

Reflections on the message by Glen Rickard on Sunday 20th June 2010

“Prayer – Part 4” Micah 6:8

He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? (NKJV)

Prayer is a tough thing for any Christian. You get distracting thoughts, and so on. But we serve a God who is huge. Consider the enormity of the universe. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second. It would take us 15 million years for us to travel from one side of the universe to the other. If we counted the stars at one per second, it would take us 2500 years to count all the stars in the Milky Way, the galaxy we are in. And there are many other galaxies. The universe is a vast place. Why then should God look at us if he is so big? That is the wrong way to see it. God has done it that way that we can look at Him in awe.

God has created more than 100, 000 million galaxies, The Bible simply says, He also made the stars (Genesis 1:16). But He is our Father, here with us. Only God is truly awesome. We serve a big God.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9.

⁷ And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. ⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ 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. (NKJV)

⁷⁻¹⁰ Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! At first I didn't think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, and then he told me, My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness. Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become. (Eugene Peterson's The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language)

We come to God with things that to us are incredibly serious. Life is serious though we laugh a lot at BFC. We have in our mind a map of what we want God to do. We ask Him to act and we have a reasonable idea of what we expect Him to do. We have a duty to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

We don't know what Paul's thorn in the flesh was. We think it may have been his eyesight because he said to the Galatians, “You would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me”, because of their love for him (Galatians 4:15) and because he pointed out the large letters he wrote with (Galatians 6:11). Paul pleaded with the Lord three times about this. Paul met the Lord when he was converted. The Lord took him up to the third heaven and he had a great revelation. He received revelation from the Lord (1 Corinthians 12:23). He experienced Christ uniquely. The Lord commissioned Paul directly. God had done amazing things for and with Paul. But in 2 Corinthians 12:8, Paul says he pleaded with the Lord. It was a reasonable request. He wanted to be healed. He probably had an idea of what he expected God to do with him. 2 Corinthians was written in about 53-54 AD. Paul has his revelation of Christ in about 40 AD, and died in about 68 AD. So he had about 30 years of active ministry. Surely God would not expect him to do all that with an impediment of his eyesight! But God said, my grace is sufficient for you. He wanted to work in Paul's weakness as he did with others. God said, “No!”

When you pray, be slow to pray because it puts you at risk with getting involved in God's conditions. Paul wanted results; God wants relationships. God wanted Paul to adjust to His will. This is where walking humbly before God comes in. We have a choice in prayer. It took Paul three times to get the message. God did it with Moses and with Jesus too, in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus asked, If you can, let this cup pass from me. He knew what He had to face (Luke 9:28). God wanted His Son to adjust.

We go along, then things come that shake us, and then we go to God. Our experience is one of constant adjustment. It starts when you first get saved. Getting saved is an adjustment, bowing your heart to God. But it doesn't stop there. He calls us again and again to adjust to His will. We might say, “I have thirty years of ministry ahead of me; how can I do it with this?” “How can I go on?” However legitimate, we have to lay down what we want and adjust to what God wants. The church is lettered with ministries and lives that would not adjust to God's will. We have a clear choice and it happens regularly. Do we humble ourselves before God? How can we say I want it my way? If Paul had not adjusted, who would have written half of the New Testament.

It is a hard thing. Perhaps God is not calling you to adjust yet – or maybe you cannot hear Him. Jesus and Paul were close to God. The closer you get, the greater the adjustment you may need to make. Walk humbly with your God.