LivingbyHisword
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Stress & Worry

Finding Peace in Christ

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Thanksgiving is right around the corner, and in this season, I encourage you to take time to be thankful for the blessings in your life, especially in these times.

Even if things don't seem good for you or you are going through difficulties, there are still so many things to be thankful for. This is because ***being thankful doesn't change our circumstances; it changes our perspective.*** Look at what the Apostle Paul says in ***Philippians 4:6–7:***

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Paul connects thanksgiving directly to the worries and anxieties of life. This is important because the things that occupy our thoughts often determine our attitudes. Consider **five common areas** that can draw our attention away from God's faithfulness and rob us of our peace.

1. **The circumstances of life:** Problems come our way that are unavoidable, and other times, problems arise from circumstances we have created and choices we have made. Neglecting important things, focusing on the wrong things, bad timing, and even direct attacks from Satan are all things we will deal with here in this world. ***Mark 4:15*** says, **"**Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.**"**
2. **Our past:** Memories, pain, hurt, debt, and unforgiveness; you name it. If we are going to live our lives looking through the rearview mirror, it will produce a blind spot in our lives and limit His ability to lead us into peace.
3. **Self-worth:** How we value ourselves. We can be high-minded or have low self-worth. Paul talked about this in ***1 Corinthians 4:4*** when he said, **"**He who judges me is the Lord.**"**
4. **Our emotions:** If we fail to direct our emotions correctly, the voice that comes from our emotions can completely drown out the voice of God.
5. **The provisions of our natural life:** Oftentimes, when we focus on our natural provisions, it is not always about what we lack, but also about getting more or keeping what we already have. This thought process can cause our mindset and heart to become incorrectly established. Take time to read ***Matthew 6:19–34.***

In order to deal with the cares, worries, and stress coming through these five areas, we must set our minds on the Word of God, taking control of our thoughts and meditating on the right things. Worry sets our minds on things that might happen; God's Word sets our minds on His truths. Look at ***Philippians 4:8:***

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are ***true***, whatever things are ***noble***, whatever things are ***just***, whatever things are ***pure***, whatever things are ***lovely***, whatever things are of ***good report***, if there is any ***virtue*** and if there is anything ***praiseworthy***—meditate on these things.

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What we allow to shape our thoughts also influences our expectations and desires. This is why it is so important that our hearts are established in the counsel of God's Word.

Proverbs 13:12–13 in the Amplified Bible says, **"**Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when desire is fulfilled, it is a tree of life. Whoever despises the word and counsel [of God] brings destruction upon himself, but he who [reverently] fears and respects the commandment [of God] is rewarded**."**

The key for us is to let the counsel of God's Word penetrate our minds, fill our thoughts, and establish our hearts. This happens through consistent fellowship with Him. As we fellowship with God, His Word begins to shape our desires, direct our thoughts, and establish our hearts in His peace. This is why thanksgiving is so important: it redirects our attention toward God's faithfulness, even when the future remains uncertain. ***John 16:33:*** **"**These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world**."** In this verse, Jesus was talking to His disciples, but it applies to us as well. In fact, this verse alone should give us hope. No matter what this world throws at us, we can overcome it with Him.

As we enter this Thanksgiving season, I encourage you to take a moment to consider the things that may be occupying your thoughts and producing worry or stress in your life. Rather than allowing those things to determine your attitude, bring them before God with thanksgiving. Remember His faithfulness, meditate on His Word, and allow His peace to establish your heart. ***Philippians 4:9:*** ***"***The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.***"***

Blessings,

JANN T. BUTLER

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