

Greetings from Pastor Jeff Steiner!

Again we bring a weekly overview of this week's ministry and events. It is our prayer that this briefing will help as a reminder for personal meditation and reflection of the Word of God ministered here at PLC this last week. Your comments are welcome!

Sunday Morning Service

“THE AFFLICTION”

Afflictions are an integral part of the Christian experience. One cannot read the Scripture without noticing the many troubles, hardships and afflictions that come to God's people at various times. King David testifies that *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous...”* but let's not forget the rest of the verse *“...but the Lord delivereth him out of them all!”* (Ps 34:19) In the book of Job we read that *“Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward”* (Job 5:7) Jesus testifies that *“In the world ye shall have tribulation...”* but again, the rest of the verse, *“...but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!”* Paul would tell us that the *“...the sufferings of this present time...”* and notice the promise, *“...are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!”* (Rom 8:18) Jesus warns us of occasional “storms” of trial, *“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house...”* (Matt 7:25) Also, we must understand that times of good and evil come to the saved and unsaved alike for Jesus said that *“...he (God) maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth the rain on the just and the unjust”.* (Matt 5:45)

Afflictions have a deeper purpose than to make life difficult and at times miserable. For the unsaved, afflictions can cause an internal search for answers and spark a hunger for God and redemption. But for the Christian the purposes are various. I'll borrow some lyrics from the song called “Through it all” by Andrae Crouch:

*I've had many tears and sorrows
I've had questions for tomorrow
There've been times I didn't know right from wrong
But in every situation
God gave blessed consolation
That my trials only come to make me strong*

Trials are meant by the Lord for our good. We don't realize how weak or strong we are apart from a test of trial. In this verse we see the songwriter recognizes that “trials only come to make me (us) strong”. Let's look at the chorus:

*Through it all, through it all
I've learned to trust in Jesus
I've learned to trust in God
Through it all, through it all
I've learned to depend upon His Word*

We as believers must be developed in our faith walk. We must learn to trust in Jesus, learn to trust in God. We must come through things and through them all, “learn to depend upon his Word”. Experience is always the best teacher in life. We learn to trust and depend by this “on the job” training. Jesus would say “Learn of me”. Are we learning anything from the testing's of life? Let's continue the song:

*So I thank God for the mountains
And I thank Him for the valleys
I thank Him for the storms He's brought me through
Cause if I never had a problem
I wouldn't know that He could solve them
I wouldn't know what faith in His Word could do*

This is where we as believers must come to, “thanking” God in spite of the mountains, valleys and the storms. We see the key here is if we never had a problem, we wouldn't know how God could solve it. Job acknowledges *“I have heard of thee*

by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5). Job knew God by what he had heard of him like we do in the early days of our salvation. But because of his severe trial, he came to know God by experience. We must pass through this process ourselves. If we don't, then "I wouldn't know what faith in God could do".

Let's now look at the sources of affliction. Afflictions many times come from the outward sources of life. Life "happens" is the norm in a fallen world. We are not immune from the sins and consequences of others that can be inflicted upon us. Afflictions can also come from inward sources. Hardships can be self-inflicted through inward fears, attitudes, improper thoughts, unbelief and believing false doctrine, etc. and let us not forget personal consequences of choices and actions we willfully make. The Apostle Peter reminds us "if we be buffeted for our faults, we take it patiently". Then there are the powers of darkness. Satan can afflict the Christian through persecutions, uprisings, betrayals, or we give him access through areas of our lives not properly submitted to God. This can be a continuous major problem in the church and in our lives. Finally believe it or not, afflictions can be of God. Everything in the life of the believer is either caused or allowed by God! Look at Job. God allowed Satan access to him with certain limitations. As Job, the believer has a hedge of protection about him from God (Job 1 and 2). God as the master designer of our lives knows what we need and has a wondrous plan for his own. This means that for us to grow, develop, mature and become seasoned in the faith, we will need training and testing's. God brings about occasional chastening and uses afflictions as a method of discipline or we are not his! It has been said that "all faith is tested and great faith is tested greatly!

This brings us to the Apostle Paul. He claimed to have a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Simply put, in his work for the Lord it seemed everywhere he went he dealt with beatings, stoning, shipwrecks, persecutions, uprisings, physical afflictions, personal needs, prisons, hunger, etc. He took this to the Lord in prayer some three times and received this response: "*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).* Here we see two principles we desperately need, "Grace" and "God's strength". Grace is the power, goodness and unmerited favor of God given to you and me, the undeserving as we maintain faith in Christ and the finished work of the Cross. Secondly we need God's strength that comes through his grace as we humble ourselves in simple dependant trust. The believer must see one's own inability, weakness and strength as insufficient and worthless. In this state, as Paul, we learn to lean upon and trust the provision of God through Christ and proclaim from the heart that "*...when I am weak, then am I strong" (vs. 10).* This is where we begin to now live our life and face trials and afflictions in the "power of God" and not in our own strength. Paul would tell Timothy and again for us to: "*...be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim 1:8)*

In conclusion, let us understand that every trial has a beginning, but praise God will have its end! Let us not despise the chastening of the Lord but let us learn the lessons and mature in the faith that we be no longer children in attitude and understanding but be on our way to maturity that we may be a blessing to others. Let us throw ourselves on the mercy of Christ and allow him to finish the work he began in us! Remember it's only a test! He loves us and will not give us more than we can bear! He promised!

You may click [**HERE TO LISTEN TO THE AUDIO VERSION OF THIS MESSAGE.**](#) A must listen! Or you may request a CD of this Sermon by emailing or calling the Church office.

Noteworthy Quote

"Salvation does not guarantee worldly success & prosperity; Salvation does not promise death-less divine health or physical health; Salvation does not guarantee deliverance from hardship or danger; Salvation does not absolve one from ill-treatment & social injustice; but.....Salvation DOES promise He is with you & me thru all these things!!! For, we have a better covenant. Salvation DOES rescue me from the, much deserved, Wrath of God for I was His enemy; Salvation DOES absolve my sin debt & deliver me from the ruling sin nature; Salvation DOES make me a new creature; Salvation DOES guarantee my name is engraved on the Palm of His Hand; Salvation DOES promise me a new, perfect, glorified body; SALVATION IS CHRIST! "Neither is there Salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12

Debra Wenger, Heritage Christian Center, Ottawa, Ill

Upcoming Events

May 3rd -5th, 2013 - Former Klu Klux Klan Imperial Grand Wizard Johnny Lee Clary will preach here at PLC. Johnny was also known in the 1980's as professional wrestler "Johnny Angel". He was gloriously saved and called into Gospel ministry! Mark this on your calendar and don't miss this event!

Prayer needs

- A greater opportunity for the "Live-Stream" and media outreaches
- Funds to come in for the needed roof repairs
- Children's Church workers
- Items for our "Helping Hands" food pantry

In Conclusion

"Again, I believe we are seeing a greater moving and operation of the Holy Spirit in our services as ever before! I also believe we are on the threshold of the greatest move of God this area has seen. We are receiving strong responses to our ministry impacting hearts and lives with the true Grace of God and the liberty and victory available in Jesus Christ! Let's keep the faith and believe God for a greater year in the work of God and the furtherance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! May God in Christ bless you richly!" In Christ's service, Pastor Jeff & Elizabeth