

IT IS WELL

- A. Introduction: We have been talking about the importance of learning to thank and praise God continually—in good times and bad, when you feel like it and when you don't. We aren't talking about music or singing. This is praise in its most basic form—acknowledging God by declaring who He is and what He does.
1. We do this because it's always appropriate to praise the Lord for who He is and for what He has done, is doing, and will do. Ps 107:8; 15; 21; 31
 - a. Thanksgiving and praise glorifies God and opens the door to His help in your circumstances (Ps 50:23). When you acknowledge someone you can't see for help that you do not yet see, you are expressing faith or trust in Him. God works in our lives by His grace through our trust in Him.
 - b. Praise and thanksgiving help you get control of your mind and your emotions when they are stirred up because of adverse circumstances. Praise and thanksgiving help you calm down. James 3:2
 1. In the previous two lessons we've focused on recognizing and dealing with complaining. To complain means to express discontent or dissatisfaction with something or someone.
 2. Phil 2:14—Christians are admonished to do all things without complaining. The Greek word that is translated complaining means to grumble or mutter in discontent.
 2. Does this mean that it is wrong to say: I don't like this or I'm not happy with my circumstance? Is that complaining? Does this mean that we must be happy or at least pretend to be happy about everything?
 - a. No. This world has been damaged by sin. It's not the way it's supposed to be, not as God created or intended it to be. There is a curse of corruption and death in the world that affects everything. Life is hard and filled with toil and trouble. Rom 5:12; John 16:33; Matt 6:19; etc.
 - b. In this fallen world we face many circumstances that are stressful, painful, and harmful. Many things in life are not as we want them to be. It's normal (and even appropriate) to be unhappy with many aspects of life in a fallen world. We must learn to have a dissatisfied satisfaction.
 1. Phil 4:11-13—While in jail Paul wrote that he learned to be content or satisfied. Contentment didn't come from his circumstances. It came from knowing that Jesus was his sufficiency.
 2. Paul knew that because Jesus was with Him and for him he had what he needed to face his circumstances. He knew that nothing could come against him that is bigger than God, and that Jesus (God Incarnate) would get him through until He got him out.
 - c. This doesn't mean that Paul never had a negative emotion or liked everything he faced. Rather, he learned how to acknowledge God (praise and thank Him) in every circumstance. And he learned to cheer or encourage himself in the hard times. I Thess 5:18; Eph 5:20; II Cor 6:10
 3. Contentment comes from knowing that life's disappointments, trials, hardships, and pain) are temporary and all things will ultimately be made right—some in this life and some in the life to come—and that God will get us through until He gets us out. We have more to say tonight.
- B. It is normal, and sometimes necessary, to express dissatisfaction with our circumstances—state problems, concerns, dislikes, etc. But we must learn to talk about them in terms of what God says.
1. We get insight into what that means from a teaching Jesus gave to His followers where He exhorted them not to worry about how they will get life's necessities. Matt 6:25-34
 - a. Note how Jesus presented the teaching. In the KJV translation Jesus begins with: Take no thought for your life, what you will eat or drink (Matt 6:25). More modern translations render the original Greek word as: Don't worry, don't be anxious.
 - b. In a fallen, sin damaged world, lack is very real. Because of the effects of sin (going back to Adam) we must toil for life's necessities (Gen 3:17-19), and all kinds of circumstances can and do come against us that threaten our provision and stimulate worry.
 1. *Webster's Dictionary* defines worry as an uneasy feeling. It defines to worry as suffering with

or tormenting oneself with disturbing thoughts.

2. When we encounter lack it is normal to feel uneasy as anxious and disturbing thoughts begin to fly and we talk to ourselves: What am I going to do, how will I meet the need? Matt 6:31

A. If you can't answer these questions accurately (according to what God says), you can slip over into obsessing or tormenting yourself by going over and over your situation.

B. Jesus gave the correct answer to these questions. The birds eat and the flowers are dressed because Almighty God provides for His creatures. God is your Father and you matter to Him more than a bird or a flower. Therefore, He will take care of you. Notice, Jesus credits an unseen source for the provision. Matt 6:26-32

3. Jesus understood our tendency to obsess. When thoughts based begin to fly through our mind and our emotions are stirred up by what we encounter in our circumstances, we all start talking to ourselves: What am I going to do? How will I get food and clothing? Jesus said: Answer them with the truth: Your Heavenly Father will take care of you.

2. Discontent is part of life in a fallen world. Expressing discontent is normal and natural. However, you must learn how to deal with it in a godly way—without obsessing (focusing only on the source of the discontent) and without letting your emotions drive you to ungodly behavior.

a. The Greek word that is translated take no thought or don't worry in Jesus' teaching comes from a root word that means to divide, to draw in different directions, to distract.

1. Life's hardships and challenges draw our attention away from the way things really are—God with us and for us, ready and willing to help because He is our Father.

2. When you learn to acknowledge or praise and thank God, in everything and for everything, it brings your focus back to Him, the source of peace and hope (Isa 26:3). You get control of your mind and your emotions with your mouth (James 3:2).

b. What does this look like in a circumstance of lack such as Jesus addressed in His teaching about worry, when you don't have enough supply to meet the need?

1. You don't deny the problem. You recognize that there is more to the situation than what you see and feel at the moment—God with me and for me. The birds eat and the flowers are dress because God cares for them—and I matter to Him more than a bird or a flower.

2. Because of the Cross and the new birth, God is now my Father. And He's better than the best earthly father. Therefore, I'm going to praise and thank the Lord, my Father, for provision.

c. We must counteract this tendency to obsess over sources of discontent with praise and thanksgiving. There is always something to thank and praise God for and in every circumstance—the good that God has done, is doing, and will do. Praise keeps you focused on the goodness of God which strengthens your trust or faith in Him.

3. John 6:1-13—When Jesus was on earth, He thanked God for lack. Remember, Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. While on earth, He did not live as God. He lived as a man in dependence on God as His Father. He is our example of how sons and daughters relate to their Father.

a. A crowd of 5,000 men plus women and children followed Jesus into the hills one day. It got late, and the people had nothing to eat. The only food available was five barley loaves and two fish.

1. John 6:11—Jesus then took the barley loaves and the fish and gave thanks to God (NLT).

Jesus thanked His Father for the lack, not for the lack in and of itself, but for what lack can become in the hands of Almighty God—more than enough (v12-13).

2. John 6:23—This miracle was later referred to as the time and place where the Lord gave thanks

b. Before this all unfolded, Jesus made it clear that this was a teaching moment for His disciples.

Jesus asked Philip: Where can we buy bread to feed these people? John 6:5

1. This was a test, since Jesus already knew what He was going to do (John 6:6). Note the test is not the lack itself. The test is: Will you trust me?

2. At some point each of us must decide: Am I going to live my life according to what I see and feel about what I see, or by the Word of God?
 - c. Both Philip and Andrew asked made statements and asked questions based only on what they could see and feel: It would take a small fortune to feed all these people (John 6:7); a little boy's lunch is nothing in a crowd this big (John 6:9).
 1. Neither had any thought of God's help and provision in the moment, no thought of God with them and for them. Andrew was actually reasoning away what will become the solution to the problem in the hands of God.
 2. It isn't wrong to be discontented with circumstances or ask questions: Where will we get the basics of life? But you must recognize that there is more to reality than what you see and feel in the moment (God with you and for you) and acknowledge through praise and thanksgiving.
- C. In one sense, learning to praise and thank God in everything and for everything is a technique that will help stop you from saying things you shouldn't say and doing things you shouldn't do. But there is another level to this, a level where your view of reality changes.
1. You become persuaded that nothing can come against you that is bigger than God, and that everything you see is temporary and subject to change by His power, either in this life or the life to come. You become persuaded that He will get you through whatever life brings your way until He gets you out.
 - a. This is why regular, systematic Bible reading is so important. It will give you a new perspective and see reality as it truly is—God with you and for you. It will build your trust or confidence in the Lord because it shows you what He is like, what He has done, is doing, and will do.
 - b. Rom 15:4—The Bible changes your view of reality (your perspective) in part by showing you the end of the story. It gives numerous accounts of real people who faced really difficult circumstances and received real help from God.
 - c. They give us the opportunity to see how God uses the harsh reality of life in a fallen world for His purposes and how He brings genuine good out of genuine bad. They helps us see how it is possible to be grateful in the middle of it your circumstances before you see the end result.
 2. Consider another example of the perspective that comes from knowing the end of the story—Job's story. Job lost his wealth, his children, and his health, but stayed faithful to God and recovered all that he lost. (People have a lot of misconceptions about what happened to Job. (For a full discussion of Job read my book: *God Is Good And Good Means Good*, Chapter 6).
 - a. Moses acquired the story when he lived in the deserts of Midian. The Book of Job can be challenging to read because the literary style is unfamiliar to us. Job is a poetic drama (a series of scenes presented mostly in verse form). Hebrew poetry doesn't rhyme in the way we are used to.
 1. Moses brought the account back to the Israelites in Egypt because it is a book of hope. The book demonstrates that God delivers people who are suffering in afflictive bondage.
 2. The Old Testament must be read in the greater light of the New Testament. The only New Testament comment about Job commends his endurance and points us to the end of his story.
 - A. James 5:11—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 (J.B. Phillips).
 - B. Job 42:10—When we examine the end of Job's story we find that the Lord ended his captivity and gave him twice as much as he had before.
 - b. What happened to Job is called captivity. God set a captive free. That's what redemption is all about. Job is a mini story of redemption—a picture of what Jesus came to do, set captives free.
 1. Why did all that calamity come to Job? Because that's life in a sin cursed earth. The book doesn't address why other than general information that Satan was the source of Job's troubles.

2. Sabians (nomads from the desert) raided his property, stole his oxen and donkeys, and killed the field hands. Lightning set off a brush fire that burned up sheep and the shepherds. A windstorm from the east destroyed the house where children were feasting. Job 1:5-6; 9
 3. Job himself asked why at least twenty times and got no answer. His three friends speculated as to why it happened. All were wrong and all were ultimately rebuked by God.
 - c. The point of Job is not why did this happen? The point is what did God do? There is no such thing as a problem free life in a fallen, broken world. But none of it is bigger than God.
 1. God restored to Job what He lost. Job was healed of his physical afflictions and his livestock were replaced two times over. He lost 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 teams of oxen (Job 1:3), but ended up with 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen (Job 42:12).
 2. Job lost 7 sons and 3 daughters (Job 1:2) and 7 sons and 3 daughters were restored to him (Job 42:13). How is that double? Although his first ten children died, they did not cease to exist. (No one ceased to exist at death. They pass into another dimension).
 - A. Job was reunited with his original sons and daughters when he died. Even though he was healed of his afflictions, he eventually died, as do we all. But Job knew that there is more than just this life.
 - B. Job 19:25-26—Job knew that his body will one day be raised from the dead so that he (and his family) can live on earth again with His Redeemer.
 1. Earth renewed and restored to what it was before sin damaged God's creation. Life will finally be everything that we all long for it to be—no more sorrow, pain, loss, or frustration. No more discontent. This hope is our satisfaction now. Rev 21-22
 2. This statement is the first place in the Bible where the name Redeemer is mentioned. Jesus is the Redeemer. (Job is believed to be the oldest book of the Bible).
 - d. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin so that men and women can be transformed from sinners into holy righteous sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. He will come again to cleanse, renew, and restore this world to a fit forever home for Himself and His family.
 3. II Kings 4—Last week we referred to a woman from Shunem (near Mount Hermon) who was kind to Elisha the prophet. In return, Elisha promised her a son. The child was born, but after a few years, died unexpectedly. Why? Because that's life in a fallen world.
 - a. She went to see the man of God. When her husband asked why, she answered: It is well (v23). When Elisha's servant asked if everything was okay, she responded: It is well (v26).
 - b. According to sight and feeling, nothing was well. But the woman kept her focus, her attention on the Lord by acknowledging Him. Her statement about her situation was: it is well, or it's all good.
 1. Well is translated from the Hebrew word *shalom* which means peace. It comes from a word that means to be safe, to be completed, uninjured in mind or body. That's our future!!
 2. She got her boy back in this life. Even if she had not, she would have been reunited with him in the life to come. There is no such thing as an irreversible, impossible situation for those who know God. Therefore, we can be content. No matter what happens, it's all good.
- D. Conclusion: To counteract the discontent that this life produces, you must learn to get your contentment from the fact that God is with you and for you, and that He will get you through until He gets you out.
1. You must become persuaded that the best is yet to come, in the life after this life when God's plan of redemption is completed. Every loss, pain, and injustice will be reversed. The hopes and longings we all have will be fulfilled.
 2. Until then, praise and thanksgiving helps you keep your focus and makes it possible for you to say: It is well no matter what you're facing. More next week!