

STAYING CALM: WEEK SIX

PERFECT STORM OR PERFECT PEACE...peace isn't the absence of conflict; it is the PRESENCE OF GOD in a conflict. Peace works from THE INSIDE OUT or it doesn't work at all. We start by KNOWING GOD'S PEACE. It isn't PEACE FROM GOD but the PEACE OF GOD. Listen again to Paul:

'Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts/minds through Christ.

God downloads heaven's serenity into our souls, resulting in a calm beyond words. We should be worried, but we aren't. His peace has no limits, it surpasses human reason. One source of anxiety: trying to live life OUR WAY instead of God's way. The symptoms are obvious:

Quick tempers, insecurity, impatience, manipulative people, arrogance, holding grudges, other harmful attitudes.

We can handle one crisis but if they come in waves, we get rattled. Waves build into a PERFECT STORM; we wonder if we will survive. Which will it be for us: a PERFECT STORM/PERFECT PEACE. Paul's word "guard" is the same word used for a SENTRY who stood outside his cell. Being a Roman guard wasn't a part-time job. He was on duty 24/7. The sentry posted outside his cell didn't compare to the peace he felt inside it.

WHAT ABOUT OUR FOUNDATION...Jesus told a story of 2 builders who built homes on what appear to be GOOD LAND. One house rested on SOLID ROCK but the other was on a WADI, or flat/sandy hollows that run near riverbeds in flood-prone areas. Sand is a poor foundation for a home. He wasn't talking about BUILDING A HOME but BUILDING A LIFE. No one intentionally messes up their lives. It happens innocently: the slow accrual of poor choices and unhealthy attitudes/habits. The truth is: life's BAD STUFF doesn't MAKE/BREAK US; it REVEALS US. It discloses what we have spent our time building, where we have directed our time and energy, what we value, where we place our security. Any foundation is fine if the SKIES STAY BLUE, but the skies darken, and the STORMS COME. God never promised a life with no storms but to support us in them. Sometimes, he calms the storms. Many times, he calms his children.

DEEPENING FEARS...God isn't in the FEAR REMOVAL BUSINESS but the FEAR IMPROVAL BUSINESS. He wants to move us beyond our PRIVATE FEARS, to be more alarmed by RIGHTEOUS FEARS. What ought to scare us the most: living oblivious to the world's struggles, not only clueless to others but to what God wants to do in our lives. We face our fears by shifting our focus from us, how we feel, to GOD'S FAITHFULNESS.