

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION  
2 Corinthians 4:16 – 5:21

Most people who are without Christ in their life live their life in the “now.” The only reality for them is “things” that you can accumulate and use. A bumper sticker read: “He who dies with the most toys wins.”

For the Christian, “things” fade into insignificance when compared to the reality of eternity.

**1. The Eternal Context**

**2 Cor 4:16**

<sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

Paul’s opposition accused him of self-promotion, deception, and distorting God’s Word. So twice in Chapter 4, Paul says, “we do not lose heart.”

In 4:8-9 Paul lists the afflictions but always follows with the assurance that God will not allow us to be “crushed.” The outward self is wasting away but the spiritual self is being renewed day by day.

**2. Wearing Down but Looking Up**

**2 Cor 4:16-18**

<sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

The stress of life was taking its toll on the “outer nature,” the body. In 11:23-33 Paul lists things that had happened to him; any one of which would probably have had a lasting effect on any of us. In the context of 4:8-9, it is astounding to hear him say in vs. 17 the afflictions are “light and momentary.”

“Light” means “easy to bear;” “momentary” means “brief” or “on the spot.”

But back in 1:8 he described these afflictions as “far beyond our ability to endure.”

What has changed Paul's perspective? Paul simply remembered that these trials were preparing him for an eternal glory "that far outweighs them all." The Greek phrase means, compared to these temporal sufferings, our future glory is "extraordinary unto the extraordinary" or "excessively to excess." It is beyond human imagination in this life.

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

### **3. Camping Out or Living at Home                      2 Cor 5:1-8**

For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup>For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, <sup>3</sup> if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. <sup>4</sup>For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup>He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

<sup>6</sup>So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, <sup>7</sup> for we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup>Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Perhaps Paul expected to be alive at the resurrection?

1 Cor 15:51-52

<sup>51</sup>Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Now he saw his physical body "wasting away..." [4:16].

The earthly tent which will be destroyed is the "mortal body" in which Jesus' life in us is being revealed through pain [4:10-11].

When a believer's body dies it takes on a new dwelling place deeded to them by the Holy Spirit when they are regenerated. At the instant of faith in Christ the Holy Spirit indwells the believer and is Himself the guarantee of our heavenly dwelling.

While in this earthly tent, in our struggle with life, we groan and are burdened because of the weakness of our mortal bodies.

We can only see this by eyes of faith. In fact, the entire Christian life is lived by faith and not by sight.

#### **4. We have a Court Date**

#### **2 Cor 5:9-12**

<sup>9</sup> So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. <sup>12</sup> We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.

The resurrection is a time of accountability. The believer will be judged by his works. At the return of Christ we will all appear before Christ. This judgment is not about determining one's eternal destiny [heaven or hell], that is already determined before death and is based on God's grace and being justified by faith alone in the atoning and sufficient death of Jesus Christ. [Romans 8:1]

However, Christians will stand before Christ to receive rewards or losses based on their works [1 Cor 3:10-15].

It is important how Christians use their time, energy, and resources.

Eph 6:8

... knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

Col 3:23-25

<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. <sup>25</sup> For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

The word “appear,” in vs. 10 means to be laid bare, exposed, displayed openly. Grace, forgiveness, and justification take the terror out of the prospect of judgment but there must remain a healthy respect [fear] for the Judge.

## **5. Are You Crazy**

**2 Cor 5:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; <sup>15</sup> and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

The love of Christ controls us or compels us to keep a grip on ourselves.

Christ demonstrated His love by dying for our sins. We express our love for Christ by how we relate to other people,

John 13:35

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

## **6. The View from the New Creation**

**2 Cor 5:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

As those loved by God, we must not look at others from a worldly point of view.

We should look for what Christ has done to change them into a new creation.

## 7. How God Views His People

### 2 Cor 5:18-21

<sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

We must be reconciled [changed]. God will not change. Sin separated us from a right relationship with God and makes us hostile towards the only source of help. Unless Christ has reconciled us we remain in a state of hatred toward God.

Romans 8:7-8

<sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

God takes the initiative to reconcile lost people to Himself. The Holy Spirit quickens [makes alive] the spiritually dead sinner through the Gospel.

After our sin-debt is canceled by the righteousness of Christ we are appointed ambassadors for Christ. We are commissioned to a diplomatic assignment of peacemaking. We have the charge to make an urgent appeal to lost people, "Be reconciled to God!"

As the Man who is God, Jesus "knew no sin."

Isaiah 53:9

And they made his grave with the wicked  
and with a rich man in his death,  
although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

1 John 3:5

You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

God made Him to be sin.

God put Jesus “in the rank and order of sinners.” Lloyd-Jones

When Christ is made sin for us, we take on the righteousness of Christ.

Christ took the punishment that we deserve and gives us a righteousness that we do not deserve, nor can we earn it.

Now God views the sinner who trusts Jesus Christ as though He were looking at Christ Himself.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.