

“Not By Sight”
Sunday, June 7, 2009
By Pastor Hubert Ulysse

This is a message of encouragement. It was prepared as a message of hope to keep us going along our way to Heaven. It's not always an easy path to walk, but if we keep on track the payoff is huge. As Christians we are supposed to be “Christ like”. That's the meaning of the word Christian, and we know that Jesus suffered while he was on Earth, so we should expect that we will end up facing some struggles as we follow in his footsteps. Don't worry. It's part of the plan.

Pastor Ulysse asked us to take comfort in knowing that everyone has a bit of fear when it comes to facing trials. He called it “chicken blood”. He asked us to remember that it's ok to cry and be afraid when things get hard. It's ok to call out to God for help, but it's not ok to run and hide. It's not ok to quit.

Over and over throughout the Bible, God shows us that he can do anything. But we can't confuse the idea that he *can* do anything with the idea that he *must* do anything we ask of him. God can use us as an example of how someone can face trials and overcome or He can use us as examples of someone who has been given health, wealth, and happiness but still relies on Him.

Christianity does not make us exempt to the duties and burdens of daily life. It helps us face them with courage.

Pastor Ulysse reminded us that it's natural to get close to God when things are hard. We tend to pray more when we're in a bind. But if we just leave God on the shelf when things are good, we might tempt God to continue to keep us in rough situations so He can have more time with us. The Bible describes God as “jealous” and as our Heavenly Father. Of course he wants to keep us close and hear from us often. We have to be careful that we pay attention to God in our daily lives. Not just when we need him.

One way we stay close to God is by reading his word. The Bible is here as a way for us to hear from God today. Once we realize that reading the Bible is a way of hearing from God and realize that prayer is how we talk to him, we have to check what kind of balance we have. Do we pray all the time but never take time to read? If so, we are in the dangerous place of talking to God but never allowing him to speak to us.

Matthew 16:21-26

21. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

22. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

23. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.
24. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
25. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
26. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

In the situation above we see that Peter was looking *through* his eyes and not *with* his eyes. He was seeing the situation from his own perspective, and was not even trying to find a spiritual perspective on what was going on. Pastor Ulysse encouraged each of us to “Look *with* your eyes, but not *through* them”. We cannot close our eyes to the things going on around us. We have to be aware of what’s happening, but we can’t just go with what we understand from our own perspective. We have to look through the eyes of Christ.

Romans 8:18

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

II Corinthians 4:8-18

8. [We are] troubled on every side, yet not distressed; [we are] perplexed, but not in despair;
9. Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
10. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.
11. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.
12. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.
13. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;
14. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present [us] with you.
15. For all things [are] for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.
16. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward [man] is renewed day by day.
17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding [and] eternal weight of glory;
18. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen [are] temporal; but the things which are not seen [are] eternal.

Pastor Ulysse reminded us that it’s ok to be a bit confused about what’s going to happen next. In the passage above we see the word perplexed. God does not give us a playbook so we know what’s going to happen. That’s just not the design. We have to be careful to make sure that we don’t allow ourselves to be distressed though. If we lose our minds trying to figure out what’s going to happen next, or how God will work things out, we

will never survive. Instead, just know that God will work things out in His time and in His way. Think of it as watching a good movie and waiting to see how the resolution will come. You know it will, and you don't have to make it happen. You just have to wait and see. Just rely on God and don't get distressed.

II Corinthians 11:16-28

16. I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.
17. That which I speak, I speak [it] not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.
18. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.
19. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye [yourselves] are wise.
20. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour [you], if a man take [of you], if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.
21. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.
22. Are they Hebrews? so [am] I. Are they Israelites? so [am] I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so [am] I.
23. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I [am] more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.
24. Of the Jews five times received I forty [stripes] save one.
25. Of the Jews five times received I forty [stripes] save one.
26. [In] journeyings often, [in] perils of waters, [in] perils of robbers, [in] perils by [mine own] countrymen, [in] perils by the heathen, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren;
27. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.
28. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Paul describes some serious trials in this passage. There are not many of us that can even relate to the kind of suffering Paul went through. He was beaten within inches of his life, nearly starved to death, and was thrown in jail more than once. None of this came because of what he did. Instead, it happened because of who he was. He was a follower of Christ. Sometimes standing up for God and being a true Christian can lead us to strange and scary situations. This is where not being distressed and trusting God comes into play. We have to have our hearts in the right place to make it through.

If our heart's desire is to see people come to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, everything else will fade into the background. This doesn't mean that it will disappear, but if our focus is on God and the gospel, things will fall into place.

II Corinthians 5:14-15

14. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:
15. And [that] he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Maybe isn't just about physical pain. There will be things that come our way that we will have to physically deal with while we are Christians. It's inevitable. But we can't just call that our part for Christ. He also calls us to go deeper with our dedication to him. We have to take on the emotional strain of wanting to see people come to know Him. It's not a "take it or leave it" experience. God wants us to care for the body of Christ the way he does. He wants us to love it unconditionally and do anything we can to make it better. Pastor Ulysse left us with this thought: "We get discouraged because we don't love enough." If we love like God loves, and focus on seeing souls saved, everything else will fall into place. We just have to be sure that we are looking with our eyes, but not through them.