result of Adam's sinful choice (Gen 3:17-19). (For a full discussion of Job's story see Chapter 6 in my book *God Is Good and Good Means Good*.)
 2. Many wrongly conclude that Job's story was recorded to explain why there is evil and suffering in the world. Job's story was recorded to inspire hope in its first readers because it describes a man delivered by God from afflictive bondage. Then, all that he lost was restored to him.
 - A. The Book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible. Job lived in the land of Uz, located in

northwestern Saudi Arabia, next to the land of Midian, where Moses spent forty years.

B. Moses recorded Job's story to give hope to his own people who were trapped in Egyptian slavery with no seeming way out.

- b. Job's story is a good example of why we start our study of God's Word with the New Testament. The Bible is progressive revelation. God has gradually revealed Himself and His plan to have a family through Jesus in the pages of Scripture. The full light of God's character and plan is revealed in Jesus in the New Testament. The Old Testament contains light, but it is less light than the New Testament and must be filtered through the greater light of the New.
 - a. There is only one New Testament comment about Job. But it gives us great insight into what we are supposed to get out of reading the Book of Job. It has nothing to do with the idea that God afflicts His people (or allows the devil to do so) for reasons known only to him.
 - b. We are directed to look at Job's endurance, God's goodness, and the end result: You have heard of Job's patient endurance and how the Lord dealt with him in the end, and therefore you have seen that the Lord is merciful and full of understanding pity (James 5:11, J.B. Phillips).
- c. How did Job's story end? God delivered him from captivity to the calamitous effects of life in a sin cursed earth. God restored to him over and above what he lost. God gave Job double. Job 42:10-12; Job 1:2-3
 - 1. Job lost 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 teams of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, but they were doubled—14,000, 6,000, 1,000, and 1,000. Job lost seven sons and three daughters, but only had seven more sons and seven more daughters after he was delivered. How is that double?
 - A. Because some restoration came to him in this life and some in the life to come. Job had ten more children in addition to the ones in Heaven, temporarily gone from him but not lost to him forever.
 - B. Now, the entire family (Job and his twenty children) are all waiting to return to earth to be reunited with their physical bodies and live forever on this earth once it is made new.
 - 2. Job 19:25-26—Although God healed Job, he eventually grew old and died—as do we all. Job knew that his body would eventually die and disintegrate in the ground, but he knew he would one day again stand on this earth in his body with his Redeemer. That's our hope, too!

D. Conclusion: We have more to say next week. Consider one more thought. Because we know the end of the story we can be inspired by Old Testament accounts such as Job's. There is no such thing as a hopeless or irreversible circumstance for those who know the Lord. All loss is temporary and subject to change either in this life or the life to come—even loss due to death. Regular Bible reading will persuade you of this.

- 1. When you know that the worst thing that can happen in your circumstance isn't bigger than God, then you have hope. This perspective lightens the load of life by putting life's hardships in right relationship to forever (the life after this life).
 - a. It's okay to not like what you're facing: I wish it wasn't happening. It's so painful. But, but it's temporary. And God will get me through this until He restores to me what I have lost.
 - b. When you learn to view life with the realization that even the worst case scenario in your situation isn't bigger than God, it banishes the fear of: What if this situation doesn't go as I would like it to go. It gives you hope and peace of mind in the midst of your troubles.
- 2. The root of all fear is the fear of death because death is irreversible and so painful for those left behind. 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 forever—earth restored and life as it was always meant to be.
- 3. Regular Bible reading will give you hope, build your faith, and expose your fears. It's worth the effort.