

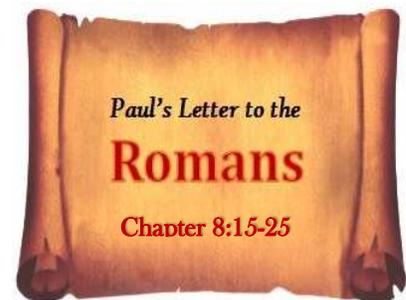
HOW DO I GROW MY FAITH?

DOT DOT DOT | Week 7 | 8.4.2019

One of the things I love about standing in front of you is I know that in this room the majority of you in this room are really wanting to grow in your faith. You want to have your faith enlarged, expanded, and that's why you're here. Very few people come into this room on a weekend because someone is basically coercing them to do so or to be in the right place, that kind of thing. You're actually here because you're like, *I want to grow in my faith; I want to figure it out.* There are others who are saying *Yeah, I'm not there, but I'm really trying to figure this thing called faith out* — and I appreciate that. I know there are a bunch of you in this room—and we want to be an open place for that where we just keep on holding our arms open to you, lots of conversations, trying to jump you into even a group that discusses these kinds of things. And that's why we keep on—you'll see it in your program today the Church Center app—go on there and sign up for that, or even just go onto our website if you're not into loading one more app, and you can just go down and see the different things where you can get that kind of interaction with each other to build your faith.

But here's what I want to say today is we're gonna share a bunch of stuff here today but we start out by reading our Bible and we do that and, you know, maybe even a little more of an elongated passage for this reason: Chapter 10 of Romans, you know we're in the book of Romans right now, says faith comes by the hearing of the word of God. So you want your faith to increase, you want it to grow, you want it to be challenged, you want it to expand, you want to figure it out—read the Bible. So that's why we do that together, so maybe nothing I say will be of help, this text will be of help. So if you have your Bibles, Romans Chapter 8.

Many of you know we've been in the book of Romans since January. We went all the way up through Chapter 11 and at the beginning of the summer we stopped, we're doing a series now called DOT DOT DOT where we've actually gone back to the first chapters of Romans and we're just grabbing little verses out that we know they'll be really, really helpful. Now that you understand the big context and how they fit in, we're just grabbing these verses that we may have missed when we are going through on a broader way. So Romans Chapter 8 and again, today I'm going to give you just a little bit more of the context so we're gonna read a little bit more. There's really just three verses in this whole section that we're gonna camp on today, but in order for us to understand the whole picture let me start Romans Chapter 8, verse 15.



If you don't have a Bible we do have Bibles on the very back table; when you're leaving here today grab one, take it with you. If you have someone that you know you want to give a Bible to, grab one and take it and give it to them. We want people reading the Word of God. We are convinced when we get people into God's Word it changes them, it transforms them, so we're excited about that and we want you to do that. Never hesitate to open up your phone at this point to the Bible app and to follow along in there. Again, I think during the week you can be reading your Bible quickly just by opening up the phone. We have lots of spare time in-between events. Anyhow, get right to the Bible. Romans Chapter 8, verse 15:

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

~ ROMANS 8:15-17

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Verse 18 is where we're really going to land here in a few minutes today. Verse 18 says this:

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

— and these next two verses are the other two verses that we're going to focus in on today —

²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

~ ROMANS 8:18-25

Let's pray.

Lord God,



I just want to bring before you each person in this room right now; You know what we each need. We've come in here today as a people hungry. We're dry, we need your Spirit to touch us, and I pray that your Word would find its place into each of our hearts in the areas that we need it today. So enlighten your Word to each one of us that as we leave here today we will have a greater vision and view of You and our eyes will be upon You in a fresh new way.

We ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

When life has hit us head-on, and it has a tendency to do that, it's in that moment we take off our headphones and we listen to God. Our willingness to engage God in that space will determine the outcome of that head-on. Pain and suffering will breed either despair that would cause us to step out of the race, give up, sit down, call it quits. It will breed either despair, pain and suffering, will either breed despair OR it will change us to have an eternal perspective. The verse I told you, verse 18, "*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us*" — the quick run up to those verses, I read it but I want to just say it real quick in short words. First of all, he said says hey listen, you don't have to be living in fear, living in this dark world with all the stuff going on any longer. Why? Because when you came to Christ you became a child of God. And in fact, it's better than that, you were adopted into God's family. And in the Roman system they understood that adoption came with all sorts of things that even the natural born child didn't have. You were adopted into the family of God. You are a child of God. You've been adopted in if you've put your trust in Jesus.

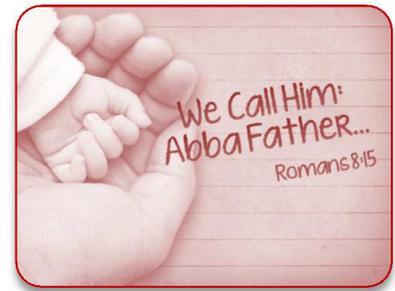
He goes on to say as a result of that, when you feel pain and suffering you can come to God who calls Himself your Father. And he says you can say, "Abba! Father!" – Daddy – and you can run to Him. So far as to say, by the way, you are heirs, in fact co-heirs with Jesus Christ of everything that He gets.

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And then there's sort of a pause and my Bible, the words are *provided that* you suffer with Him. You're in our family now, you go through what our family goes through. Jesus suffered, you will suffer.

Now, he doesn't give that to us or speak that to us like that parent looking down going, "Aw, we went through it tough, you're gonna get it tough, too." Instead, he's just facing something that's a reality. We live in a world that is fallen. Go back to Adam and Eve when sin entered into the world and things began to change as a result of that sin. Now here's what I want you to hear: Even though you live in that world, you are impacted by it every day and it hurts like crazy, I want you to know this morning that God sees you. He sees your pain. He cares about it dearly and He has, as these verses leading you up to it that said hey, you no longer have to be a slave to fear. Why? Because you're in His family, you're His child, and you are securely placed in His hand where you can say, "Abba! Father!" The God who keeps the universe spinning exactly perfectly every day, every hour, has all of history in control, the past and the future, that very same God has you in the palm of His hand. And I want you to live with that promise now and be comforted by that promise.



And what this text is going to say in verse 18 is despite your suffering, expect that because of The Fall, the way you're going to get through that to the other side is to change your perspective. What is it that I'm seeing through the glasses, through the lens of life? Change it from your circumstances to what's yet



to come, towards eternity, towards something bigger, towards Jesus Himself.

I'm going to explain it to you today as I switch, a switch in your thinking. It's gonna be absolutely normal for each of us to see our circumstances on a daily basis, but we're gonna try to switch from those controlling our mindset to eternal things controlling our mindset. It's quite normal to anticipate and to look forward to what's going on in this world; to plan for it, to make a way for it, it's just quite normal for that. I get it, God gets it, and it's part of even The Fall where we have to work and the work of our hands, that's going to be a part of it. But what he's going to

say is when we put our hope in something—and we're going to define that in a moment—we need to put it on eternal things, future things, where the glory is really at and where it's really found.

Now right after this verse in verse 18 there are statements that say all of creation groans and it speaks that the creation that we are a part of is not what it once was, it is broken, it is marred. I sat this morning on my couch on my back porch overlooking the woods behind my house. And I love woods, I love trees, I enjoy looking at the green especially this time of the year, and today can you believe it—how many days in a row that it has been clear and sunny? It's just like mind-blowing and exciting. So I was just sitting there just enjoying the sky, looking up into the sky, and I look at it and I see it as being so incredibly beautiful but this text tells us even this world that we live in is not what it once was. It's not how God created it, it is not perfect like He created it, and I'm reminded of that when I look to my right and the tree that used to be so beautiful last summer is almost completely dead now. Some people say it's the new bugs we got this year that are foreign bugs, I don't quite get that. I think it might be all the rain, it's like a marsh over there, but it's dead. And so the beauty that we have, all of creation it says

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groans under the weight of The Fall, so that what we have today is not what it was originally meant to be.

I saw a phenomenal illustration of this this week. I was down in a woods walking and I came up across a little white building and there on the side of that white building was this, and someone saw that earlier, “Eww, no.” I looked at it closely, it's not alive, it's just stuck on the side of the building. It's a cicada shell. I said that first hour, I have not received any text saying I was wrong on that; I figured I'd be wrong. I don't know my “bugology” very well. I Googled it, I was pretty sure it's a cicada, has left that shell, has gone on to something else. And when I see this I'm reminded—because it said here the creation groans under the pressure of The Fall so do we groan under the pressure of The Fall, that what we are today is merely a shell of what we were originally created to be. We even have seen this in our lifetime. I look into the mirror, and I've told you just before, I looked in the mirror I see an 18-year-old guy, but you know what? No I don't, I'm lying to myself. I see you myself for what I am. I know what I see, and you all have been thrilled about what you're seeing. You're so excited about what you're seeing that you can't wait to see what you're going to be so you're looking at the FaceApp.



Cicada shell

Well, I'll tell you what, that's about as discouraging as it can be, going straight downhill. This text is taking us way beyond that saying listen, despite the sufferings that's gonna make you look like the way they're saying on that FaceApp that you're going to look at, I want you to go one step further and I want you to look towards the glory that is yet to come that He is making you for. We get so hung up on where we're at today, so disappointed that we're not like we were then, and we keep on looking somehow, some weird obsession with the way we're gonna look in 10-15-20 years that we miss the way God's leading us towards to the day that we are glorified and with Him in glory and everything is made right again. And in this text he's trying to remind us of this very thing.

Any parents in this room? A couple parents, 2-3 parents in this room [Laughter] – been on vacation yet this summer? You might be a half-hour out from home, some of you it's less, maybe it's an hour away from home, and you're driving on vacation, let's just say you're driving to Florida, you're going to Orlando to Disney to the – what do they call that place? The happiest place on earth? And you're on your way, you're about an hour out of town and the kids from the back seat say, “Are we are we there yet?” [Laughter] And I look out the window and I look out the window and you probably, like me, you have all sorts of replies to that in that moment. It's just stupid. My father-in-law used to say, “Yup.”



Look out the windows, are you kidding me? Why are you asking dumb questions? [Laughter] And the moment that they realize that the answer is no then they have to get a little more creative and they have to go to the bathroom, need some food, because sitting in this car isn't working for them any longer and it's not happy like the place they're going to. So what do we do? We try to find a way to stop, to take a break, to sit down, to get out, to stop doing what you're doing. We're headed for the happiest place but we don't want to keep on driving.



It used to drive me nuts when my kids were young. I was terrible. Like, I didn't believe them, certainly you don't have to go to the bathroom, [sound effect of car driving] right past the exit. My wife would look at me like, “You've

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gotta be kidding.” [Laughter] “You have to stop! They have to go.” I said, “No, they don’t.” “Yeah, they do!” [Laughter] Poor abuse my kids put up with. “Okay, I’ll stop at the next exit, but then again, don’t get them anything to drink cuz we’re not stopping for another nine hours.” [Laughter] You know what I’m talking about, right?

But isn’t that exactly the case in our lives? We’re like, “Are we there yet?” We look out the windows, we certainly know we’re not, and rather than just pushing on to the thing that we’re supposed to do in the midst of our suffering—looking out, “Yuck, in the midst of our suffering—rather than pushing on to where we’re supposed to get to, to the happiest place of glory, we stop here and we have a picnic here.

Or we give up here, “Yeah, I just I can’t handle the noise in the backseat and the screaming and the crying and the fighting and the bickering. I’m done! I’m out!” And that describes many of our lives where we’re at right now. We’re going to the happiest place but we’re not there yet, I don’t know if I can stand it any longer. Don’t stop. That’s not parental advice. Listen to my wife on that one, listen to me spiritually, don’t stop, keep going.



“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” — keep going. And at the end of this passage, I told you there were two other verses that I believe begin to put some focus into all of this and explain to us what this looks like. Listen to verse 24, it says this:

²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope.

— I like how he says I know what you think the meaning of hope is, but if you can see it, you’ve got your definition wrong —

For who hopes for what he sees?

~ ROMANS 8:24

If you see it, it’s already been revealed, so he begins to drive us towards the definition of hope by telling us what it is not. It is not wishful thinking. It is not—I’ll just use these 3-4 little letters, “iffy.” We have this tendency to place our circumstances and hope together and highlight the iffy. I *hope* I can make the team. It’s iffy. I *hope* I can get a good grade. Really iffy. I *hope* that I can pass that professional exam to move forward in my career. Those things are crazy ridiculously hard, you have to go through them four or five times. So hope?

I *hope* I can find a great friend. Some of you might be saying, “I hope I can get married.” Or I *hope* I can get a break so that I can finally accelerate in some things that I’ve wanted to do. And you say, “I *hope* my kid can find a great friend this year in school.” Some of you are saying, “I just *hope* I can get rid of this pain,” and yet the doctor’s said he didn’t expect that very thing would happen. And some of you are hoping on your boss right now, you’re hoping that they’ll get a job assignment change, you’re hoping that they’ll be fired, you’re hoping that they’ll take a different job, a better job at another city, somewhere else far away from you. Some of you are *hoping* that your mate will become what your perfect dream of a mate is. Something iffy? Wishful thinking? Based on circumstances? Something totally – seen.



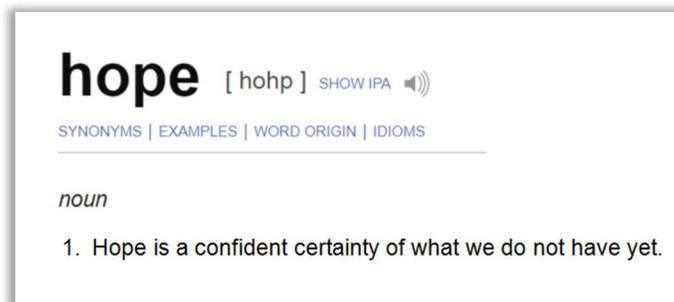
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The fact of the matter is we are an extremely hopeful people. I'm going to try to re-direct you to be a people filled with hope—a hope that is God-defined because God's saying when you're a hopeful person, you're depending upon something that you can see, a circumstance that you can control or that is fixed in front of you. Now, let me just pause for just a moment. Next week I'm going to come back here and we're going to talk about some verses right beyond this and we're going to go with a theme that we've talked about a lot here at Calvary—something only God can do. God cares about every little detail of your life. I do not want you for a moment to think that we have a God that doesn't care about every detail of your life. He loves you, you matter, the things that are going on in your life matter right now, those circumstances matter, that mate matters, the kids matter, your boss matters—all of that matters a lot to God.



In fact, next week we're gonna start praying for something only God can do in our life because we know we have a God who holds us in His hand and cares. You gotta come back next week because we're gonna have those black bracelets again that many of you have seen before, the “Something Only God Can Do” bracelets. So you come if you don't come next week, they might be gone so you've got to come next week. Some people are like, “Oh, shoot.” I saw people out there [nods towards the lobby] telling their friends, “Can you grab me one next week?” Something only God can do. But today here's what I want you to know: That while God cares about every little detail here, if you're going to make it through this time where we live in a fallen world, you're going to have to flip the switch from focusing and obsessing on the circumstances to thinking about this hope that is in us, something eternal, something way beyond today. There is more. Let me give you a definition of hope:



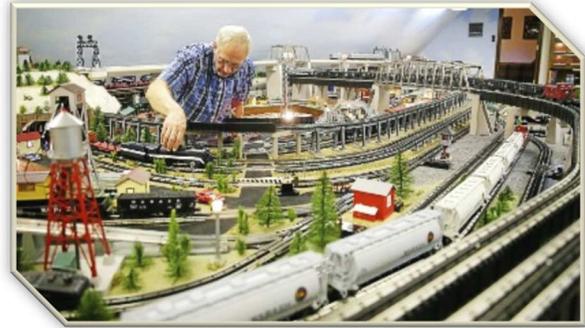
You know, I read an article this week, you know all these articles—six ways to that, three ways to that—“Six Ways to Have a Healthier Life” or something like that, and so it went through this list of things that you should be able to do to help you have a healthier life. So it said the first one was get a good friendship, and I thought to myself as I read it, I'm like, *Well, how many of you ever had a friendship that turned out to not be such a good friendship?* So you hope that that'll make you a happier life or a healthier life and that hope becomes very iffy. The second one was find a mentor who's a step ahead of you. Ever had that mentor only to have that mentor let you down and disappoint you or not be there in that moment of need?

All right, one of the other things in there was find life-giving people not life-sucking people. Have you ever had a life-giving person that all of a sudden turn into a life-sucking person? I liked the last one, the last one was totally— I guess I'll never have a healthy life as it said you need to find a really good hobby that you're just passionate about. Uh, that sounds boring to me. I'm sort of more about the bigger picture.

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I think of my father, he had a hobby, was into model railroading and he had just boxes and boxes full of model railroad stuff that he had modeled over the years. And you know my father's been gone for a bunch of years now and I'm guaranteeing you somewhere in my mom's house is a stack of the boxes of all that stuff and that hobby and I'm sure he's not even thinking about that stuff now as he's in Heaven spending time with Jesus. I'm just looking at the stuff that was said that we need to do to have a healthy life and I step back and go, "Really? I'm not so sure."



find a really good hobby

Listen to Philippians 1:6:

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

~ PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Verse 25, after saying don't hope on the things that you can see, redefine the word hope, says this:

²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

~ ROMANS 8:25

And what we do not see is not just this hope, this iffy thing, like *maybe* if there's an eternity out there, *maybe* if there's a God out there. Instead we step back and we confidently know that there *is* a God there, that there *is* a Heaven, that there *is* an eternity, that He *has* a plan for you, and that He loves you dearly, and that He's taking you and carrying you there. That He's working everything out here to get you to there; that He's making you more like Himself to take you to be with Himself someday. That all of a sudden it takes our attention and our eyes and our focus off of this stuff and it puts it onto something else. It's that switch that pops it off of our circumstances and onto Jesus who is our hope.

I like that verse here where it says, "*but if we hope for what we do not see,*" and then it says this, "*wait for it with patience.*" So this is like you see it constantly on the, you know, on social media watching



this video—have you ever watched these videos that says on the thing, you know, watch this video and it says wait for it? So you watch and you watch and you watch, you know eventually something crazy is going to happen. I don't know if you've ever done it but I was just in the middle of those things, *I'm not doing that, I'm so tired of being drawn into this wait for it stuff.* I click it off and keep on going. And some of us are like that in life. He says, you know, listen, there is an eternity, there is a hope, there is something that

we're headed towards. No, we're not there yet, kids, we're going somewhere and we gotta keep on going to get there, but we're gonna have to wait for it. I don't want to wait for it. Yes, you're gonna have to wait for it if you're gonna get there. Don't click off too soon.

A friend of mine, a great philosopher, he and I were talking this week and he said to me, he says, "We're looking for answers tied to our gratification and when we don't get it, we're out." Can you imagine—you get to Delaware, you stop at a rest stop and say, "Let's just stay here for the week." [Laughter] "I don't think so." "But it's so nice; sure better than the back seat of that car." "Get in the car, we're

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going.” Wait for it! But it's getting hard! I don't like it. I want to be healed. I want my kid to be okay. I want out of the chair. I want off that cane. I want to have my dad back. Whatever it may be. And this text says—and we groan under the pressure of that, and it is that groaning that is meant to cause us to long for and hope for something more; to remind us this isn't it. This rest stop's not doing it for me. I'm getting tired of slushies. I want something more. I know where I'm headed, let's get back in that car, let's wait for it, and let's keep our eyes on it.

Verse 18, *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”*—and yet some of us in this room have no hope. Or, I would say we are hoping for the wrong thing. We have wrongly defined hope on the things on this earth and some of us have given up and we have stopped because getting kids to play a sport that you could never play a sport has become all-consuming because that's where your hope is.

Some of you have given up. Why? Because for you, you hold on to money like it is so valuable. Why? Because that's where your hope is. Remember, Paul says your hope isn't on something that you can see. Some of you have given up. Why? Because for many of you, comfort is everything to you. Comfort dictates the terms, but your hope will never be found in comfort. Some of you have given up. Why? Because you're in a race with your neighbor to get what they have, because you're in a chase to outdo your brother or your best friend to have what they have to become what they have become, but your hope is not found in that. Some of you have given up. Why? Because in your professional career you've chased to be at the top and when you thought you got to the top you looked and there was yet another peak and a whole bunch of people staring down from that jeering at you, and you realized your hope's not in the chase of the career.

THERE IS MORE.

You see, there is more. And we have to get beyond these circumstances and put our hope in on Jesus. He said this before He left this earth, “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I'm gonna come and I'm gonna take you to be with myself so you can be there with me.” Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people. On the next page of my Bible it says, “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” — saved from our sins, saved from our selfish desires, saved from these circumstances so that we can put our attention on what He has prepared for us. Yet we live in this world that is fallen, that is pulling us down, that we are groaning under. He says I give you the ability to look ahead and see the glory that only God can give.

And just real quickly, just leave you with this: How do I get here? When you find yourself putting your hope on these circumstances, which I guarantee you all of us do, will do, will continue to struggle with, and you know it when all of a sudden it becomes all-consuming to you and you can't get it out of your head. A year from now we won't remember it, it'll be so long-gone but there'll be a whole new set of circumstances we'll have our head in. When you find yourself bogged down in that, sinking in that, it's at that moment we're gonna have to throw the switch and we're gonna have to turn and put our attention towards eternal things, towards glory. He says hey, listen, in the midst of this suffering it's not worth comparing to the glory. I want you to switch the switch and I want you to look there.



“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

~ JOHN 14:1-3

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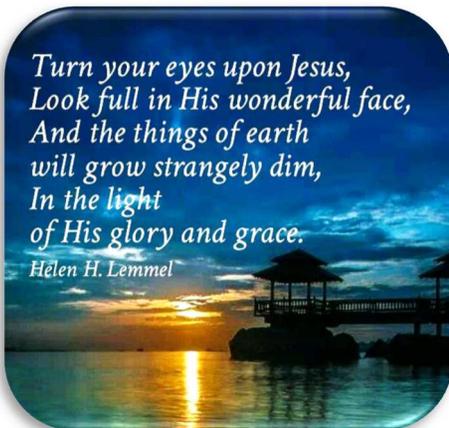
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How do I look there? I'm just going to throw out a couple things that I have in mind. First of all, we started out by just saying faith's going to be increased by reading God's Word and hearing what God has to say, knowing God's Word. Faith comes as we keep bringing these things to Him, as we pray to Him, that's why we're gonna keep on talking about the something only God can do next week. I don't think we're putting enough trust on Him—again, putting our attention there onto Him, we're putting it on ourselves and what we can create and what we can do and we're discouraged because it's not getting done, rather than saying, "I'm in your hands and I can trust You for it, God."



One of the other things that I found personally helpful has been a place. We stopped at the end of one of the sections of the worship this morning and just said, "Let's just say praises to God and say thank you to God." There are things that have happened to you in different places where you know that was God. God showed up in that place, God showed up in that time, God showed up among those people, and I find myself when I go to certain places, I am reminded of those marking moments in my life where I know that God was there and God showed up. And it reminds me that if He showed up there, He'll show up here and He'll show up now, and I get so encouraged by that.

There is an old hymn, in fact, I'm gonna ask Angel and Ann to come up right now if you would, that you probably are very familiar with and maybe the words of that hymn, maybe even the tune of it going through your mind will help you figure out how to flip the switch from the circumstances that you face right now to these eternal perspectives.



It's an old hymn, you've probably heard it, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of this earth will grow strangely dim"—I love that because the things of this earth for most of us most of the time aren't very dim. They're very big! And we're gonna walk out of this room today and we're gonna walk headlong into them. We're gonna check our phone, we're gonna check our emails, we're gonna have a conversation, we're gonna make a phone call and we're gonna be right back into it. And we're gonna lay down in our bed tonight ready to go to sleep and we're gonna feel overwhelmed by it wondering if we can

even get to sleep, and we're going to be reminded: Turn your eyes upon Jesus, and the things of this earth will grow strangely dim.

Hey listen, I know there's some of you, we didn't do this first service, but there's some of you, there's just some stuff bearing down on you right now and you wish you could turn your eyes on Jesus. You wish that the things of this earth could grow strangely dim. You know it's right, you know you gotta get there, but boy it's tough right now. I'd like to invite you right now to come and pray together right here at the front, to kneel here at the front, to just give it to Him. And why would we do that here instead of there? [motions toward Prayer Chapel at the back] The only reason I can think of is this: Sometimes when we make a physical motion there's something about getting in motion. You gotta get back into that car, turn on the car and start driving, and sometimes we're just sitting and we're waiting out and we decide to sit alongside of the road and wait. And we've been sitting and somehow this morning we need to stand up and we need to step out and we need to come to the God of the creation and say, "I'm gonna put my eyes on You, Jesus. I'm gonna turn my eyes on Jesus."

HOW DO I GROW MY FAITH?

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So would you stand up with me right now, and listen, we talked about this earlier, don't be shy. Just come on up here and kneel at the front, stand at the front, and when we're done singing this song, I'm just gonna pray over you and pray with you. Just be bold, just come up here and seek God in this time.



Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/351905548>

YouTube: https://youtu.be/nHymoQxK_IY

Facebook – 930AM: <https://www.facebook.com/CFDowningtown/videos/750381018731114/>

Facebook – 11AM: <https://www.facebook.com/CFDowningtown/videos/2605022023160140/>

Calvary Fellowship website: <https://www.cfdowningtown.com/watch>

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