

EXPERIENCING PEACE OF MIND

- A. Introduction: For a number of weeks we've been talking about how God gives His people peace of mind through His Word. Our topic is part of a larger discussion we've been having about the importance of becoming regular Bible readers. John 16:33
1. Peace of mind is freedom from anxious thoughts and emotions. Peace of mind doesn't mean that we never have any more troubling thoughts or emotions. It means that we know how to deal with them according to the Word of God.
 - a. Peace comes to us through the Word of God (the Bible) because it gives us additional information about our circumstances. God's Word changes our perspective, or the way we see things, which changes the way we deal with the situation.
 - b. The Lord Jesus God gives us hope and help through His Word and brings peace to our mind as we learn to keep our attention on Him through His Word and as we learn to see our situation in terms of God with us and for us.
 - c. Isa 26:3—You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you (NLT); Ps 119:92—Because your words are my deepest delight, I didn't give up when all else was lost (TPT).
 2. John 14:27—To experience peace of mind we must learn how to keep our hearts (mind and emotions) from being troubled (agitated and disturbed). We do this by keeping our focus on Jesus the Living Word who is revealed in the written Word, the Bible. We have more to say in tonight's lesson.
- B. To experience peace of mind we must first know that there's more to reality than what we perceive with our senses. This information is found in the Bible, God's Word.
1. Col 1:16—The Bible informs us that God created both seen and unseen things, a physical material world and an unseen dimension that is beyond the perceptive abilities of our five physical senses. This unseen dimension can and does affect the seen world. Not seen doesn't mean not real.
 - a. II Cor 4:17-18—Earlier this year we talked about Paul the apostle. He had a perspective or view of reality that gave him peace of mind in the midst of life's troubles. Paul learned to look at (or mentally consider) unseen things or things he could not see. There are two kinds of unseen things.
 1. Things we cannot see because they are invisible or imperceptible to our senses. These include Almighty God and His kingdom of full power and provision.
 2. Things that are future. These include answers to prayers that aren't visible yet, and the restoration and reunion that awaits us in the life after this life, first in the invisible Heaven and then on this earth renewed and restored to a fit forever home for God and His family.
 - b. When we learn to live with the awareness of unseen realities, it brings peace of mind. Consider an example. The great Hebrew prophet Elisha and his servant found themselves surrounded by an enemy army. II Kings 6:13-18
 1. The servant was terrified, but Elisha was not. Elisha had peace of mind because he knew that they had unseen help—the angels of God who were present to protect him and his servant (v16).
 2. Elisha had a view of reality based on information from God. His view affected how he felt about his situation and how he dealt with it. (Elisha saw the angelic beings and chariots when the prophet Elijah left this material world and entered the unseen dimension, II Kings 2:11-12).
 2. To experience peace of mind we must learn to live our lives in terms of these unseen realities that are revealed in the Bible, God's Word. That's what living by faith is—For through faith we are ordering our manner of life, not by something seen (II Cor 5:7, Wuest).
 - a. Heb 11:1—Faith perceives as real fact what is not revealed to the senses (Amp); (Faith) is confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen (NLT).

- b. 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.
 - 1. Faith is based on confidence or trust in a Person we can't see, Almighty God. I Pet 1:8—You love (God) even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him, you trust him, and even now (in the midst of troubles) are happy with a glorious, inexpressible joy (NLT).
 - 2. How can you have confidence in and trust someone you've never seen? God reveals Himself to us through His written Word—His character, power, and faithfulness. God, through His Word, persuades us of the reality of things we cannot see to the point where they affect the way we live. That's why we need to be Bible readers. Rom 10:17
- c. We become persuaded through repeated expose to the Word of God, the information about unseen realities. Our faith grows and develops as we look at Jesus through His Word. Heb 12:2
 - 1. This is one reason why I spent time earlier in the year explaining to you who wrote the New Testament and why we can trust it.
 - 2. Each document was written by an eyewitness of Jesus or a close associate of an eyewitness—men who walked and talked with God Incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ. I John 1:1-3; II Pet 1:16
- 3. To experience peace of mind we must recognize that there are many things that can distract us from the Lord and take our focus off of Him and His Word. We need to recognize and deal with distractions.
 - a. Last week we talked about Peter, one of Jesus' first followers, who was distracted by what he could see and feel when Jesus told him that he could walk on water. Matt 14:21-33
 - 1. Peter experienced a visible demonstration of God's unseen power that produced a physical result. Peter was able to walk on water at the word of Jesus.
 - 2. Looking at (focusing his attention on) Jesus gave Peter faith or confident trust that he could do what Jesus said. When Peter took his attention off of Jesus he became afraid and began to sink.
 - b. Jesus rebuked Peter: Why did you doubt me? Doubt is lack of confidence or trust in a person. The Greek word that is translated doubt means to waver in opinion.
 - 1. James 1:8 calls the one who wavers a double minded man, a man of two minds, a man who hesitates or vacillates.
 - 2. Peter vacillated between what he could see (the waves) and feel (the wind) and what Jesus said (you can walk on water). In other words, Peter allowed himself to be distracted.
 - c. Notice, the pivotal detail in what happened to Peter. His success and failure in a scary situation was directly connected to what he did with his mind and where he focused his attention. Jesus saved him anyway. But this incident is recorded in part to teach the rest of us.
- C. Let's consider some more events in Peter's life that give us additional insight into our topic. To experience peace of mind you must learn to control your mind, recognize distractions, and keep your focus.
 - 1. Matt 26:31-35—The night before Jesus was crucified, He told His apostles that that very night they would all desert him. Peter responded that even if all the rest deserted Jesus, he would not. Jesus told Peter that before the rooster crowed in the morning, he would deny three times that he even knew Jesus.
 - a. Luke 22:31-32—Luke's account of the incident gives an additional detail about this exchange. Jesus warned them that Satan desired to sift all of them as wheat. (The Greek language indicates that Jesus meant all the apostles.)
 - 1. Sift like wheat is an agricultural reference that was familiar to them. It meant to separate that which is unwanted, like the wheat from the chaff. When used figuratively, it has the idea of to test. Satan was going to test them with the goal of getting rid of them. The devil already got Judas. Luke 22:3
 - 2. Jesus' focus was on Peter because he would become the leader of the group after Jesus returned

to Heaven. Jesus had a message for Him: But, I have prayed for you “Simon that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen and build up your brothers” (NLT).

- b. Remember that earlier in His ministry, Jesus explained to his apostles (the original twelve) that His kingdom would advance in the hearts of men through the preaching of His Word. Jesus also warned them that there would be obstacles to the spread of His Word, including the devil who would attempt to steal the Word from men in an attempt to make them ineffective. Matt 13:18-23
2. Back to Matt 26. After His warning to the men, Jesus then to the Garden of Gethsemane and went off to pray (v36-46). After a time of prayer, an armed mob arrived in the garden to arrest Jesus. At that point, all the disciples fled just as Jesus predicted. Jesus was taken to the high priest’s house, and Peter followed from a distance (v47-58).
 - a. Inside the house, the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council) called witnesses to give some testimony about Jesus that they could use to put Him to death. Peter sat outside in the courtyard (v59-68).
 - b. Three different people separately approached Peter to say that he was one of the men who followed Jesus. In front of everyone, he denied knowing Jesus, swore that he didn’t know him, and then swore by God that he didn’t know him (v69-74).
 - c. Immediately after Peter’s third denial, a rooster crowed. At that moment, Jesus looked at Peter and he remembered what the Lord said. Peter left that place, sobbing bitterly. Luke 22:61-62.
3. Let’s analyze what happened here in terms of our topic. When the armed mob showed up Peter found himself in a dangerous position. What emotions would he have experienced and what thoughts would have begun to fly through his head? No doubt he felt fear over what was happening, what might happen, and what they should do—along with tormenting thoughts about the danger they were facing.
 - a. We know that Peter pulled out a sword and cut a man’s ear off (John 18:10). When Jesus made it clear that He wasn’t going to stop what was happening (Matt 26:52-56), the disciples fled.
 1. Remember what we said previously. When people are in situations like this our minds begin to race because of what we see and feel. The devil takes advantage of our vulnerability and goes to work on our minds with thoughts that further agitate us emotionally (and we often help him).
 2. Peter was probably torn (vacillating, hesitating). He was committed to Jesus, but afraid of the danger. He may have asked himself: What should I do? Maybe I can help. But I need to stay safe. (He decided to follow from a distance).
 - b. While Peter was waiting outside, three different people asked him if he was with Jesus. The first time, he denied knowing Jesus. What were his thoughts? Possibly something like this: I know I’m lying, but if I tell the truth, I might get arrested myself and then I won’t be able to help Jesus. (We are complicated creatures and the devil is a master at subtlety and helping us justify behaviors.)
 1. Two more people approach Peter and, motivated by fear, he dug in his heels and lied two more times, each time more strongly denying that he knew the Lord—in front of everyone.
 2. Peter took an oath (Matt 26:72) and then he swore by God or used the name of the Lord to affirm a lie (Matt 26:74). The Pharisees (Jewish religious leaders) taught that there were two kinds of oaths—one was a slight offense if broken. The other was binding and resulted in perjury if you broke it. Jesus specifically taught against both (Matt 5:33-37).
 - c. How did Peter, in just a few hours, go from proclaiming that he was willing to die for Jesus if necessary to denying Him in a profane way? (Invoking the name of the Lord for a lie was profane or blasphemous.) Peter did not control his mind (thoughts) or keep his focus on the Lord’s words.
 1. Matt 26:31-35—Jesus gave the disciples words that could have helped them. He told them that He would meet them in Galilee after He rose from the dead (they were in Jerusalem). (In other words, Jesus told them whatever is about to happen tonight will end well.) Jesus tried to help Peter specifically by warning Peter that he was going to deny Him that night.

2. Peter could have recalled Jesus words. He could have remembered times in the past few years where Jesus outwitted the religious leadership or delivered people through supernatural power.
3. But Peter was distracted from Jesus' words by circumstances, emotions, and thoughts to the point where he forgot Jesus' words completely.
- d. How could the devil use all of this to destroy (sift) Peter? He could have used Peter's weakened emotional and mental state to crush his faith and hope in Jesus through fiery darts (thoughts).
 1. Can you image the guilt that Peter experienced once Jesus was crucified? I should have stayed with Jesus. Maybe I could have stopped His death. Why didn't I listen to Him? He might be alive right now. I failed Him. I don't deserve to live. I'm a horrible person.
 2. Let me make this point. We aren't criticizing Peter. He had to learn and grow in his ability to keep his focus on Jesus, control his thoughts, and deal with the enemy's mental strategies.

As we said earlier, many of these events are recorded, in part, to teach subsequent generations.

4. Not only did Jesus pray for Peter to survive Satan's attack, Peter was the first apostle Jesus appeared to on resurrection day (Luke 24:34; I Cor 15:5). Jesus visited Peter and restored him. There's no account of what was said. We do have one touching detail from another post resurrection appearance of Jesus.
 - a. John 21:1-14—Jesus appeared to the apostles while they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee. (Remember, He had told them that He would meet them in Galilee.)
 - b. Peter had denied Jesus three times in front of everyone. At this meeting Jesus gave Peter an opportunity to affirm His commitment to his Lord three times publicly. And Jesus made it clear that Peter still had a purpose and a place with Him—feed my sheep. John 21:14-17
 - c. Peter had to believe Jesus' words over and above his emotions and thoughts every time a memory of what he did that night when he denied Jesus rippled through his head, every time he walked by the high priest's house, the Garden of Gethsemane, or the place where Jesus was crucified.

D. Conclusion: We have more to say next week. But consider these thoughts as we close. When we read the two New Testament epistles Peter later wrote, we see that he did indeed grow in all of these areas.

1. Peter wrote his letters to Christians who were experiencing challenges that would soon become full blown persecution. His purpose was to encourage them to stay faithful no matter what.
 - a. I Pet 1:5—Peter opened his letter by reminding his readers that we are kept (guarded) by God's power through faith. Faith is confidence in a Person. Doubt is taking your focus off of Him and His Word. Peter learned those lessons the hard way—but he learned them.
 - b. I Pet 1:13—Peter exhorted his readers to gird up or prepare their minds. In that day long garments (tunics and robes) were the common clothing style. When it was time for action of some sort, they tucked their robe or tunic into their girdles (a leather band worn between the hips and lower ribs). Peter had learned the importance of dealing with the mind and changing our view of reality. He learned to recognize ungodly and destructive thoughts, and keep his focus on God's Word.
 - c. I Pet 5:8—Peter further learned that the devil seeks men he can devour, those who don't control their mind or keep their focus (lose the mental battle). Peter urged his readers to resist the devil (stand against his lies) steadfast in the faith—faith in Jesus who is revealed in the written Word.
2. Peter prefaced his words with this statement: Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares what happens to you (I Pet 5:7, NLT). Peter connects worries and cares (distractions, in the Greek) with resisting the devil because he tempts you to look away from Jesus to all the distractions around you.
 - a. To experience peace of mind we must learn to control our mind, look away from distractions, and focus on God's Word. We must learn to assess (or see) our circumstances in the light of unseen realities revealed to us in the Bible.
 - d. We don't deny what we see and feel. We recognize that there is more to our situation than what we see and feel. God is with us and for us and He will get us through until He gets us out.