



New Life Christian Community

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Cor 5:17

Sunday, February 16, 2020

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PASTORAL PONDERING

Perspective

"We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring." 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

I was recently reading through 2 Thessalonians and found myself asking, "Why do the apostles spend so much time writing about rejoicing and the good that comes from persecutions and afflictions for the Christian?" Much of the time we are quick to complain about our afflictions because they limit us from doing what we want to do. We say it's inconvenient, it didn't fall into my plans for life, or I'm now disadvantaged in comparison to others; and so, our hearts are often left in a state of grumbling, discontentment, and bitterness. When things don't go the way we hoped, we come up with hundreds of reasons why this or that has happened. Our minds get set on the circumstance, and when they do, our perspectives on the grander purposes of God will be small and limited. It's like looking through a cone backwards. The fact is we just don't see it all, and we don't know how all the parts of the puzzle are going to work together in the bigger picture. And that's probably a good thing. You might ask, "How can anyone possibly grow and rejoice in times of affliction and persecution?" The short answer I think is perspective, God's perspective. In the midst of any and all circumstances, God's Word is sufficient to give us all the perspective we need. Consider these observations below.

The apostles (and, for example, the Thessalonian church) understood the blessings wrought through trials and the larger purposes of God through persecution and affliction. Consider how the apostle Paul describes the result of the sufferings of the Thessalonians in these verses. It was resulting in more faithfulness and increasing love toward one another. Does that jump out at you? The result of their afflictions and persecutions was increased love and faithfulness!! It's quite revealing to us how difficult circumstances have the ability to draw out the realities of our hearts. It leaves no room to hide behind a false façade. In the case of the Thessalonians, it's clear that what is being revealed about their hearts through persecutions and afflictions is steadfastness in the faith and increasing love. Amazing! The Thessalonians are not rioting, demanding the justice they deserve for their mistreatment. Their afflictions are not resulting in hearts filled with revenge and bitterness, they are not complaining about any hardship or looking for ways to make their best life now, nor did they try to force their way out of afflictions, but rather submitted to God's sovereign plan. In so doing, they left judgment and the outcome in the hands of God. They were being sustained by the very Spirit of Christ within them and carrying in their minds and hearts God's eternal perspective. How are you responding to your current circumstances? What is it revealing about your heart?

This perspective comes when Christians set their minds on God's grander plans and

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PASTORAL PONDERING

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purposes that find their fulfillment in Jesus and the promised hope that His Bride will one day share in His glory (vs. 10). Wow, so worth it! This perspective shapes how we view and understand our current challenges, persecutions, and afflictions. It reminds us to look to Jesus, knowing that as we share in these sufferings we will also, by His grace, share in His glory when he returns. Let this sink in! To this end Paul prays for the Thessalonians that God would continue his work in them through these afflictions, showing to them that they have been set apart to share in Christ's suffering so that they may also share in His glory (see also [Romans 8:17](#)).

How do you pray about the afflictions and persecution you are currently facing? Are you praying as if these circumstances were something inconvenient, a hindrance to your walk, or just plain unfair for you? Paul does not write to the Thessalonians saying how sorry he is that they have the unfortunate lot in life of being persecuted. He doesn't even write that he hopes these afflictions end soon and that they will be able to get back to "normal life" again in a jiffy. How silly, when you look at the bigger perspective. These afflictions are not hindering their walk in faith and love, but actually advancing God's purposes in them and in the whole world to sanctify His Church, presenting her holy, being found steadfast in faith and in love. What a good God we have and what a faithful Savior!

You might ask, "How can I keep this perspective?" Pray...pray like Paul in [vs. 11-12](#) that the Spirit would fulfill these greater purposes in you and the body of Christ. Stand firm...firm in the sufficiency of the written Word of God ([Ch 2:15](#)). Remain...remain in close fellowship believers so that we might walk alongside one another, reminding one another of these truths like Paul is doing for the Thessalonians in writing this letter.

I'm not saying that perspective is the solution. Jesus is the solution! When we walk closely with Jesus, God shows us grace by giving us His perspective through His Word, which sustains us when we are weary. As we look to Him, the result of any circumstance and act of faith will be an increase in love for others (even the one who is persecuting you) and increasing steadfastness in faith. Therefore, be encouraged, weary Christian, and pray that as you walk through afflictions and persecutions that:

"God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the Grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Vs. 11-12)

Seeking God's perspective by looking to Jesus with you,
Pastor Paul

Announcements and Upcoming Events

- ❖ The next *Woman's Book Study* meeting is on **Monday February 17, 7:00 pm** at the New Life Building. We will be discussing Chapters 4 & 5 of 'Even Better Than Eden'.
- ❖ *Hall of Men* is **Sunday, February 23rd at 6:30pm**. You won't want to miss it!
- ❖ Not Just a *Movie Night*, come and join us on the journey to combat constant escapism by watching and discussing the 2016 Oscar Nominated Best Film *Arrival*. Afterwards we will look at the ideas presented and discuss how this fits the world our God came to save. Join us on **February 28 at the building @ 6:00pm**. Bring some popcorn, and then plan stay for the discussion immediately following the movie. Let's explore how to make sense of His creation together. For more information about the night talk to Nathan Anderson
- ❖ Come and support *Gospel Joy International* with a dinner and silent auction on **March 12, 2020 @ 6:00 pm** hosted at Bethlehem Baptist Church South Campus. Also during the evening will be music and a message from Pastor Jason Meyer. One of our own missionaries Emily Pohl is the director of the ministry Gospel Joy. Check out our website under the overseas missions page for more information about the ministry Emily is doing with Gospel Joy in Africa.
- ❖ Mark your calendars. The *St Croix Valley Men's Retreat* is set for **Friday and Saturday, April 3rd & 4th @ Oak Forest Retreat Center** in Frederic, WI. Be on the watch for more information about specific times, cost, and topics. Anticipate being challenged and sharpened in the faith as we study God's word and fellowship together. Be thinking and praying now about who you could invite, neighbors, co-workers, family and friends.
- ❖ Those of you involved in the *Missions Trip* planning for Albania this summer we will be meeting again **after service in the back conference room @ 11:30**. Feel free to jump in line for lunch right away and bring a dish to the room. If you're interested in being a part of the conversations your welcome to participate in praying and planning with us.
- ❖ Maybe you missed the open house for the *Tri-County Options for Women*, but if you are still interested in learning more about what they do, please consider visiting the center. It's located downtown Osceola next to Lucky Panda. Stop in and meet Karen, she is great. They are always in need of volunteers to help stock and organize supplies, mentors for the young struggling mothers, and volunteer doctors or nurses to run the ultrasounds and other tests.

Upcoming Sunday Potluck/Meal Teams:

February 23	Meal Team #4
March 1	Bring a Dish (P#1)
March 8	Meal Team #5

Fellowship and a meal follow our service today - Please stay and join us!

Pastoral Eldership Team:

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Schedule of Events Week of Feb 16-22

Mon	Adult GriefShare 2:00 pm (green rm)
Tues	Men's Bible Study 5:30 am Our Place Café - SCF
Wed	Women's Bible Study 12:30 pm
Wed	Immerse Family Studies 6:15 pm
Thurs	Men's Bible Study 6:30 am
Thurs	Women's Bible Study 9:30/10 am
Thurs	GriefShare - Adult /Youth 6:30 pm Adult and Youth meet separately

February Memory Verse: **Philippians 3:8**

"I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." ESV

February Fellowship Tip:

Have you recognized a spiritual gift in someone or even yourself? Consider how you can encourage the use of these gifts Christ has given to His church by His Spirit.

HEBREWS

JESUS
According to Scripture

Today's Passage:

Pastor Tony's message is from the New Testament book,

[Hebrews 12:18-24](#)

Sermon Notes:

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Sunday service starts at 9:30 am / Check out New Life online at newlifechristiancommunity.org
Join New Life Connect by emailing Pastor Paul at pastorpaul.nlcc@gmail.com