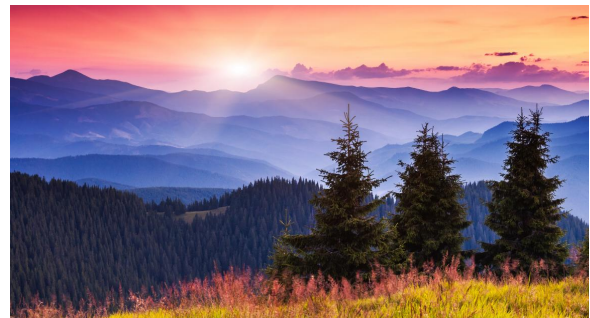

SOLA FIDE

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The Eternal Perspective

“I can do all things through him who gives me strength”. We often quote this verse from Philippians 4:13 when we go through any struggles, ranging from minor inconveniences to life-changing events. As Christians we understand the importance on the reliance on God and His word to carry us through life’s difficulties and to live out a godly life. But let us be honest with ourselves: how often do we rely on God in times of struggles and worries? When we go through hardships in life, do we turn to God or do we turn to worldly solutions? These struggles may be complex issues but they all have a simple solution: our eyes must focus on the eternal.



What does it mean to “focus on the eternal”? Despite its lofty sounding characteristic, it simply means that Christians must always focus their eyes on home in heaven. Paul writes this in Philippians 3:20, “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”. Christians focus on the eternal because it is a natural response as citizens of heaven. And as we (Christians) focus on the eternal, we will see all things through the eternal as well. As an American citizen, my worldview is seen through the lens of America and all her cultural influences and ideology. Likewise, as a Christian, my worldview needs to be seen through the lens of the one who gave us this eternal life: Jesus Christ.

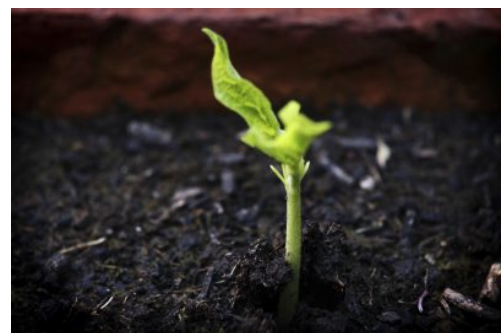
So, why do we fail? As citizens of heaven, we know that the way we perceive life and the responses to its struggles and difficulties should be through eternal, but it is far easier said than done. The reason for this is, is because although we are citizens of heaven, we still live in a foreign nation called, “The World”. This world that we live in is hostile to God, and until we return home, we must fight against its influences and desires that are at natural enmity with God. Our failure to have our eyes on Christ is also due to remembrance of our old lives before we met Christ and longing for that past comfort in sin that we have experienced. Yet, our failure to have our eyes fixed on the eternal isn’t something new; in fact, it is an ancient problem. Lot’s wife, when fleeing from Sodom and Gomorrah, looked

back at the burning city with longing eyes and was turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19). The Israelites, after leaving Egypt, complained to Moses about the richness of their foods in Egypt and the relative comfort they lived in (even going as far to forget they were once slaves!) and this resulted in them wander in the desert for forty years before reaching the Promised Land (Numbers 14). It is easy for us to forget that we are citizens of heaven, especially when we struggle through life, because we get distracted by the ease and comfort of the lives that people of the world are indulging in. And it is through this avenue that Satan can attack us to drive us away from God. But we need to remember that God is good - “For I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

That leads to our last point: how can we keep our eyes focused on heavenly things? The only way for us to remain rooted in our new citizenship is to have a deepening and growing relationship with Jesus Christ. We must proactively live our Christian lives with sense of purpose. “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3: 1-5). If our relationship with Christ is continually growing and vibrant, then the world and its pleasures will lose its luster.

In order to have growing and vibrant relationship with Christ, one thing that I would like to suggest to you, is to engage with other like-minded Christians who value their relationship with Christ as well. Fellow believers strengthening and correcting one another has been documented since the Old Testament as it says, “iron sharpens iron and one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17). And it is the local church that provides an avenue where like-minded Christian can help keep each other’s walk with Christ in check. The blessings we receive from engaging with Christ, thanks to our fellow brothers and sisters, can be reciprocated as we ourselves encourage others to focus and re-engage with Christ.

Brothers and sisters, I encourage you continually examine your relationship with Christ if you are struggling: are you praying consistently? When was the last time you devoted time to read and meditate upon the Scripture? Are you plugged into an accountability group? Are you honestly sharing with your small group about your struggles? Are you actively engaging in the worship? Struggles and difficulties are an inescapable part of life: but our response to these events do not have to be dripping with misery and anguish. As our focus and perspective changes more towards eternity and the Kingdom of God, these issues will no longer grip us with anxiety and sorrow. The contentment we gain from our eternal perspective will allow us to say, “I can do all things through him who gives me strength” in whatever struggles and difficulties we may face in our lives.



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