



Gazing on the Unseen

Message by Pastor Andrew Kulasingham, 18th August 2019

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:16 NLT)

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that far outweighs them and will last for ever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on the things that cannot be seen. For the things that we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last for ever.

Mark 9:28-29 (NLT)

Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, "Why couldn't we cast out that evil spirit?" Jesus replied, "This kind can be cast out only by prayer."

Why couldn't we....?

- **We prayed and prayed and prayed but nothing happened – why couldn't we ...?**
- Unanswered prayer poses a great deal of difficulty for believers.

The paradox of prayer:

... whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

(Mark 11:24)

Whatever means whatever.

Why couldn't we? - But the Bible also says ...

Mark 11:25 - "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

- Obviously Jesus is saying there is a link between forgiveness and prayer
- Forgiveness is an instant choice – healing of the hurt from the offence is a process.
- So we forgive and we bless those who have offended us – we do it repeatedly until the remembering the offence no longer hurts.
- So we forgive but still no healing – why couldn't we?

1 John 5:14–15 – **And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.**

- Maybe it's not according to His will?
- We know that healing is according to His will?

James 4:3 - **You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.**

What if I'm praying to relieve someone from pain and suffering – that's not asking amiss?

John 15:7 - **If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.**

- So there is a correlation between my intimacy with God and my effective prayer life
- So I walk in forgiveness, I know healing is the will of God, I know I'm not asking amiss, and I am abiding in Jesus and his words abide in me.

So why still unanswered prayer?

- I have walked with God – not perfectly but have grown in this life of the Spirit for 41 years
- I have seen enough and experienced enough unanswered prayer
- I have no answer why some get healed some don't. That is a mystery beyond my understanding

We aren't alone in this. Paul lived in this paradox as well Epaphroditus and Trophimus are two examples.

Philippians 2:25 – 30

²⁵ **I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, ²⁶ for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.**

²⁷ **Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.**

²⁸ **I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. ²⁹ So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honour such men, ³⁰ for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.**

- near to death, sickness

2 Timothy 4:20 – **Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus, sick.**

Some people tell me that sometimes God gives us sicknesses to teach us something, but the following extract from scripture tells of a “thorn in the flesh” without specifying precisely what it was.

Paul's thorn in the flesh – 2 Corinthians 12:7-12

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. ¹¹ I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing.

¹² The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

- Paul's weakness was "a messenger of Satan to buffet me."
- his immediate response was that he... "pleaded with the Lord three times."
- he got an answer

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 - **And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

So where do we go from here?

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NLT)

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

1. We never give up

- We encourage, we build each other up, we uphold each other in prayer.
- ... bodies dying but spirits being renewed every day.

2. We understand that we live in two time zones

- Temporal time – short term effect – present troubles are small and won't last very long
- Eternal time – long term effect – produce glory and last forever (Mrs Chow and cancer)

3. We fix our gaze on the unseen

- There are not only two time zones but two realities.
 - Things we see will disappear.
 - Things we cannot see, last forever.

Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

The great men and women of God, from ancient times till today, have discovered this – that we don't frame our world by what we see, we frame our world by the word of God. That's how the great leaders of revival saw it – people like John Wesley, Hudson Taylor, George Muller, Aimee McPherson, Kathryn Kuhlman. They saw the unseen, they saw the miraculous, they saw the healing, they saw the break-through in their lives.

- I will never give up – I'm gonna contend for the sick among us.
 - My watch is set to eternal time – I'm gonna contend for the sick until healing occurs or eternity happens.
 - My gaze is fixed on things that cannot be seen – I will frame my words, my thoughts and my prayers with the word of God, contending for the sick until healing occurs or eternity comes.
-