

Title: From Temporal to Eternal

Text: 2 Cor 4: 17-5: 9

Date: Sept 3, 2020

Place: SGBC, NJ

Before I went to bed Sunday night I counted 10 texts from brethren here and other places with whom I have been corresponding concerning their heavy, heavy burdens. We have many brethren—in this congregation and others—bearing heavy, heavy burdens. Some mourn over loved ones recently departed to be with the Lord. Others with aching hearts watch their loved ones near the end of this life. Some have heartbreaking news about their health. Others suffer other heavy trials that give heavy hearts.

Monday, I was outback thinking on my text, seeking a word of comfort for these brethren, when a shadow came over the parking lot. I looked up to see giant white clouds drift over the tree tops. Immediately this verse popped in mind—*"Jesus saith...Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"* (Mt 26:64). When I saw those clouds, I thought wouldn't it be wonderful if our Redeemer came right now! One day we will look up and he shall be coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. So why does God send afflictions?

Proposition: God sends these afflictions to prepare his people either for our departure or for his return, whichever comes first. He reminds us this is not our permanent dwelling, our life is in Christ in glory—*"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory"* (Col 3:4).

So for a little while I want to turn our attention and affection from this life to eternal realities. I'm not interested in end times or signs or debates over the order of things—I want you to behold Christ! Only God's people will be comforted by this message; those without Christ are terrified by these things—but God's people are comforted, that is what I pray God do with this word.

THE FACT

First, let's look at the fact that our Savior is coming again. He is on his way now. At any moment Christ shall appear. Be it our departure or his second appearing Christ is coming to receive us to himself.

We have our Lord's word on it. Among the last words to John in Revelation, Christ said, *"Surely I come quickly."* That statement could be translated, *"Surely, I am coming quickly. Surely, I am on my way."* Our Redeemer is not a man that he should lie; he cannot lie; Christ is God and we have his word.

He reminds us he himself is coming. This is the word we use to comfort brethren whose loved ones have departed to be with the Lord—whose bodies sleep in the grave—notice it is the Lord himself that is coming.

1 Thessalonians 4: 13: But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14: For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15: For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them [go before them] which are asleep. 16: For THE LORD HIMSELF shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18: Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

We have Christ's word. Christ himself is coming. He shall gather all his people to himself

Also, we have our Savior's accomplished work to assure us he is coming again. He said, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (Jn 14: 3). On the cross, Christ prepared a place for his elect. He bore God's judgment for us—he died our death and satisfied justice for each of his people. He put away all the sin of his people making his people the righteousness of God in him. So his holiness demands he come again for us. Law and justice demand he fulfill his covenant word to come for each of his own. And, brethren, he shall—he is coming again

Hebrews 9: 26...now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27: And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and UNTO THEM THAT LOOK FOR HIM SHALL HE APPEAR THE SECOND TIME without sin unto salvation.

His second appearing will not be like the first. First time he bore our sin; second time he shall appear without sin.. First time, he redeemed us from the curse of the law, second time he shall redeem us from this world into glory those he purchased with his precious blood.

First time, he wore a crown of thorns; second time he shall wear the crown of universal dominion. First he came in humility on a lowly asses' colt, the second time he is riding on his white horse, conquering and to conquer, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

First time his heel was bruised by the serpent, second time he shall break the serpent's head for good and dash his enemies in pieces as a potters' vessels. First time he was despised and rejected of men; second time he shall be glorified and admired in all them that believe. First time men spit in his face, the second time every knee shall bow and confess him Lord to the praise of God

Revelation 1: 7: Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. 8: I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

So brethren, as you suffer remember—Christ has entered “*into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: And “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:24, 27).*

Acts 1: 9:...a cloud received him out of their sight. 10:...[two men in white apparel] said,...why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

WHY TRIALS?

So why does God send trials? He sends them *to work for us*. God sends trials to prepare us for glory. He sends them to keep us watching, waiting, longing for Christ—2 *Corinthians 4:17: For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*

God gives burdens to make us behold something far, far weightier—“*a far more exceeding and eternal weight*”—of glory! One he reminds us our affliction is light compared to what our Substitute suffered on our behalf. Bearing the sin of his people—yours and mine—under the fierce justice of God and wrath of satan and wicked men

Isaiah 52: 14:...his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

Lamentations 1: 12:...behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

Hebrews 12: 13: For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 14: 4: Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

But by his affliction, Christ worked for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory because “*with his stripes we are healed!*” So that shows us why our suffering is needful—to turn us to him.

JC Philpot said, “He means to conform you to the image of His Son in *glory*—therefore He now conforms you to the image of His Son in *suffering*.”

Two, by these afflictions, he turns us from this flesh, from our troubles, our cares and concerns to Christ at God's right hand; to him who is *our far more exceeding and eternal riches of glory!* He makes us behold Christ our Life, Christ our sovereign King, Christ our Acceptance with God. He makes us behold that we have, right now, eternal Life in him and an inheritance awaiting. Doing so God graciously reminds us that our purpose in this life is Christ and his glory, Christ and his kingdom, Christ and his people. It puts our present afflictions in perspective. It makes them light and momentary in comparison with that far exceeding weight of eternal glory with Christ.

God turns us from the temporal to the eternal—from the seen to the unseen—*2 Corinthians 4: 18: While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.* God reminds us that we and everything around us is weak as dust and shall soon return to dust.

We are dying dust living amongst dying dust. Everything in this earth is made of earth: our bodies, our houses, cars, clothes—nothing was created, all was made with hands out of dust—all temporal, all dying, all decaying right this minute, all will soon return to the dust including us.

James 4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

Also, Christ makes us know the eternal is the real—*2 Corinthians 4: 18...the things which are not seen are eternal. 5: 1: For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* He reminds us our body is only a house, a tent, soon to be dissolved. Man does not *have* a living soul, man *is* a living soul. Our soul is us. Our souls shall live either in the bliss of glory or the torments of hell. But our souls are immortal and shall never die. So Christ reminds his child that Christ has prepared us a permanent eternal house; not of the earth, not of dust, created by our eternal Redeemer in righteousness and true holiness; our building of God is immortal, incorruptible and righteous in Christ. Believer, notice “*we have*” it! “*We have* a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

1 Thessalonians 4: 17: When Christ shall appear, we shall see him as he is, and be like him...

Then by making us behold Christ in these afflictions, he makes us long to be with Christ—*2 Corinthians 5: 2: For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4: For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. 5: Now he that hath wrought us for [prepared us for] the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6: Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8: We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

It is the Lord Jesus we groan for, not merely to be delivered from burdens, but to be with the Lord. The Spirit of God continually reminds us we are strangers in these bodies and in this life. Our conversation—our citizenship—is in heaven.

Philippians 3: 20: Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

We are *confident and willing*, not in ourselves, but in Christ—the very purpose for which God works this to make us have no confidence in the flesh but all confidence in Christ alone. “*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*” (Php 3:3)

Oh, but in Christ, having Christ's righteousness alone, we are *confident and willing to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.* We are willing to behold Christ's face, to know him as he knows us, to be perfectly conformed to his image. It is our desire to be freed from all sin and trouble and division. We long for that day with Christ when we will have no more corruption of worship, no more persecution from the world. We long to have Christ present us as his glorious church without spot or wrinkle (Eph 5: 27).

Brethren, has God ever worked this in you? Has he made you be burdened—by your sin, by the self-righteous Pharisee in you, by trouble within and without—so that you long to be with Christ in your eternal abode? Then you will know this last thing.

RENEWED INWARDLY

Through trials God mortifies our old man of sin and renews our inward man. He revives us. The Spirit renews and refocuses us to live less for self and more for him—*2 Corinthians 5: 9: Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.*

He increases our faith in Christ. Then while present in this body we labor to enter Christ our Rest by faith, the only way we shall be accepted. Beholding our sin we know more fully that our only acceptance is to be “*accepted in the Beloved*”—accepted by being found in him, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ given by God through faith. He sets our affection on things above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, not on things on the earth. He renews us to remember we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.

Also, he increases love for brethren. We labor for brethren to enter into Christ our rest and be accepted. We only have this spiritual fruit by Christ filling us with the fruit of the Spirit. He gives that love that scripture calls charity. He makes us love this way

1 Corinthians 13: 4: Charity suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5: Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6: Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7: Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

After every true trial, we are made to behold Christ by faith in a greater way. And we are made to be longsuffering, to bear our brethren’s shortcoming, to hope for God’s grace upon them, to endure all things and believe all good things concerning them. We do not rejoice to commit iniquity but also we do not rejoice if our brethren are overtaken in iniquity. He makes the preaching of the gospel of Christ and his glory preeminently important.

We begin testing our actions by this acid test: what will help my brethren hear the gospel of Christ.

He makes us do all waiting, watching, hastening to the coming of our Lord. Christ said,

Matthew 24: 42: Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

2 Thessalonians 3: 5:...the patient waiting for Christ.

Titus 2: 13:...looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour.

We are brought to cry out, “*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*” (*Psalm 73:25-26*).

Christ says, “*He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen.*” As his bride, we answer, “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*” (*Rev 22: 20*)

Amen!