



“A HEART FOR GOD”

LESSON 2: FAITH THAT OVERCOMES FEAR

BIBLE BOOK CLUB STUDY NOTES – MAY 23RD & 27TH

REFERENCES FOR THIS LESSON:

- “*A Heart for God: Learning from David through the Tough Choices of Life*”, Rebecca Manly Pippert, IVP Books, 1996. (Read it!)

HOW CAN WE INCREASE OUR COURAGE?

WRONG WAYS

- WILL-POWER
- POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE
- PROOF-TEXTING (Taking Bible verses out of context)

Remember that the crises of our lives are spiritual, the result of living in a fallen, sinful world. We were never meant to fight these battles with our own strength and resources. The battles belong to God.

RIGHT WAYS

- BUILDING FAITH IN GOD
- UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S NATURE
- FOUNDATION IN HIS WORD, THE BIBLE
- OUR DAILY EXPERIENCES AND ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD (SPIRITUAL MARKERS)
- ORTHODOXY (right thinking),
ORTHOPRAXIS (right living),
ORTHOPATHOS (right heart)

STEP 1: BUILDING OUR FAITH

REMEMBER WHAT IS TRUE

- The traits of God (goodness, righteous, loving, merciful, powerful, trustworthy)
- Remember the rule of God over all creation
- Remember the power of God. Christ has already won the battle over evil.
- Understand your circumstances in the larger picture of God's purposes. God gives us the resources for any circumstances.

BELIEVE GOD'S WORD

- God doesn't speak a lot, but we can be sure His Words are reliable because He is trustworthy.
- Remember that God builds our faith **every day**, beginning long before our present circumstances. He is building us into people who will have faith and confidence in Him because of what we have learned about Him and our personal relationship with Him.

STEP 2: WALKING WITH GOD DAILY

- Consider the prophets of the Old Testament. Before they ever spoke a word in God's authority, they spent years with Him in private, being shaped into the vessels whom He could use for His purposes. This required them being broken down, broken of pride, worldly ways, self-control, and from this broken (honest) perspective realizing their utter dependence upon God and His great love and mercy for them. This was their "wilderness season". It prepared them to trust Him before they were sent out to share His Word with those who were unbelievers, unrepentant, or otherwise had their hearts hardened to the message of the prophets.
- In the same way, God uses our daily walk with Him to prepare us ("train us") for our own "wilderness seasons". He knows we will be caught in the spiritual warfare of the enemy, that we will have tribulations. It is not His will that we battle alone or unprepared.
- Our daily walk is one of obedience to God, living as best and morally as we know how in light of Scripture, and confessing our fears, doubts, sins, frustrations, and concerns to God. In this way, we learn to trust Him.

STEP 3: LIVING GOD'S WORD DAILY

- Scripture is our guide for all things. HOWEVER, this does not come from superficially glancing at the Bible or proof-texting.
- **KNOW GOD'S WORD. REALLY KNOW IT.** Spend time every day in the Bible, allowing it to fill your heart, committing its passages to mind in light of their right context.
- **USE GOD'S WORD.** It is our weapon against the enemy. Look to the example of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). He had God's Word in His heart and on His lips. This was the only defense He needed against the attacks of Satan.
 - The enemy will distort our vision—which means he will distort our perspective on our situation and our ability to face it.
 - The enemy will manipulate our emotions—he will plague us with self-doubt, self-loathing, fear, pride, stubbornness, resistance to God's help, and doubt in God's abilities, even doubt in God's love.

"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take (the thorn in my flesh) away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)

Take a moment to look back on your life from the perspective of one who is a disciple and child of Christ.

What moments can you see, in retrospect, when God was clearly at work in directing your footsteps, delivering you from bad situations, comforting you in times of crisis, or otherwise demonstrating His power, love, mercy, and grace in your life?

These moments are what we call “spiritual markers”. They are points in your life where the Holy Spirit is preparing your way according to God’s purposes.

How many of those moments did you turn to God? Glorify God? Learn from God?

How will those experiences shape your response to crises and your daily walk with God in the future?

What are
“spiritual
markers”?

HUMAN BATTLES HAVE DEEPER SPIRITUAL PURPOSES

- Remember that God's purposes, covenants, and promises are fulfilled **His way** and in **His timing**...not on human demand. He has the long-term vision for redemptive history.
- We have God's Word to give us confidence that—regardless of the outcome—all things happen under His control.
- Such was Jesus' confidence when He faced the cross and Stephen's as he was martyred. Such was the confidence of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego at the furnace. Such was Esther's courage to stand before King Xerxes I to save her people. Such was the confidence of the prophets of Israel.
- Faith enables us to understand the deeper nature of our circumstances, just as David understood that the fight against Goliath was really a spiritual battle and found courage to face the giant.
- The Word and God's cultivation of our hearts and spirits (even the skills He gives us, like David and his slingshot) gives us the weapons to do battle in the most effective way we can.
- Every battles against fear or temptation ultimately brings glory to God. Each time we resist the attack of the enemy—from the biggest fear to the smallest temptation---and choose to trust and obey God, He is glorified and magnified. We are reflecting His image. *There is no such thing as a "small" victory when we fight in the name of the Lord.*

- ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
- ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

THE ARMOR OF GOD

Understanding the Armor of God

BELT OF TRUTH

- In battle, the belts held the soldier's armor in place and had a sheath for the sword.
- In spiritual battle, it refers to the truth of God.
- Knowing and trusting God through knowing Christ and understanding the Scriptures.

BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

- This piece protected the soldier's chest and HEART.
- Spiritually, we must also guard our minds and hearts against the "arrows" of the enemy (lies, sinful emotions) as we develop God's character.
- This refers to God's righteousness.
- Spiritually, it means obedience to Christ, right living, honoring God, and rejecting sin.

Understanding the Armor of God

SHOES OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

- Shoes protected the soldier's feet and helped him have solid footing in battle.
- Spiritually, this means being prepared by our firm footing in Christ, knowledge of Scripture, and faith in God.
- We have firm footing on the Rock that is Jesus Christ, our Savior.

SHIELD OF FAITH

- Protected the soldier from arrows of the enemy.
- For us, this means protection again from lies and temptations, worldly pressures, manipulations, and schemes. Sometimes, this includes the manipulations of people who misuse or abuse God's scripture (false theologies).
- This means faith and understanding of God and His Word, claiming God's promises, and trusting Him. God is our help (2 Corinthians 10:4)

Understanding the Armor of God

HELMET OF SALVATION

- The helmet protected the soldier's head and gave him confidence and hope for victory in the battle.
- The helmet is our hope for salvation, our confidence that we have been redeemed and saved by Christ and are now forgiven, beloved, accepted, and included in God's promises. **The enemy can never take us from Jesus' hands.**
- Remembering our salvation and all that's been done for us gives us the proper perspective in any circumstance.
- *"and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."* (John 10:28)

SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

- This is the only offense weapon in our spiritual arsenal.
- This means God's Word, the Bible. We are to wield it just as Jesus demonstrated during His temptation in the wilderness.
- *"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* (Hebrews 4:12)

Prayer of the Apostles: A Model for Us

- *²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:*
- *"Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the Lord
and against his anointed one.*
- *²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."*
- (Acts 4:23-30)

- REMEMBER GOD'S CHARACTER

- Creator, Sovereign God, Covenant God, God of History & Revelation
- Omniscient, omnipresent, righteous, just, merciful, loving

- REMEMBER THE EVIDENCE OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN HISTORY (personal history, church history, biblical history)

- Claim the biblical promises for your redemption and salvation
- Recall God's promises in biblical history that were fulfilled, particularly the promised Messiah.
- Recall God's delivery of His people from impossible situations in history
- Recall God's faithfulness in YOUR life.

- AFTER THIS, GIVE YOUR SITUATION TO GOD

- Confess your fears, doubts, disappointments, and trust God with the outcome. **ALL OF LIFE IS UNDER THE REIGN AND CONTROL OF GOD.**

How to pray through our fears.

The Apostles faced opposition, persecution, and death at the hands of the Sanhedrin and other Jewish leaders. Stephen was eventually martyred for proclaiming Christ.

Most of us will not face this level of fear in our Christian walk, but we will all face times of crisis. Let the example of the apostles' prayer teach us how to approach God during these times.

STEP 4: USE YOUR RESOURCES AND ACT

- In any time of crisis, having submitted to God's control and His will, you must use the best options available to you and entrust the outcome to the Lord.
- This is not always easy to do when we are afraid, hurt, angry, or grieving, but such testing of our faith is truly "where the rubber meets the road".
 - A faith of intellect cannot save us (we learned this from Saul)
 - A faith of convenience (contingent upon God doing our will instead of His) is empty and hypocritical
- There is a time to plan and prepare, but eventually we have to take up our slingshot and act. Fear immobilizes us just as it did Saul against Goliath.
- Pray
- Recall your "wilderness training"
- Take up the full armor of God.
- We know that our own means and resources are limited. That's the point. Our weaknesses and limitations are God's opportunities to show His power and His glory. Impossible situations are His wheelhouse.