“Life’s Essential Ingredients” Pt.1

(3/22/20)

This morning, for our first livestream, I want to start a little series that focuses on three things that are essential for life—especially when we are facing any kind of crisis or adversity in our lives.

Those 3 ingredients are: Peace, Hope and Love

Before we go any further, let me say that all three are rooted in our relationship with Jesus Christ and apart from Him are only cheap ‘knock-offs’ or ‘counterfeits’ of the world—let me explain.

I. Peace

The Bible talks about 3 kinds of peace—2 of them come from our relationship with God; and the third is a ‘peace’ that comes from the world.

A. Peace with God

Romans 5:1 (NKJV)
[1] Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

God’s Word teaches us that we were born into this world as children of Adam—separated from God thru the Fall and at enmity with Him (rebels at war with God) having the wrath of God upon us (judgment—John 3:36).

The Bible teaches that, at one time, God also considered us *His* enemies—in other words, He was at enmity with fallen man as well.

Now let me stop here and say this—yes, there are a lot of people who go thru life determined not to bow to God's will in their lives.

They're at war with God; mad at Him for some tragedy or disappointment they blame Him for.

But most people don't even know that they *are* at war with God—they would say, *"I've never been at war with God, I like God."*

And as a 'proof' of their *like* or *love* for God they point to how 'religious' they are!

What they don't realize is that religion is another form of rebellion against God—the very rebellion the Jewish people manifested toward God thru their devotion to Judaism (religion) while having rejected Jesus as their Savior and King.

Romans 10:1-3 (NKJV)
[1] Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. [2] For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. [3] For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

And so, returning to the point I was making—the Bible presents a picture of God and man with their backs turned toward each other signifying the <u>enmity</u> both had for one another.

But then Jesus died on the cross for sinners!

And at that moment God's righteousness was satisfied because sin had now been paid for.

The result was that God turned and faced man (who still had his back turned toward God in stubborn rebellion), God turned toward us with His hands extended inviting us to come to Him for forgiveness and fellowship.

When a person accepts God's offer of forgiveness and comes to Jesus for salvation—that person is forgiven, saved and now in perfect fellowship with God.

Imagine, if you will—God and man now face to face in blessed communion (oneness) with each other.

This is what Paul meant in Romans 5:1 when he said—*"Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*—in other words, the 'war' is now over!

We have laid down our hostility towards God and His commandments, surrendered our lives to Him in obedience as His servants—and He in turn has forgiven us and adopted us into His family!

Now, **peace with God** is essential if we are going to experience the second kind of peace the Bible talks about for the child of God—

B. The peace of God

Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV)
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.

Let me say this—**peace with God** is *objective*, whereas the **peace of God** is *subjective*.

In Romans 5:1 when Paul talks about us having peace with God when we receive Jesus as our Savior—in the Greek it's in the present tense (something that exists right now).

In other words, this isn't a peace we are waiting for in the future—it's a peace that is ours right now as a newly converted believer in Christ.

When I say that that **peace with God** is objective not subjective—I mean it isn't based on feelings (which are up and down depending on our circumstances at the moment)—this peace (peace with God) is based on the objective truth of our relationship with Jesus thru faith which is eternal and never changing!

However, the **peace of God** is *subjective*, and because of where we are in our walk with God at any given moment—it is a peace that can 'come and go'.

Now, let me put that thought on hold for a minute and come back to it—because this is the peace that we, as Christians, at this moment in our lives—are most concerned about having!

C. The peace of the world

I would be remiss if I didn't bring out another kind of peace—a peace that doesn't come from God, but rather is a 'peace' that comes from the world.

Jesus talked about the peace He gives in contrast with the peace that comes from the world to His disciples in the upper room the night before His crucifixion—

John 14:27 (NKJV)
27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you [the peace of God]; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

So, what is the 'peace' the world gives?

Well, primarily it is an artificial peace that comes thru alcohol and drugs.

As I said a couple of days ago in a church update—I understand why people drink alcohol and take pills to calm their nerves during stressful times—I understand it even though I don't agree with it.

I understand because people can't live in a perpetual state of stress, anxiety, worry and fear (concerning the uncertainty of the future)—without having a nervous breakdown at some point.

Or in other words—they can't live for very long without *peace*.

And so, they will eventually and inevitably seek peace thru artificial means—they will 'grab' for it by seeking to medicate themselves with pills and/or alcohol.

This may bring some initial 'peace' (a false peace due to 'escapism' and numbing themselves to reality)—but will ultimately lead them into dependency to that drug and ultimately into bondage (addiction—where the 'cure' is worse than the problem they're facing).

Whereas the peace that comes from Jesus is real, lasting and liberating!

It's a true peace that the world knows nothing about because it's a supernatural peace that comes directly from God and—*"surpasses human comprehension."* (Phil.4:7)

The **peace of God** is a peace that only a child of God can experience—because it's a peace that comes from God as an *attribute* of His divine nature.

The only way for a person to experience any attribute of God in their life (all of which are exclusive to His nature—think of the Fruit of the Spirit)—is to have God's nature *planted* within them.

And that only happens when they receive Jesus into their heart as Savior and the Holy Spirit moves in (which is what is meant by being 'born-again' or 'born of the Spirit').

At that moment, as Peter tells us, they become *"partakers of God's divine nature."* (2Peter 1:4)

John 16:33 (NKJV)
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."

Notice that Jesus didn't promise that He would give us peace by taking away all the problems and pain in life.

He promised to give us a supernatural peace *during* or in the *midst of* the trials and tribulations we would experience in this world.

➔ Talk about the contest to see which artist could best capture the concept of 'peace'

Now listen, as we wrap things up—I have never seen, in my 64 years of life, anything like the panic and quarantines going on right now with this Coronavirus outbreak.

And because of the scope of this outbreak having now become a worldwide pandemic—I have to believe that God has allowed it for His divine purposes.

My pastor used to say—*"When you don't know what God is doing, you must fall back on what you do know about God."*

Now, before we look at that, remember what the Bible says about how we handle anything in life that comes our way.

In 1Thess.5:18 Paul admonished us, *"In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you who are Christians"*—and notice that Paul says, *"In* everything not *for* everything give thanks." (Explain).

However, you won't *thank* God in everything until you first learn to *trust* God in everything—and trusting God in everything won't be possible unless you believe three things about Him:

1. That God is sovereign

This means that not only is God *aware* of everything that touches my life—it further means that He is in absolute *control* of everything that touches my life.

And that means He is all-powerful when it comes to the circumstances of my life!

Nothing happens in my life except what God allows for His purposes.

Romans 8:28 (NKJV)
[28] And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

It doesn't say "*we see all things working together for our good…"*, it says *"we know it by faith"* because of what God has told us in His Word.

Now, the fact that God is sovereign (which includes the fact that He is all-powerful) wouldn't comfort me in times of difficulty or adversity if I didn't believe the second truth—

2. That God loves me unconditionally

You see, if God was all-powerful but a cruel despot—that wouldn't comfort me, it would terrify me!

The fact that God is all-powerful *and* at the same time is all-loving is a tremendous comfort to me.

God loves us with all of His heart, which He proved on Calvary—*" But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Rom.5:8)

The Bible clearly teaches that God's sovereignty and His love always work together for my ultimate good—I have to believe this by faith because my circumstances don't always show me that this is true.

The devil is always trying to get me to judge the love and goodness of God by my circumstances.

But these 2 truths—that God is sovereign (all-powerful) and that God loves me with all of His heart unconditionally—still wouldn't be enough to comfort me in times of great adversity if I didn't believe one more thing about God—

3. That God is infinitely wise

God is so much wiser than I am—a truth I accept in principle but not always in practice.

There are many things that God allows to happen in my life or in the lives of others that, honestly—I really don't understand.

I look at the situation and say to myself, *"If I were God, I wouldn't have let that happen", or "If I were God, I wouldn't have done things that way…"*

The problem is—I'm not God!

I can't see the big picture like God—I only have limited information of the situation.

But that never seems to stop me from making judgments based on my limited understanding—judgments which often cause me to question the wisdom (and ultimately the love and goodness) of God.

Peter said the problem with us is that *"we only see what is near and not what is a far off."*

In other words, we can't see the future, so we don't know what is coming down the road tomorrow or next week or next year—but God does.

And I need to realize that God is often working in my life *today*, preparing me today for what He knows is coming tomorrow, next week, next month—or even 5 years down the road!

So, I have to trust in the **sovereignty**, the **love** and the **wisdom** of God because—like a 3-legged stool, these truths will *hold me up* when my circumstances try to *knock me down*!

They will keep me going by strengthening me in my adversity.

They will strengthen my faith in knowing that everything is working together for good in my life (eternal good not temporal comfort) by the One Who loves me and gave Himself for me!

Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV)
11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

This morning we find ourselves living in difficult times, uncharted territory, which not only affects us but also our whole country and even the world.

Many people have lost their jobs (some jobs will never come back as businesses will be forced to close for good)—which has caused a great deal of stress in their lives.

On top of that, many in our country are so empty and feel so hopeless that they have turned to alcohol and especially drugs like opioids to find some peace and escape—substances that are killing people in record numbers.

For many of these people, their health is declining, their bills are rising—and they're not sure how they're going to make it.

We are living at a time when, because of the uncertainty of the future, many people are experiencing a considerable amount of fear, anxiety and stress—and even Christians are not immune—so what are we to do?

We must keep our eyes on our God and trust in His ability to take care of us and bring us thru whatever storm of life we are facing—and all the anxiety and stress that comes with it.

Isaiah 26:3 (NLT)
3 You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!

You see folks—<u>that's the key</u>!

The key to experiencing this peace is that you have to keep your thoughts (your mind) fixed on God, because you trust Him and have absolute confidence in His strength, love and wisdom towards you.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)
6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Again, I can understand alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide—I don't agree with them but I can understand them because of the world we are living in.

People need peace and if it doesn't come naturally (which today is almost impossible) they will get it artificially.

I recommend getting it *supernaturally* through Jesus Christ!

When you do the peace of God which this world cannot understand will guard your heart and mind in Christ.

Let's close by looking at Psalm 46—

Psalm 46:1-3, 7, 10-11 (NKJV)
1 God *is* our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 *Though* its waters roar *and* be troubled, *Though* the mountains shake with its swelling… 7 The LORD of hosts *is* with us; The God of Jacob *is* our refuge…10 Be still, and know that I *am* God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! 11 The LORD of hosts *is* with us; The God of Jacob *is* our refuge.