

Devotion #26 - Perfect Peace

Isaiah 26:3,4 (NIV)

"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal."

This past week, I misplaced an envelope with over \$500 of concert tickets & checks. I spent three entire days looking aimlessly for the tickets and praying that God would show me where they were. I was on schedule to preach both the Saturday night and the Sunday morning service, and was having a hard time being focused on my message because of the situation. Just as I would clear my mind and start studying, I would start thinking about where the tickets might be and would go look. I checked, double checked, and even had others search the same places - I guess just hoping that they would somehow appear. In a moment of faith, I printed in the church bulletin that the concert tickets would be available after service, but I sure didn't have them yet. It was a rollercoaster ride of trusting, and then doubting when I wouldn't find them. Saturday morning I got up and went to the church to try and get my thoughts focused, but was still frustrated that I hadn't found the envelope. My statement to God was simply, "Lord if I don't find them by service tonight, than just forget it because they'd be of no value." My amazing wife called to encourage me. She shared that she knew God would be faithful if I would just let go of the situation and focus on what was most important, my message. I finally took her advice and spent some quality time in the Word. After clearing my head and getting my message together, I drove home to change before the evening service. As I was pulling up to my house, I saw something laying on the side of the road. I jumped out of my car, and much to my delight, I picked up my missing envelope from the melting snow pile. Everything was wet, but everything was there. I believe that God brought out the sun to melt the snow enough to expose it - just in time! All the hours and time I spent worrying and doubting were wasted. I had let something in the natural rob me of my time, and rob me of my peace. I let the situation get the best of me, and I paid the price for it. I don't know what situations you are facing in your life, but whatever you choose to magnify is what is going to consume you. I took my mind and trust off of God, and allowed my loss to steal my peace. The Bible states in *1 Peter 5:7* to, "*Cast your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*" When I finally released the weight and burden to God, He proved himself faithful. When you choose to keep your mind and thoughts on God, you will live in perfect peace. Most things are out of our control anyway, so just lay them down and stop worrying. Whatever the circumstance is that you are facing today, be encouraged by the words in *Colossians 3:15* where it says to, "*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...*" The simple truth is that nothing in the natural is worth losing your peace over!

Pressing Towards

Danny

Devotion #27 - Bullhorn Guy

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

The other day as I was driving down the road, I saw this man that I'll just call the bullhorn guy. Every Saturday, like clockwork, he strolls to one of the busiest intersections in town and sets up all his stuff. He has a couple of signs strapped to a little step stool, a megaphone with a microphone attached to it, and a commitment like very few people I know. After he has everything in place, he climbs up to the top step of his little ladder and begins his routine. In a very monotone voice, he begins reciting scriptures and proclaiming to everyone that they need to repent and turn from their sins. Most people just act annoyed by the loudness and distortion of his words, while others laugh and shake their heads in disbelief. An even sadder reality though is the judgmental thoughts and critical words that Christians have as they see him. I've heard some of their comments and truthfully - I've had some of those same thoughts myself. This time as I drove by though, the Holy Spirit gave me a whole new perspective. Without having ever met the guy, it's pretty evident to me that he has made a decision to tell people about the one who has touched his life. Not only that, look at the consistency and passion that he is putting into his efforts. It's irrelevant to me at this point how effective his approach is, what matters is the simple fact that at least he is doing something. Rather than judging his methods, I took the opportunity this time for a little self-reflection. How committed am I to continually going into the world and proclaiming the truth. Jesus simply said to "go", He didn't exactly outline the specific methods. I recently heard this amazing line in a movie that says, "We can't judge somebody else by their actions, while we judge ourselves by our intentions." The truth is that God isn't looking for perfection, He is looking for a willing heart. What about your life? Is it full of good intentions, or is it saturated with a heart for the lost? Are you purposing on a regular basis to go out and be a light as the Holy Spirit leads? If God has truly done something in your life, than you have a testimony that needs to be proclaimed. Peter and John said it this way in the 4th chapter of Acts, *"For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."* We have been commissioned to go, and Jesus promises that if we do, He will be there with us. I think it is time to step up, and step out into this world to declare our Savior's love!

Pressing Towards

Danny

Devotion #28 - Stinkin' Thinkin'

2 Corinthians 10:4,5 (NIV)

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

My oldest daughter came running up to me tonight to show me her notebook that she had been writing a story in. On the bottom of one of the pages was written a sentence that started with, "I hate my sister..." and finished with her name. Her younger sister had just written it down and showed it to her, apparently as a joke. I was very shocked, and immediately called the guilty party into the room for a little talk. My first question was simple, "Why did you write that about your sister?" With her head hanging low, she responded timidly with, "I don't know...I just thought of it." I asked her if she really felt that way, and she said - "NO!" I then asked her if she was mad at her sister, or if she was jealous? The answer to everything was an emphatic - "NO!" If she really didn't hate her sister, then where did the thought come from? It was pretty clear to me that the idea did not come from deep within her heart, but rather was just one that was thrown at her by the devil. The sad thing is that she immediately embraced it and acted upon it, rather than fighting it. The key to this scripture in 2 Corinthians is that we are to wage war and demolish each thought that goes against what God declares. Simply put, not every thought we have is a good one, so we should be monitoring everything that goes through our heads. The problem is that we are too lazy and aren't prepared to fight. We usually don't even realize how wrong our thinking is until we've already acted on it. The Bible states that we are to, *"take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."* In other words, the way we fight against stinkin' thinkin' is with the truth. To help my daughter understand this principle, I erased her sentence and asked her to rewrite it according to God's way of thinking. Without any help, she immediately wrote out, "I love my sister!" She had to take the lie the devil was feeding her and counter it with the truth. The scary thing is that if you don't know the truth of God's Word, you'll be prone to believe the lies. How well do you guard your thought life? The Lord says in *Isaiah 55:9* that, *"...my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."* With that in mind, are you making sure that your way of thinking is lining up with God's, or are you carelessly dwelling on things that are contrary to the Word? The reality is that it only takes a second to act upon a thought, so any unguarded thinking could lead to sin. As you go throughout your day, be alert and controlled. Be ready to stand up and fight against the lies the enemy will throw at you. Most importantly, spend time in the Word finding out what God thinks. When you do, you'll be able to line your way of thinking up with His.

Pressing Towards

Danny

Devotion #29 - Content In Every Situation

Philippians 4:12,13 (NIV)

"I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Having just had a major surgery, and looking at upwards of 4 months on crutches, it was pretty clear that I was going to be spending a whole lot of time at home recovering. Because of this, my wife mentioned to me that it would be worth the investment to buy a medical chair that would last me a lifetime. I was excited at the idea of finally being a man that owns his own recliner, and thought that a custom fit lounge chair would be awesome. I started dreaming of all the accomplishments that would happen as I would spend time enjoying my new gift, and then reaffirming myself that I really deserved one. As I was laying in my bed resting, my wife and mother showed up to deliver it. Much to my disappointment, they had found a used one at a second hand furniture store and were hauling it in. They were so thrilled because they had saved about \$700 dollars. Unfortunately, the thought of a used chair didn't make me jump out of bed. I went from not having a medical recliner, to having one - but sure wasn't very happy about it. Why is it at the age of 35, a ridiculous chair can cause me to be disappointed? Obviously it shows that I still haven't completely learned the secret of being content. My life is so full of blessings, but yet in a moment of wrong focus, discontentment sets in. Suddenly I found myself not satisfied with, or even grateful for the Lord's provision. Another passage that talks about this truth is in *Psalm 34:10*, "*Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.*" If your focus is on God, and you are in pursuit of Him, you'll never miss out on anything. There won't be any lack in your life. You may not have the latest and the greatest, but at least you'll have peace and contentment. Don't believe the lies that say your are missing out or being short-changed by following Christ. What does your life look like? Does your house, car, clothes, friendships, job or bank account determine your happiness? Are you in pursuit of natural things rather than God? The key to not getting your emotions and heart wrapped up in any and every situation is to just delight yourself in the Lord. When you purpose to do this on a daily basis, you'll find yourself living in the moment and staying clear of disappointment and discontentment. Remember, you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you!

Pressing Towards

Danny

Devotion #30 - Gripped With Fear

Philippians 4:6,7 (NIV)

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

The other day as I was driving down the road, I was suddenly gripped with fear. I am about to go in and have a total hip replacement, and the worst case scenarios were going through my mind. As I pulled up to my house, I was in a slight state of shock, because I'm normally a pretty positive person. Dealing with this type of mental attack isn't what I'm used to. I couldn't figure out why I was being bombarded with so many thoughts that were full of doubt and unbelief. As I spent a few minutes trying to find the root of my emotional distress, the Holy Spirit brought a simple point to my attention. I had not prayed and asked the Lord if I was supposed to have the surgery. I had simply listened to what the doctor told me, and then proceeded to plan my life around it. Don't get me wrong, my doctor is one of the best surgeons in the country, but somehow that wasn't enough to give me peace. Without bringing God into the situation through prayer, I had no way of accessing His peace. As a result, my mind was in turmoil. I guess having faith in a man just doesn't measure up to having faith in God. After realizing this simple truth, I am now going into surgery in the morning with confidence that the Creator of the Universe has a plan. With the Lord's hand on the situation, there is a genuine peace that is surrounding me. What does your life look like? Do you find yourself anxious or worried about many things? You see fear is the exact opposite of faith. When you allow situations or circumstances in your life to control you, you are living in fear. David encourages us in *Psalms 55:22* to *“Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.”* When you chose to put your faith in God by inviting Him into every situation of your life, you can be assured that He will pull you through. There can be no peace in your life unless the Prince of Peace is involved, so purpose today to ask for His wisdom, guidance and strength.

Pressing Towards

Danny