

TRUE AND TRUTH

- A. Introduction: For a number of months we've been talking about the importance of becoming a regular Bible reader, especially the New Testament. We've covered a number of topics that address what regular reading does for us, as well as how to overcome some of the obstacles that keep people from reading.
1. For the last several weeks we've been dealing with the fact that the Bible changes your perspective which then changes how life's troubles affect you and how you deal with them. Perspective is the power to see or think of things in their true relationship to each other (*Webster's Dictionary*).
 - a. The Bible gives you an eternal perspective. It reveals that there is more to life than just this life and that the greater and better part of life is ahead, in the life to come—first in Heaven and then on this earth renewed and restored to pre-sin Eden like conditions. And, in comparison to what is ahead for those who belong to the Lord, even life's worst hardships pale in comparison. Rom 8:18
 1. God desires a family with whom He can live forever. He created the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. And even though the family and the family home have been damaged by sin, God will ultimately fulfill His plan through Jesus. Eph 1:4-5; Rev 21-22
 2. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin at the Cross so that all who put faith in Him can be transformed from sinners into sons and daughters of God. Jesus will come again to restore this earth to a fit forever home for God and His family. John 1:12-13; Acts 3:21; etc.
 - b. Life on this planet will finally be what God has always intended it to be. The Lord Himself will come to live on earth with His family, "and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever" (Rev 21:4, NLT).
 2. However, the fact that we have a bright future doesn't lessen the hardships of life in this fallen world. Recently, we've been talking about how the Bible helps us deal with the anguishing thoughts and painful emotions we all experience as we face life's hardships. We have more to say tonight.
- B. II Cor 4:17-18—Our key passage is a statement that the apostle Paul made as he was describing the many hardships he faced. He called his troubles momentary (in comparison to the life ahead) and light (because they didn't weigh him down). This perspective came from looking at what he could not see.
1. Looking at, in the original Greek language, has the idea of mentally considering things we cannot see. This of course includes thinking about those things that are future or still to come in the life after this life. But there is more to it.
 - a. The Bible reveals that there's more to reality than what we perceive with our physical senses. There is an unseen realm or dimension that can and does affect this physical world. II Kings 6:8-23
 - b. No matter how things look and feel in your circumstances, there is more to your situation than what you see—God with you and for you, a very present help in times of trouble. God with you is all you need to make it through whatever you are facing. His presence is salvation. Ps 46:1; Ps 42:5
 1. The problem is that when we encounter troubling circumstances, we're immediately hit with distressing emotions and thoughts: You're not going to make it. This is the worst thing that could happen. There is no hope. God doesn't love you. God is bad. You're bad.
 2. Not only are these emotions and thoughts tormenting, we end up letting what we see and feel determine what we believe and how we act in the situation—instead of letting what God says dominate our mind, emotions, and actions.
 2. Let's be clear about one thing. We aren't saying that what you see isn't real. We're saying that sight doesn't have all the facts in your situation. You don't deny what you see and feel. You recognize that there is more information available through the Word of God.
 - a. Mark 5:21-42—A man named Jairus approached Jesus and asked Him to come heal his daughter who was at the point of death. Jesus agreed to help. As they were on their way to the girl, Jesus

was interrupted by a woman with an issue of blood who needed healing. As Jesus dealt with the woman, someone from Jairus' house came with news that his daughter had died.

1. Note Jesus' response: Jesus ignored their comments and said to Jairus don't be afraid. Just trust me (Mark 5:36, NLT). To ignore means to refuse to take notice of. When you notice something you give attention to, heed, make mention of or remark on it (*Webster's Dictionary*).
2. Jesus didn't deny the physical reality that the girl was dead because it didn't change the unseen facts. He knew that His power, and His Word are greater. It wasn't too big for Him.
- b. What we see and feel is true—we really see and feel something. But true is temporary and subject to change. For example, it's true that there is light in this room right now. But with the flip of the light switch the room goes dark and true changes.
 1. God's Word is Truth (John 17:17). He releases His power through His Word and Truth changes true. Jesus took Jairus' daughter by the hand, told her to get up—and she did (Mark 5:41-42).
 2. You must understand that there is true (what you see) and there is truth (what God says). True can change, but Truth never changes. It may be true that you are in a bad situation. But the Truth (God through His Word) changes things when we believe what God says.
3. We struggle with trusting the Word because sight and emotions often contradict it. Then we feed those thoughts and emotions by talking about what we see and how we feel. Paul instructed believers that when we are anxious we should fix our attention on unseen realities. Phil 4:6-8
 - a. Paul wrote: Look to God and, with thanksgiving, make your requests for help to Him. Then put your attention on Him. Think on whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and worthy of praise. Then, you'll have peace of mind.
 1. Each of these characteristics is an attribute of God's Word. Assess your situation according to God's Word: He is with you and for you. He will get you through until He gets you out.
 2. Paul wasn't saying that what you see and feel isn't real. He's reminding us that there are more facts available to us about our situation (through the Word of God) than what we see and feel.
 - b. We made the point last week that the Greek word that is translated think on (fix our attention) means to take an inventory or make a list. You call to memory what God says and then draw conclusions about your situation based, not on what you see and feel, but on His Word.
 - c. Paul urged Christians to: Fasten your thoughts on every glorious work of God, praising him always (v8, TPT). Praise is acknowledging God by talking about who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do.
 1. In the moment, when you see trouble, emotions are stimulated, and thoughts begin to fly, you must be able to get hold of yourself. Praise helps you do this by helping you focus on the way things really are according to God.
 2. Praise is an expression of faith. Faith believes what God says without seeing, before it sees (II Cor 5:7). Faith is the assurance (of things) we do not see and the conviction of their reality—faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the sense (Heb 11:1, Amp).
 - d. Note Paul said we are to go to God with thanksgiving (v6). You thank someone when they help you. Paul admonishes us to thank God before we see His help. Ps 50:23—Whoso offers praise glorifies me (KJV) and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God (NIV).
4. To experience the peace that passes understanding you must reach the point where God's Word settles every issue for you—despite what you see and how you feel.
 - a. To reach that point there are three issues we must address. We must know what God says. We must be convinced that He will keep His Word to us. We must get control of our thoughts and emotions and not let them run wild.
 - b. Regular Bible reading will help you with all three. The Bible reveals what God says. It persuades

and convinces you that God will come through for you, and it helps you develop self control by showing you what in you needs to change and how to do it.

1. John 17:17—Word of God is Truth. The Greek word translated truth means the reality lying at the basis of an appearance (*Vine's Dictionary*). His Word shows us the way things really are.
2. Rom 10:17—The Greek word translated faith means a firm persuasion based on hearing. The Greek word translated hearing means teaching. (It's the same word used for instruction in II Tim 3:16). The Bible informs us and then persuades us of unseen realities.
3. Heb 4:12—For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are (NLT). The Bible brings to light issues in our soul that hinder us from trusting God.

C. We have trouble letting God's Word settle the issue when we what see and feel contradicts His Word because God's Word has been progressively devalued in our culture—even in Christian circles. And many of us have been affected by it, but may not realize it.

1. Phil 4:8—As we've already mentioned, when Paul urged Christians not to worry, he told us to fix our minds on whatever is true and honest. Understanding the original languages gives us insight into the value and reliability of the Word of God. God's Word never fails because He never fails.
 - a. The Greek word that is translated true means the reality at the base of appearance. It has the idea of what is genuine—Whatever things have the character of truth (Phil 4:8, Wuest).
 - b. Paul was a Pharisee thoroughly schooled in the Old Testament where the Word of God is referred to as true (Ps 19:9; Ps 119:160, etc.). The Hebrew word means stability. It comes from a word that means to build up or support. The primary meaning is that of providing stability and confidence, like a baby would in the arms of a parent. Used metaphorically it conveys the notion of faithfulness and trustworthiness, such that one can fully depend on. We can depend on the Word of God.
 1. Isa 55:11—So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth; it shall not return to Me void—without producing any effect, useless—but it shall accomplish that which I please and purpose, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it (Amp).
 2. Matt 24:35—Jesus Himself said that His Word will never change. The Greek word translated pass away never means cease to exist. It carries the idea of passing from one state or condition to another. (The same word is used in II Cor 5:17 and II Pet 3:10.)
2. The Greek word that is translated honest means honorable and reputable, something that inspires reverence and awe—worthy of reverence (Wuest). Sadly, we've lost a reverence for the Word of God.
 - a. For many centuries the Scriptures have been referred to as the Bible. That's what it's called—not what it actually is. The word Bible comes from the Latin word *biblia* which means books. The Latin word comes from a Greek word, *byblos*.
 1. The Bible is actually a collection of sixty-six books and letters, written and kept together, first by prophets in Israel, and then by the first Christians as the apostles wrote their documents.
 2. The term *biblia* eventually came to be used for these writings (lessons for another time).
 - b. Bible is the name for these writings. But what are they? These writings are the Word of Almighty God who cannot lie, never fails, and does not change, the One who always keeps His Word.
 1. II Tim 3:16—The Lord inspired the words of Scripture. Inspired means God-breathed. The written Word of God is a supernatural because it comes to us from Almighty God.
 2. Through these writings, God has revealed Himself to us. The Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed through the written Word of God. John 5:39; John 14:21
 - A. Because we don't recognize the Bible for what it is (the Word of God) we don't have a proper respect and reverence for it. It's not unusual to hear sincere Christians say: I know what the Bible says, but...! Would they respond that way if Jesus appeared to them

in person and spoke to them?

B. (The written Word of God is more reliable than a supernatural manifestation, and supernatural appearances must be judged in the light of the written Word. Lessons for another day).

3. We're also living in a time when many sincere Christians are looking to prophets to give them direction. I've heard more than one person say that in these times of increasing chaos in the world, they're following the prophets to get their information. That is potentially very unwise.
 - a. Because of the availability of technology practically, anyone can get on the internet and tell the world what they believe God is telling them. There are several problems with this.
 1. One, God's written Word is supposed to be the lamp for our feet and the light for on our path. God speaks to us primarily through His written Word. Ps 119:105; Prov 6:20-23
 2. Two, their words must be in line with the written Word of God. Sadly, far too many Christians are not familiar enough with the Bible to rightly judge the words of so called prophets.
 3. Three, Jesus said that one of the hallmarks of the years leading up to His second coming will be false prophets and false christs. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 24
 - b. Eph 2:20—People sometimes argue that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, and that we need to have prophets and apostles regularly speaking into our lives now to give us direction and guidance.
 1. But that's not what Paul meant when he wrote these words to the Ephesian church. Remember that everything in the Bible was written by someone to someone about something. Those three factors set the context. Verses cannot mean something to us that they would not have meant to the first readers.
 2. The foundation of the apostles and the prophets is the written Word of God. The Old Testament was written under the inspiration of God by the prophets and the New Testament was written under the inspiration of God by apostles who were eyewitnesses of Jesus. Luke 24:27; 44; Acts 3:21; II Pet 3:1-2
 - c. You may recall that we spent a lot of time earlier in the year talking about what the Bible is and how we got it. If you find that you can relate to the statement: I know what the Bible says, but...you might want to review those lessons until you are persuaded that you can trust the Bible to be what it is—the Word of Almighty God.

D. Conclusion: We have much more to say next week. Consider these thoughts as we close.

1. It may be true that you are facing something impossible. But God's Word is Truth. No matter what you are facing God, Who is Truth and speaks only Truth, will not fail you. He will keep you. He will deliver you. He will fulfill His Word.
2. Regular reading of the New Testament will build a trust and confidence in God into you. It will help you get control of your thoughts and emotions in the hard times. It will help you know what to do in the increasingly troubling times that are coming to this world. It will give you peace of mind. John 16:33