

CONFIDENCE IN A PERSON

- A. Introduction: For several weeks we've been focusing on the fact that God promises His people peace of mind. Peace of mind means freedom from troubling and agitating thoughts. However, Jesus' promise does not automatically come to pass without our cooperation. We must learn to let not our hearts be troubled.
1. In the context of giving peace to His followers Jesus said: Do not let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid—stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed (John 14:27, Amp).
 - a. In other words, to experience peace of mind, we must do something with our heart (mind and emotions). Jesus' words were originally written in Greek. When the Greek word that is translated heart is used figuratively (as it is here) it refers to the seat of desires, feelings, thoughts—namely your mind and emotions (heart).
 1. Peace of mind doesn't mean that you never have another troubling thought or emotion. It means you know how to answer such thoughts and the subsequent emotions with God's Word.
 2. Peace of mind comes through God's Word (the Bible) because it gives us information that calms our mind and emotions.
 - b. The Bible shows us the way things really are according to God who knows everything. If you don't know for yourself what the Bible says then you won't have peace of mind. That's why we've placed such emphasis this year on the importance of becoming a regular Bible reader.
 2. In the last two lessons we've been talking about the importance of learning to focus on Jesus. Focusing on Jesus is another way of saying: Focus on the Word of God. Jesus, the Living Word of God (John 1:1; John 1:14) is revealed in the written Word, the Bible (John 5:39).
 - a. Life is filled with all kinds of distractions that pull our attention away from our only source of help and hope—Almighty God, and His promises of provision and protection.
 1. Matt 13:3-23—In His parable about the sower who sows seed (or proclaims God's Word), Jesus said that the distractions of life can choke the Word of God and keep it from producing results in our life: (In thorny ground), all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life and the lures of wealth (v22, NLT).
 2. To experience peace of mind in the midst of life's many troubles you must learn to recognize distractions and turn away from them.
 - b. Last week we looked at two examples from the Bible of people allowed life events (distractions) to take their focus off of Jesus—Martha and Peter. We have more to say tonight.
- B. Matt 14:22-33—We begin with Peter, one of Jesus' original twelve disciples. Peter was distracted from Jesus (took his focus off of Jesus) in a life threatening situation. Remember what happened.
1. Peter and the others were caught in a serious windstorm while crossing the Sea of Galilee. Dangerous waves stirred up by the wind threatened to overwhelm the boat. About three o'clock in the morning, the men saw Jesus walking on the water toward them.
 - a. Peter cried out, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you by walking on the water" (v28, NLT). Jesus answered: Come (v29). Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus.
 - b. When Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and looked around, distracted by the waves, he began to sink. Peter cried out to Jesus who reached out His hand and saved Peter. Matt 14:30-32
 1. But note, that as Jesus grabbed Peter, He rebuked him. "You don't have much faith" Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?" (v31, NLT).
 2. Jesus wasn't being mean with His words. He was making a critical point about the relationship between faith and doubt and keeping our focus on Him.
 2. There are two key words in Jesus' statement to Peter—faith and doubt. To benefit from the point that Jesus made, we must first clearly define faith and doubt.

- a. Faith is confidence in a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ. Note that when Jesus said to Peter “you have little faith” He defined little faith as doubting **ME**.
 1. The New Testament was originally written in Greek. The Greek word that is translated faith means persuasion. It comes from a word than means to win over, persuade. It has the idea of trust or firm persuasion, confident belief in the truth or truthfulness of any person or thing.
 2. Jesus told Peter he could walk on water, but at some point Peter lost confidence in what Jesus said and began to sink.
 - b. Note the definition of doubt—to be uncertain about, lack of confidence in (*Webster’s Dictionary*). Faith is trust in a person. Doubt is lack of trust in a person.
3. The Greek word translated doubt in the account of Peter walking on water has the idea of waver in opinion. There’s a second Greek word used for doubt in another place where Jesus contrasted faith and doubt (Matt 21:21). This word has the same idea—to contend or be in strife with one’s self; to doubt, hesitate, or waver.
 - a. We get insight into what it means to waver from something that James wrote. James was not an original disciple. He was one of Jesus’ half brothers (Matt 13:55-56). James became a believer following Jesus’ resurrection (I Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19).
 - b. James 1:5-8—James wrote that if anyone lacks wisdom, they should ask God for it. Our purpose right now is not to learn how to get wisdom from God, but to get insight into the relationship between faith and doubt and the importance of learning to keep our focus.
 - c. James writes that one who asks God for wisdom must not waver if he wants an answer. Waver is the same Greek word translated doubt in Matt 21:21. It means to be in strife with oneself.
 1. James 1:8—James calls the one who wavers a double minded man. Double minded is made up of two words—two (*di*) and spirited (*psuchos*). The word refers to the immaterial part of man—soul, heart (mind and emotions).
 2. James 1:8—[For being as he is] a man of two minds—hesitating, dubious, irresolute—[he is] unstable and unreliable and uncertain about everything (he thinks, feels, decides) (Amp).
 4. We’ve made the point recently that to walk in peace of mind we must win the battle in our mind. When hardships come our way, we all experience troubling emotions and anxious thoughts.
 - a. The problem is that not only do we have an enemy who attempts to influence us through thoughts, we also all have a tendency to let our mind run wild—which makes things worse.
 1. What kind of thoughts fly through the mind of someone who desperately needs wisdom from God? Let’s be honest, even though we’ve asked God for wisdom, many of us continue to go over and over in our mind (or obsess over) the fact that we don’t know what to do. (Side note: What should we do? If you truly trust God, you’ll fill your mind and mouth with thoughts of thanksgiving and praise for His faithfulness.)
 2. When Peter took his focus off of Jesus and looked at the huge, dangerous waves all around him, it stimulated fear, which would have been immediately followed by thoughts.
 - A. Imagine what would have gone through your mind in that situation. I’m going to die! What was I thinking! Men can’t walk on water! I shouldn’t have gotten out of the boat!
 - B. Those feelings and thoughts caused him to waver and doubt (lose his confidence in) Jesus’ word which stopped the power that enabled him to walk on water.
 - b. Note what James said about the man who wavers or doubts and loses confidence in God.
 1. James 1:6—Only it must be in faith that he asks, with no wavering—no hesitating, no doubting. For the one who wavers (hesitates, doubts) is like the billowing surge out at sea, that is blown hither and thither and tossed by the wind (Amp).
 2. I’m not trying to teach a lesson on faith and how to get your prayers answered. I’m trying to help you see the importance of recognizing mental distractions and learning to focus (keep)

your attention on the source of faith—Jesus, through His Word.

5. Christianity is more than a set of doctrines and corresponding behaviors. It is devotion to a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ, God manifested in human flesh. Jesus authenticated everything He said and did by rising from the dead. John 1:1; John 1:14; Rom 1:4; etc.
 - a. Faith is not based on principles and techniques which, if properly worked, will bring results. Faith is confidence in a Person who cannot lie and cannot fail. This Person (Jesus) loved us so much that when we were lost in sin He humbled Himself, took on flesh and was born into this world. Jesus, in His humanity, voluntarily laid down His life at the Cross as a sacrifice for our sin—all so that we could have relationship with Him. And He is with us and for us now. (Lessons for another day).
 - b. Faith is trust or confidence in Jesus. You may ask how do I come to trust Him? How do you come to trust anyone? You spend time with them and get to know them. You check their track record (past actions and fulfilled promises).
 1. Jesus reveals Himself to us through the Scriptures (John 5:39)—Who He is, what He is like, what He has done, is doing, and will do. We get to know Him through the Bible. That’s why it is written that faith (trust, persuasion in the reliability of) comes to us through the Word of God (Rom10:17).
 2. When you are a regular reader of the Bible, not only does it build your trust in Jesus, it gives you something to answer the challenges that come to our mind when we face troubles and helps us calm our mind.
 - A. Ps 94:19—In the multitude of my (anxious) thoughts within me, Your comforts cheer and delight my soul (Amp).
 - B. Ps 94:19—When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer (NLT).
 - c. James 1:2—James’ epistle gives us insight into how to handle the mental attacks and distractions that try to pull our attention away from the source of our faith.
 1. He wrote that Christians should count it all joy when we encounter life’s trials (life’s troubles). Count means to deem regard or consider. When used figuratively it means to lead before the mind. It has to do with mental activity—you bring something to your mind.
 2. You put your focus back on Jesus. You consider this trial as an occasion to cheer or encourage yourself (count it all joy) by bringing to your mind the reasons you have hope and help in your circumstance—Jesus is with you and for you. He will get you through until He gets you out.
 6. Faith comes to us by looking at the source of faith—Jesus. But not only do too few of us actually read the Bible, we rely on others to tell us about Jesus. Let me add important side note before we move on.
 - a. When I stress the importance of reading the Bible, I am not diminishing the importance of getting good teaching. We need both. Reading the Bible and then getting good Bible teaching is critical to spiritual growth and stability.
 1. The Lord Jesus intended that ministers of the gospel (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers), using the Word of God, would build up believers into a place of maturity (many lessons for another day). Eph 4:11-13
 2. The goal of this is that: We will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth (Eph 4:14, NLT).
 - b. The problem is that just because a preacher can speak and quote a few verses, it doesn’t mean that he knows what he is talking about or that what he is proclaiming is consistent with the Bible. And, if you don’t read the Bible for yourself, then you can’t tell of what is being taught is accurate.
- C. Paul the apostle understood the importance of dealing with distractions and keeping our focus on Jesus. He

is the one who wrote Heb 12:1-2—Let us run with patient endurance and steady and active persistence the appointed course of the race that is set before us. Looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith (Amp).

1. In a previous lesson we pointed out that Paul was concerned for a group of Christians living in the Greek city of Corinth. Among other things, false apostles were challenging Paul's authority and the genuineness of his apostleship. They were making false claims about him and undermining his work with another (false) gospel message. II Cor 11:4
 - a. Paul identified these false apostles as ministers of the devil who used the same tactics that the devil does—mental strategies. II Cor 11:13-15; Eph 6:11
 - b. II Cor 11:3—But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your pure and sincere devotion to Christ (NIV).
 1. Paul makes a number of points that we've already covered—the devil's strategies are mental; he presents us with lies through thoughts; he wants to influence our beliefs and behavior. But notice that Paul also feared that these people would lose their focus on Jesus.
 2. The Greek word that is translated pure and sincere devotion (simplicity in the KJV) comes from a word that means single. The word has the idea of single focus, pure and sound.
2. II Cor 10:4-5—Although Paul was addressing a specific situation in that church, we get insight into how to deal with false ideas and distractions in our minds that come from the devil. Let's get the context.
 - a. These false apostles claimed that Paul was bold when he wrote letters to people, but weak in person (II Cor 10:1-2). Paul assured the Corinthians that when he next came to visit them, he would be bold with those who challenged his authority and apostleship. In that context Paul made this statement about using spiritual weapons to pull down strongholds (II Cor 10:3).
 1. Stronghold literally means a fortress. When used figuratively it means an argument. Casting down means to lower or demolish with violence (literal or figurative). Imagination means a reasoning or a thought.
 2. II Cor 10:5—I destroy every claim and every reason that keeps people from knowing God. I keep every thought under control to make it obey Christ (NIV); We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God (v3, ESV).
 - b. When we encounter threatening circumstances and feel all the corresponding emotions, the mind is the area where the battle takes place. Not only do we face the tendency to focus on what we see and feel, we get bombarded with thoughts (fiery darts) from the wicked one.
 1. And, we all have mental arguments (strongholds) built up in our mind over our lifetime that are often contrary to God's Word. That's one reason why we must renew our minds or get a new perspective and learn to see things as they really are according to God. Rom 12:2
 2. The point for our present discussion is this. We must do whatever we have to do to look away from distractions and keep our attention focused on Jesus. You can't do this effectively without the Bible because our spiritual weapons are the Word of God and the Spirit of God. II Cor 10:4; Eph 6:10-17

D. Conclusion: We have more to say next week, but consider these thoughts as we close.

1. Do you know the Lord Jesus well enough that your confidence in Him and His help won't be shaken by life's trials and distractions? Are you able to recognize fiery darts from the devil and strongholds in your mind that oppose accurate knowledge of Jesus? Are you determined to do whatever it takes to keep your focus on Jesus?
2. Faith is confidence or trust in a person. You can only trust someone to the degree that you know them. The antidote for doubt and wavering is faith in Jesus. The relief for anxiety and fear is Jesus. Spend time with Him through His Word. Let Jesus build trust into you through His Word, the Bible.