

Why Paul Did Not Lose Heart In Suffering

by James Jennings

This sermon focuses on why Paul did not lose heart amidst suffering, highlighting the renewal of the inner self despite the outer self wasting away. Paul's perspective on trials as light, momentary afflictions preparing eternal glory beyond comparison is emphasized. The sermon challenges listeners to shift their focus from the seen, temporary things to the unseen, eternal realities, reminding them of the guaranteed future glory and the purposeful nature of sufferings in renewing and producing growth.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16, Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:7, 2 Corinthians 5:7, 2 Corinthians 5:5, Romans 8:23, Proverbs 16:26, Hebrews 12:2, James 4:14, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Perseverance in Suffering", "Eternal Perspective"

Description

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Transcript

2 Corinthians 4, v. 16-18 I want to speak right now on why Paul did not lose heart while he was suffering. Why did Paul not lose heart? He says here, so we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, wasting away, being destroyed, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

For, this light momentary affliction is preparing or producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. 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 or temporary, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

And then there is a chapter break, but he goes on. There's a conjunction. For, we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God.

Let's pray. Father, Lord, I thank You for Your incredible Word that, Lord, it's profitable. That in some ways can sound like a cheap word, but it's profitable for teaching, for reproof, for encouragement.

And Lord, I pray that You would use this message to encourage saints who are going through trials. And Lord, us who are maybe not in as severe of a trial, Lord, that we would have a clear and renewed perspective on how we should approach the trials that we will indeed face, because You have promised

through much tribulation, we will enter the Kingdom. So, Lord, I ask for Your help right now.

In Christ's name, Amen. Well, let's think about this issue of losing heart for a moment. When 9-11 happened, I read an article about a man named Ben Copp.

He was 13 at the time. And he had made a vow to join the Army Rangers when he was old enough and to go all the way to Afghanistan and Iraq and to fight against terrorism. And so he did that.

But upon his third deployment, after saving six soldiers in battle, he got shot in his leg. Later that day, on the operating table, he had cardiac arrest, which led to his death. Now was the cause that he was fighting for worth it? Was it worth it? Fast forward to 2021.

Afghanistan, the country in a short period of time, has been taken over by a terrorist organization that this young man was seeking to help eliminate. And so, if you go online, you'll find multiple articles right now where news organizations are interviewing the mothers of soldiers who died in Afghanistan. And they're asking the mother the question in view of this current takeover, they're wanting to know to the parents, do you feel like what your son did was in vain? That his death was in vain? One mother said, I've just got to try and think that he didn't die in vain.

That we didn't lose so many lives in vain. Another mother said, if you say that it was all for nothing, you're saying my son died for nothing. And I cannot live with that.

Walk a mile in my shoes and then say that to me. One mother recalled how she struggled to sleep after watching the heartbreaking scenes of the Taliban taking control of Afghanistan. Look, why would people ask those mothers that question? Because mankind knows we don't want our life to be full of no meaning.

We don't want our sacrifice to have been for naught. Right? No one wants that. And these mothers could be on the verge or some have already lost heart.

They've got to turn the TV off and they think it seems it was all in vain. Or you take a soldier who lost both of their legs in the battle to secure a city that the city is now no longer secure. Were those legs lost in vain? Did it have no meaning? Now my goal right now is not to answer that question in regards to what's going on in the Middle East.

I'm simply using that as an illustration. Whether or not it was in vain and how someone would answer that question and all the factors in there, I cannot be an authority on that or even begin to answer that question. But what I want to highlight is that the current circumstances are such that those who sacrifice for the cause could lose heart.

They could become very discouraged and think this is all in vain. Now you rewind history about 2,000 years earlier, and you find this man who was radically saved. He went preaching.

The very message he once tried to destroy. I'm speaking of Paul. And then he says in 2 Corinthians 11, he was beaten with rods.

He was stoned. He was shipwrecked. There were dangers from robbers, danger from his own people, and danger from false brothers even.

He says he had many sleepless nights. He was often without food. False brothers.

There were churches that Paul labored to establish that people came in there, even wolves, and they twisted things and it all turned out to be, was it in vain? What Paul had done. Not all of them became apostate, but many gave in to errors. Many yoked themselves to the false teacher.

Some of Paul's own co-workers deserted him. He says at the end of his life in 2 Timothy 4, all those in Rome had deserted him. What an incredible statement for this man to make.

Did Paul lose heart? Paul says right here in the verse, we do not lose heart. So he didn't. Paul didn't lose heart.

Paul didn't get to this point of despair, of fainting, of giving in to all manner of discouragement. And yet, this is a man who also says his body is wasting away. His body is wasting away.

He's getting persecuted, stoned, false brethren, and yet the man is not losing heart. He's not losing heart. There's something here from Paul that I want to have.

I want all of you to have. That's why we're going to ask the question, why did he not lose heart? Because whatever reasons by which he didn't lose heart, I don't know about you, but I want to know those reasons. Because that should affect my life in the midst of trials.

And Paul was not some super human, and neither are we. If you look at chapter 4, verse 7, we have this treasure in jars of clay. Jars of clay.

Easily broken. Easily discarded after they are broken. We're not made of metal that can be repaired.

Paul was criticized for his weakness. 2 Corinthians 10.10, the false apostle said his bodily presence is weak. And his speech was of no account.

It wasn't impressive. Paul says he experienced trouble on every side. I mean, look at 2 Corinthians 4.11. For we who live are always being given over to death.

Always? Being given over to death? Look at verse 8. We are afflicted in every way. Every? Is that an exaggeration, Paul? 10. We're always carrying the body in the body, the death of Christ.

So Paul suffered. And boy, it's just hard to wrap your mind around it, isn't it? Based on what we go through in our own lives to enter into what Paul endured. Paul even adds in that list right there, he says that he was perplexed.

He says he was perplexed. Verse 8, perplexed, but not driven to despair. Perplexed.

I take that to be something that affects the mind. The wasting away that Paul's talking about here, it's not just the physical. When the physical wears away, what happens to the brain? I mean, your stroke, brother, and others who've gone through things, you're not the same mentally, your capacity to think.

You start to feel like I'm wasting away. I just saw a picture of Papa the other day. They're pushing Papa in a wheelchair outside during the evangelism.

What happened to the Papa who's out playing tennis? His body has continued to waste away. So are ours. I recently was just playing soccer with my kids.

Kicked the ball barefoot and it hit my ankle and it's been swollen for a month. And it won't go away. And I'm thinking, when did this ever happen? I'm just 35.

My body doesn't heal like it used to heal. We're wasting away. Paul was perplexed at times.

That could be comforting. You don't want to take it to mean something that doesn't. But sometimes you didn't know.

Do I go to the left? Do I go to the right? Lord, what are You saying? What are You saying should happen? But Paul did not lose heart. He did not become discouraged and faint in the midst of his trying ministry. And why did he not? That's what really matters to you and I. Whatever answer Paul gives for why he did not lose heart should give us relief from discouragements in our own life and from fainting.

And yes, does Paul say, so we? Referring to the other apostles and those who minister, he does. But the truths here are applicable to anyone whether or not you're in the ministry or not. Now look at the amount of times he mentions this idea in these chapters.

4.1, Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. We don't lose heart. There in 4.16, we do not lose heart.

In chapter 5, look at verses 6 and 8. He says the opposite. It's not just Paul didn't lose heart. He says in v. 6, So we are always of good courage.

Wow! Again, is he exaggerating? So we are always of good courage. Then he says in v. 8, Yes, yes, we are of good courage. And we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him. Paul was concerned about churches not losing heart. What did he tell the Galatians? At the end of the letter, let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we don't what? If we don't give up.

If we don't faint. If we don't lose heart. I mean, you can lose heart.

You and I could lose heart. What did he tell those at Ephesus? Ephesians 3.13 I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering. Which is your glory.

So Paul's suffering, and they could lose heart. They could get discouraged and faint. And it's not even over their own sufferings.

It's over Paul's sufferings. What did he tell those at Thessalonica? 2 Thessalonians 3.13 As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. What did Christ say in Luke 18? He told us a parable in regards to prayer so that we would pray and not what? Lose heart.

Get to the point of fainting. Of discouragement. Paul knew he could easily lose heart.

So he says this. He says these exhortations. And if you remember a few weeks back during the 10 A.M., I dealt with parents not provoking their children to anger.

And in Colossians 3, it talks about fathers not provoking your children to wrath lest what happens? Lest they be discouraged? Or the NAS says, lest they lose heart. Lest they lose heart. You know, they're never encouraged.

They're always criticized. The parent is a perfectionist. Everything they do, there's always something wrong.

The kid just wants to faint and quit. Right? Or there's no love. And they're constantly looking for that love.

I gave many examples, but a child could lose heart based on the conduct of the parent. Well, I've got good news for you. God's conduct for you and I should never be a cause for us to lose heart.

He is a perfectly heavenly Father. What does it mean to lose heart? If you look at a lexicon, it'll say become discouraged and faint. Or you fail to hold out successfully.

You give up. You give up. Or it says to act badly in some circumstance.

To lose heart, it's the idea that the person gets to the point where they just make that terrifying statement, why try? Why try? Why try? To lose heart could be to be disillusioned. You lose faith or trust in something formerly regarded as good. And you know, there's two types of losing heart, right? There's the momentary, kind of like Craig even said in the Lord's Supper.

You've got these saints who had unbelief, but yet their life had belief at the same time. So their whole life was one of faith, but there were certain areas they were struggling to believe God. Same thing here.

I might lose heart momentarily with one area in my life, but then you've got others, it's not just losing heart in a little area and being discouraged, but their whole life becomes one of a permanent discouragement, of disillusionment with the faith and they entirely abandon Christ. So you and I can lose heart over many things. Don't ever lose heart over Christ.

There's times you hear someone, they talk about a sport or some hobby and they just say, it doesn't do what it used to do for me. That's fine. That's great.

I'm glad it doesn't do what it used to do. But never say that about Christ. You never want to get to that point where you're discouraged and giving in more and more to losing heart on the reality of following the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is in Malachi 3.18. Israel arrived at the point and listen to the words they ended up saying. It's somewhat terrifying. They said, it's in vain to serve God.

It's in vain to serve God. What is the prophet of our keeping His charge? Or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts? Right here, they're mourning before the Lord and they're getting to the point where they're thinking, what's even the point of this? You heard Craig talk about us praying and fasting. If in your mind you're thinking, what is even the point of that? That's unbelief.

Trying to creep in and poison your mind and lose confidence in God. Throughout all the Old Testament, we see people thinking it's in vain to serve God. They lose heart.

We don't want to lose heart. We want to be strengthened in our heart. Paul mentions that multiple times.

One of them is in Colossians. He says that their hearts may be encouraged. So we need.

Now, how severe is this? How severe is it to lose heart? How much should I listen up to what led Paul to not lose heart? Is this really that important? Look at 2 Corinthians 4.1. You ask yourself, what might you

do if you lose heart? And Paul says right here, after having this ministry by the mercy of God, we don't lose heart. And then he actually explains what those who don't lose heart have renounced. Which, if you think, that would imply if one loses heart, they might not end up renouncing these very things that Paul says next.

Verse 2, we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or tamper with God's Word. But by an open statement of the truth, we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience and the sight of God.

Those are words coming from a man who has not lost heart. He's not lost a confident trust and belief in the goodness and loving-kindness of God. But you reverse that.

You've got someone who's losing heart in the Lord. They're going to tamper with God's Word. I've seen it happen.

Think of how many errors come from people finding no hope in a trite affliction from the Word of God. And since they can't, they end up tampering with it to find an encouragement that is not actually there. The well-known one is one of the main false teachers of easy-believism out there.

His friend who was a pastor denied to faith became an atheist. When his friend died, he couldn't handle the thought of his friend in hell. He couldn't cope with that thought.

So you know what he did? He created a doctor and he tampered with the Word of God and said, well, because you one time asked Jesus in your heart and you said that you believed, even though you've now become an atheist, I'm still going to see Him in heaven one day. And behold, that has spread throughout all of America because one teacher at Dallas Theological Seminary decided to go that route because he couldn't handle the Word of God saying what it does in the midst of a trial. It's sobering here.

Paul, he's not losing heart, so he's renouncing tampering with the Word of God. But in reverse, if we're being crushed, if we're fainting, we don't want to change who the Lord is. If you don't like what God is doing with His government, don't try to hack the system.

Don't try to alter it. So, Satan prowls around like a roaring lion. And he's seeking someone to devour.

He wants to convince you to lose heart because some affliction that God has allowed in your life. Satan wants to convince the believer that God's treatment of them is wrong. He wants you to lose heart.

Just to think, it's like Job's wife. What a picture of the enemy when she's looking at her husband and saying to him, curse God and die. But Job's response was to bless the Lord who gives and takes away.

And so it is with our enemy. Satan wants us to misread God's mind in sending the affliction. But we must not do that.

If you start to wrongly view God's treatment of you, then you're going to have some type of bitterness toward God. And you either get upset with Him, or you get to the point where you alter His character in order to fit your mold. You tamper with it.

Think, has Satan slanderously tried to convince you that God's treatment is ill toward you? Has it ever happened? When something happened, and right away the thought just comes, some ill thought about God. Now, before we look at these reasons why Paul did not lose heart, I want to warn us all of something.

My goal is just to give the reasons Paul does from this chapter.

And I'm trusting that by doing that, it will bring the outcome that Paul intended. Right? Pretty simple. However, this is what I believe.

I believe some will be let down by Paul's reasons. It's not going to be what you're going to want. Partly because some might be too familiar with what Paul's going to state, and thus it won't have such an impact.

Or for some, we can already program our mind where we think, this is what I need. And Paul says, no, this is what you need. Right? We've got to be able to believe that.

So I'm not meaning to say you won't be impacted, but that it will take faith on your behalf, faith on my part, even as the one preaching this, to really believe these truths as your own. Only then will it change and alter my own perspective. So if Paul's reasons are not what you're looking for to pull you through losing heart and being discouraged and affliction, then I would ask you, what are you looking for? Is anything else that you go find out that they're actually going to do what these truths from the Word of God are going to do? You know, the medicine being ineffective does not indicate defective medicine as much as the patient not really, by faith, taking and receiving it correctly.

So we're going to consider why Paul did not lose heart from these verses right here. So first reason, and there's some I have to skip over here for the sake of time, but the first reason here that Paul did not lose heart is in 4.1. Chapter 4.1. He says, therefore, having this ministry, by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. Wait, what's Paul saying there? For one, he's acknowledging who even got him in the ministry.

Was it something he did? Was it something someone else did? It was what the Lord had done. Right? We have this ministry because we were shown mercy. Paul recognizes he is where he is because he's been shown mercy.

And Paul realizes he's laboring because who took initiative to put him in the ministry? The Lord. Right? This is God's idea. How can you lose heart if you're doing what was God's idea and not your own? Right? If the Lord's the one who enrolled me, if the Lord's the one who saved me, if the Lord's the one who put me in this situation, and it wasn't my own idea, but I got plucked out of the path I was on and I got put in this situation, I can not lose heart over that.

Think about what Paul said in 1 Timothy 1.16. I have received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life. Paul is being faithful to the One whom showed him mercy because the grace of God is true and it actually does change someone. Right? The real mercy of God is not ineffective.

And Paul won't lose heart because God's perfect patience won't fail to bear perfectly with Paul's weaknesses. It's one thing to know of someone who is miraculously rescued by another compared to actually being the one who was rescued. And so Paul says, I know, I was personally rescued by the Lord.

I was put in the ministry by the Lord. And the Lord is even using me as an example to show His perfect patience. I mean, how could I lose heart? Chosen by God, drafted into the ministry by God, and He's told me He's going to manifest perfect patience towards me? What's there to lose heart about? It almost sounds like they're using it as an excuse to mess up because God is so patient.

But no, true patience makes you want to love the Lord all the more. So this firsthand experience of the mercy of God, it makes Paul want to proclaim the Lord's kindnesses all the more. But can you and I look and say, you know what, the only reason I am where I am is by the mercy of God.

God put me here. God did this. I mean, there is great encouragement there to not lose heart.

I didn't make this up. I didn't save myself 13 years ago. It was the Lord.

And all of a sudden, there's this courage because you see God's hand in faithfulness. But you consider the opposite. You consider someone who they say, well, I have this ministry because I got creative and I knew all the marketing tactics and I made this little thing on YouTube and I got all these views and I figured it out on my own.

You know what? They're going to be able to easily get discouraged because it wasn't the Lord's doing. When the going gets rough, they're going to end up fainting. So that's the first reason.

True mercy and acknowledging that and seeing that and working your life. You're not going to be able to lose heart if you really get a glimpse of God's patience and kindness and His salvation in your life. Joshua read in Hebrews 12, it says considering Jesus and His sufferings that we do not faint, that we do not lose heart there in v. 3. Second reason, Paul did not lose heart because he was content being a jar of clay and not a titanium vase.

Look at v. 4-7. We have this treasure in jars of clay. We.

Not just them, but specifically these guys ministering. You've got this little jar that could so easily be broken. It's not tough.

It's got this glorious light within it of the Gospel that is coming forth from something you would not expect. Kind of like our building. When people come up to our building, it does not look good.

Thankfully, it's not a jar of clay and it's not going to collapse on us. I hope people come in and they see there's truth here no matter the way the external thing looks. I mean, God actually wanted it like that as far as the weakness of the human body.

And Paul, how can one be content? First, if you want to be content with being a jar of clay, which you need to be content, you need to just accept that reality that you are weak and you're not going to be able to maintain perfect health until you're 100 and bodily training only profits a little. What was God's reason behind making us jars of clay? Do I know that reason? Because if I don't know that reason, I'm not going to be content. I'm not going to be content.

And he says right there in v. 7, he gives the reason. We have this treasure in jars of clay to show something. And that to show is to show the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

God wants us weak enough, kind of like Gideon stripping the army down of how many soldiers they've got, so that when they go to war, we go to preach, so that we go to evangelize, so we go into the missions field, people look and they see the power is not with them, it's with God. It's with the Lord. They're weak.

And then the life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal flesh. It says in v. 11. There's power there through Christ.

So in your trial, do you recognize the weakness? It's supposed to be there. Right? It's not an accident. It's supposed to be there.

Are we content about that? So rather than despair it, we trust by faith that recognizing the weakness, we can go to the Lord in faith and find strength. Remember 2 Corinthians 1? Such a glorious chapter. Paul despaired of life itself.

He felt like he had received the sentence of death. And then he gives as clear as day a reason why it all happened. And I love that verse.

He said it was so we would no longer rely on ourselves, but we would rely on the God who raises the dead. That's one of the main purposes of a trial is to get you more God-reliant. And then you won't lose heart.

But when you're self-reliant in your own power, your own strength, you hate being perplexed at times and having to walk by faith. You want everything ordered and figured out perfectly, you're going to lose heart. But we go by faith.

We look to that which is unseen. So what about those who do the opposite of this? They're not content in weakness. Therefore, their life does not show the surpassing power which belongs to God.

Therefore, they don't get true help in the trial. They're constantly trying to put on some titanium armor around the jar of clay. Rather than just realizing this is what I am and God has made me like this with a purpose, so I'm going to stop trying to patch this thing up.

Patch this thing up. I'm not saying you shouldn't take care of your body and get medical help if you can. We want to live as long as we can.

We don't want to have a martyr's complex. Third thing here, why Paul did not lose heart. Paul did not lose heart because he viewed his trials as easy to bear compared to what is to come.

And you see that in the verses that we read. He says, we do not lose heart, though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day for this light, momentary affliction. For this light, momentary affliction.

Light. Easy to bear. Not heavy.

I mean, is that how you would describe? Affliction. And he's calling his whole life together as this. Not just some specific individual trial.

Growing up, there's video games and you go to play it at the place and it gives you a check and a degree of difficulty. Right? Easy, normal, hard, and then some had harder than hard. Paul here himself is selecting and describing the degree of difficulty in one way compared to that which is to come.

I mean, what if I could tell you that you could select your degree of difficulty on your trials? What if that's actually in your hands? That you could select the easy button? Because Paul here, he's telling us that. He's calling his lifetime of afflictions as light compared to something. I mean, what if you went up to a Christian who was stoned, whipped, their comrades deserted them, they had eye problems, they're suffering, and you say to them, boy, this really must be easy to bear.

Easy to bear. I mean, wouldn't that be somewhat hurtful? Wouldn't that insult them? Yet here, Paul himself is the one telling us this light, momentary affliction. Light, momentary.

And this is coming from one who is not what? He has not lost heart. If your heart is drifting from faith and confidence in the Lord and discouragement, you're not going to be able to see things as they are with an eternal perspective. That's going to start to get taken from you.

But here one is who's not lost heart, and he can look at his trials as light. And he's not discouraged by them. At least not right here as he's writing these, because whatever led him to be despairing in 2 Corinthians 1, right after being stoned it seems in Lystra, he had learned from that to rely more on the Lord.

So Paul is growing up to this point. He's not the same Paul he was when he talks about what happened in 2 Corinthians 1. God has already grown him some and further sanctified him in his own battle against these afflictions. The Greek word for light is used in one other place in the New Testament.

Where do you think that is? Yeah, Matthew 11. Matthew, my yoke is easy. My burden is light.

My burden is light. Meaning, it's not hard to carry. The word could be rendered insignificant or trivial.

Meaning, the weight, it's superficial. You know, you say you have a superficial cut. It's basically saying it's not a big deal.

It's not a big deal. You could wrongly take Matthew 11 to think that Christian life is easy in the wrong sense. You could totally miss what Paul is saying there.

But is it easy if by faith, I'm trusting the Lord and working through things by looking to Him and having Him bear those burdens and casting them upon Him? Yes, I won't get crushed. Because I'm looking to Him. Think of the song, Abide With Me, that we just sang.

I never noticed that statement that it has. It says, I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless. And what was the next statement? Ills have no weight.

What does it say after that? Tears, no bitterness. I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless. Ills have no weight.

He's talking about this passage. Paul looks at his trials and he calls them superficial. That's almost insulting to someone who's in the midst of a trial right now.

Again, he's saying that in comparison to something. That all the more shows us Paul's perspective, the way Paul would think. In 2 Corinthians, that word affliction is the word tribulation in some places.

It's the idea of pressing out grapes in a wine press. You'd put heavy pressure, apply to the grapes, where they cannot take it any longer, and the grapes finally, they give forth the juice. Right? You're getting out of them something.

That sounds like the difficulty harder than hard. When you look at Paul's trials, I would say harder than hard. And Paul says, easy, light, momentary, not that heavy, easy to bear.

Now, we could do one of two things right now. We could get mad at Paul for his insensitivity, his lack of present-day understanding. Or we could pause and we could ask ourselves, here is a man who has a perspective that I need.

This is a man who has a perspective that I need. So I might be discouraged in an affliction right now and I might look at Paul's words as harsh, but I need to have whatever this individual has. I don't want to view my trials as impossible to bear.

I don't want to lose heart. I want to be able to look at my trials and be able to say as Paul did that that is easy to bear and it's light and momentary compared to something. It's not saying trials aren't difficult.

It's not saying that the way that it's narrowed, Jesus used the word hard. He didn't say easy in Matthew 7. He said it's hard. Hebrews 12 talks about to the point of shedding your own blood, meaning to the point of death.

I'm not trying to say death is easy. But it is easy if your perspective is on that as Paul's was, that which is eternal. Eternal.

How could Paul view his trials as easy? You know how? Paul did something every day that you and I need to do. Paul was comparing and contrasting all of the time. I mean, every day.

Comparing and contrasting in order to do what? To maintain a biblical perspective on reality. Right? I mean, even in this text right here, he sees the body's wasting away. That's one thing.

But then he sees the inner man is being renewed. Then he looks at the suffering as light, but then he looks at the glory as something that is weighty, that is heavy. And he sees the suffering as momentary, but he sees the glory as eternal.

I mean, Paul is comparing things. We ought to be getting the spreadsheet out, so to speak, and adding the correct values to everything that we see. This trial value is this, but then, oh, the glory is this value, therefore this value must shrink.

It's not as difficult in view of what is to come. But you know what happens here? We're stuck in this body of flesh with eyes that are looking to that which is what? Seeing. That's the difficulty.

All this is happening in the realm of faith. It's about trusting the Lord from the heart of faith. I mean, imagine if you had all the afflictions of Joe, Jeremiah, Jonah, Stephen, and Paul.

Imagine all of those on your head. What is that compared to the eternal glory? Good. What is it? Is it harder than hard? Is it medium? Paul's saying no, it's light.

It's momentary. We've got to be able to look in the present at how we will look at everything when it's all been said and done. Don't get stuck in the here and now.

Think, when I'm in glory with Christ, how will I look back on everything? And I need to be thinking that way now. Having this heavenly mind, this heavenly perspective as Paul does right here. So, one way to not lose heart is to be able to look as Paul says and say these momentary afflictions, they're light and momentary compared to the eternal weight of glory that is to come.

Another way that Paul is not going to lose heart. Paul did not lose heart because he saw an aspect of the true design of his sufferings. And that was to renew his inner man.

And if you look at the verse there, though our outer self is wasting away, something positive is happening. The inner self is being renewed day by day. Meaning, there is something very meaningful going on in the midst of our trials.

Kind of like Josh talked about in the first hour about the discipline of the Lord. That might feel severe at times, but it's to share in the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. And then as Craig said, it's ultimately to present it as a people blameless to the Lord.

And there's all sorts of God's plan involved in all of this. But your trial is not meaningless. It has a purpose.

It really does. And you might not be able to see the purpose, but it has a purpose. And what does Paul even mean here? Our inner self is being renewed day by day.

It's caused to grow up day by day. He doesn't say week by week. This is happening every day of our lives.

There's some progressive growth that is happening. And afflictions actually help increase that. Recently, one of our sisters came out of the season of cancer and met with Jeff and mentioned how she struggled that the Lord wasn't as close as He was when she had the cancer.

It's not an accident, because there's such renewal and a separation from the things of the world in the midst of a trial where all the more your heart longs for eternity. Paul's the one who tells us, I desire to depart and be with Christ. That's far better.

What was his reason to remain? Well, to remain is more necessary for you all. He wanted to be with Christ, but to remain was more necessary for his fellow believers. So it is, that as he was in a trial, the weight of it caused him to rely on the Lord.

2 Corinthians 1.9 And as he's relying on the Lord, he's looking to the Lord and change is happening. Just look at 2 Corinthians 3.18. He had just made this statement. We with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

Trials come and you look to the Lord and you're being changed in the midst of the trial as you look and rely upon the Lord. It's just happening to you through the Spirit of Almighty God. He's continually changing you in the midst of that.

You could say trials promote a quickened sanctification in many ways. I mean, it's as if Paul's progress bar of his health is getting decreasing. It's like 100% now, it's down to like 10%.

It looks like he's at the end. But while that's decreasing, his holiness and his desire to be with Christ is increasing. It's past 100% for this guy.

It looks like he's at 130. He's broke the thing. He so much wants to be with the Lord.

I mean, do you look at that? A blow to your body physically is actually meant to renew you internally. I mean, just the little thing of my ankle swelling for weeks. It's amazing, just something as small as that.

I mean, that's really light. It's like easy, easy, easy. But you know what? Your body wasting away? I mean, in some way, medicine is a blessing, but we're often able to patch up the pain and it takes away this constant, desperate need for the Lord.

Paul didn't have Tylenol to take after that stoning. He didn't have essential oils, or maybe he did. Whether they did anything or not is unbeknownst.

Another thing that kept Paul from losing heart. Same idea. It's not a meaningless trial.

He says here, the affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory. Preparing. Producing for us an eternal weight of glory.

Meaning the trial, it's kind of like rain coming down on the crop and it's helping produce something. That without the rain, there isn't some producing. Now what does Paul mean by that? Because if you look at Romans 8.18, he's not saying the same thing.

It almost sounds like it. Romans 8.18, he says, I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed. So there he's saying, suffering's now, glory later.

You can't compare it. The contrast is so different. But here he uses the word, this light momentary affliction is preparing.

Producing. So he doesn't look at it and just say it's contrast. But he actually looks at it and says the affliction is actually helping to bring something about.

So how do our afflictions produce an eternal weight of glory? Now, some false religions will say, oh, well, that means through your sufferings you earn heaven. No, no, no, no. Now, is the Christian going to go through many tribulations? They are.

Do those trials merit justification before God? Absolutely not. Is Paul saying that as he suffers, the weight of glory, meaning the value of it and his desire to be there, it just keeps increasing? Or, what does Paul go on to say right after this? In the same context of this idea, look what he says in v. 10. 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.

Paul's theology is not one where there is no reality of rewards that take place. Is that what he's saying? As he suffers and he labors for the Lord, there's being more fruit? And that's just going to make eternity all the more glorious? These different people who as he suffered, life was given to them. They came to know the Lord.

He just talked about that in 2 Corinthians 4. No, 4.11. He says we're always being given over to death. But look what happens when he's given over to death. "...So that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh, so death is at work in us, but life in you." I mean, Paul is suffering, and he's saying life is at work in others.

Meaning, not just growth, but people are actually coming to the knowledge of the truth as Paul is suffering and laboring for the Lord. And will that indeed no doubt make heaven all the more glorious when the missionary sees the people who came to know the Lord, even though he suffered as he suffered? Is it going to make it all the more precious to see those who were brought to the truth through those beautiful

feet? Yeah, I think that's definitely something that will make heaven all the more glorious. Is that exactly what he means here? Or is it the idea that our afflictions are kind of priming the pump for our desire to be in heaven? Just producing more and more.

I mean, think, Paul got to the point where he just wants to depart and be with Christ. Far better. Proverbs 16:26 says, a worker's appetite works for him.

His mouth urges him on. Is that what Paul's saying? He's just working and it makes his appetite for heaven all the more. As one brother said, if you haven't worked all day and you're just laid on the couch and a feast is right before you on the table, right? And you're just laid on the couch all day, where's your appetite at? It's not going to be as enjoyable.

But the person who labored all day and they sweat and they got cuts and they just labored away and they get home and they've got this feast on the table, it's all the more pleasurable and delightful for them to indulge in that because of the hard work leading up to it. I mean, is that the same idea? Paul just looks at all these labors and he sees there's rest coming. As it says in Revelation, they will rest from their deeds and their deeds will follow them.

Something is being produced. His suffering is not meaningless. Something is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory.

In your trials, they will make you want heaven more. They'll make you realize how frail this life is. As we suffer, it helps decrease any remaining contentment that we have for this life.

You start to realize this really isn't that amazing compared to the glory that is beyond all comparison. This really makes you examine what is precious? What am I holding on to? One of the main reasons I would rather not die than be with Christ is my lost children and being able to love them and be a father to them. When I was single, there was a lot more of a willingness to be ready to go.

Right? And I appreciate what a brother wrote about this very passage and just examining our own heart towards what idols are creeping into our heart. Listen to what he says. This is in regards to family and how the Lord, in order to produce even a greater longing for heaven when we make an idol out of our family, there's times He actually has to deal with that.

It can be somewhat scary to think of the Father doing that to us. But as Hebrews 12 says, He does it out of love. He says this, our earthly happiness is much derived from our families.

We love our wives. We love our children. They are dear and near to us.

A part of ourselves. And these ties so tender and so close, they form a main part of the sweetness that is in any earthly lot. That we might not then set up these family idols as our household gods, nor cleave too closely in affection to them, it needs must be that gall and wormwood should be dropped into this cup, lest it prove too sweet.

Lest we love our wives, our children, our relations and friends too dearly. Lest they usurp the place of God. By becoming idols, they chain and feather us down too closely to the earth.

Entangled in these silken ties, we would grow more and more attached to this life. And in proportion, as these fibers of sin and self entwine themselves more closely around our heart, would they eat out the life

of God and drain away all our spiritual strength and vital sap. As then, to save the oak, the ivy is cut down.

So the ax must fall to sever these two ensnaring these two tender ties. And as they become cut or loosened, more room seems to be made for the things of eternity. More room for the Lord Jesus Christ and for those spiritual affections to expand and grow.

And you know, why does Jesus say I must hate My own father and mother, My wife and My children, for I cannot be His disciple? Why does He say that? It doesn't mean you hate Him as in a sinful anger, but in comparison to Christ, it's so small. I read those words and I just thought... I mean, I feel that. I feel the test.

Do I need to love my family? Do I need to lay my life down for my wife? Absolutely. But it's like where do you get to the point where something crosses into idolatry? Where something, your emphasis, it starts to kill your longing for eternity. And I know most of us parents, we just want our children saved.

It's not a matter of seeing them ultimately grow up and be old. It's a matter of them being in Christ. But the more we look at the things not seen, as one brother said, the more our desire after the enjoyment of them will increase.

So Paul didn't lose heart because he was not looking at what is seen. Do you see that here? Verse 18, we look not to the things that are seen. Does that describe me? But to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are unseen are eternal. Where's my primary focus? Where's my primary looking? Again, the trials, Paul's saying, are going to help you look all the more to the unseen. You have no other option.

As things in your life, they fall apart, you recognize my heart and my flesh will fail. But the Lord, He is my portion. He's my portion, ultimately.

Paul's basically, again, contrasting the length of each phase. Everything in this life, it's this short. Everything in eternity, it's forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever.

And he goes on in chapter 5, he starts to deal with that. Just this earthly home being destroyed, this body. You realize what makes Paul not lose heart almost has nothing to do with anything here and now? It's like all of his encouragement is looking to unseen realities and trusting them by faith.

And he says in 5.7, we walk by faith, not by sight. But when I look at my own life, where am I at? How much of it is looking to the seen? Or it becomes too focused in. And like that oak tree, the vines, they start to creep up and you don't even recognize it.

It's like something just really grips you. And you're longing for heaven. Maybe it's not as it could be.

You're looking to the things that are unseen. Paul's looking to what is to come. So some of us, we might not find our heart encouraged as we could because we're too focused on what is temporary.

And so when Paul's thinking about all these things, he won't lose heart, and it deals with the eternal or what the present is even working for, producing a greater eternal weight of glory if we're too focused on the temporary. It's not going to do much. Because if our main affection is towards the things here, then the things working to make the eternity all the more glorious and better, they won't excite us as much.

Paul didn't lose heart. He was always of good courage because the eternal weight of glory was guaranteed. And look at 5.5, He who has prepared for us this very thing has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

They commonly use the word a down payment. Some of you put a down payment on the house, it closes in 30 days. I mean, you're just excited.

Right? 30 more days. Or some of you bought it in cash. It closed in five days.

We're Californians. But you can't wait to move in. That's how Paul is.

He knows the down payment is there. This is a guarantee I will be with Christ. And he just can't wait for closing.

Can't wait for it to come. He can't wait for the tent which the wind is blowing against and it's just all broken. He can't wait to get a heavenly dwelling that is solid.

He can't wait even for a new body. Paul's concerned about that. Why in the first letter did he deal with the Church so strongly about denying the resurrection? Because Paul believes that you will be resurrected and you will have a resurrected body.

And he looks at that as glorious. And he hopes for that. And you know what? As your body's falling apart, you can hope for that.

Some of us, that doesn't encourage us that much. Maybe it's because we haven't suffered as much as Paul did. And so the idea of having a new body, that was very encouraging to him.

And that's another reason Paul didn't lose heart because a replacement body was coming. He knew he had a brief time left to use the beat-up old plugger before he got a body that would never break down and was eternal. Paul was always looking to the future provision.

His aim was not the freedom of a bodily existence in heaven, but for a bodily existence which is permanent and heavenly. He was checking the shipping address, you could say, to see when is it going to arrive. And it's not Amazon Prime in three days or two days.

It's James 4. It's a vapor. It's a vapor. That's how long until it's delivered.

Our life is a vapor in view of eternity. It's just going to be here. It's going to be gone.

We were just talking about Scott's 40. And we're growing up. I'm going to be 40 in five years.

We'll be 60, 80 before we know it. It's just going to be gone. That's why he prayed in the Psalms, Lord, give me a heart of wisdom that I would number my days that I would have a heart of wisdom.

I mean, we need that. So, Paul speaks in Romans 8 of redemption of the body. How many of you think of that? I rarely do.

But I think the more my body falls apart, the more it will come to my mind. Everything Paul puts, it's about perspective. That's really what it's about.

How do you perceive reality? How do you view reality? That's going to affect how you respond to your trials. We've got many precious promises, but they require faith to lay hold of. Are you content being a jar of clay? Do you approach afflictions as a chance for the life of Christ to be at work in you that you might speak to others that they might have life? Or do you moan in self-pity? Or do you view your trials as easy burdens? Or do you view it as some great heavy thing that is impossible to bear? Do you see that your trials are renewing you day by day and constantly making you holier? And they have a meaning and a purpose.

Do you view your life as momentary? Short? Or do you lack some sense of urgency on the brevity of life? Do you see your trials as producing something and not meaningless? Or do you question what God has allowed? Do you believe heaven to come is beyond all comparison? Or do you rarely compare and contrast the temporal to the eternal? When was the last time you've done that? When was the last time you took out the spreadsheet, so to speak, and you really compared things? Because that's what Paul does here. He's constantly having it fresh in his mind of how brief life is, how glorious heaven is. So believer, maybe you're depressed because your eyes are not turned upon the unseen.

It's not where you're looking. You're looking entirely to the seen. You're looking at the wrong place.

By faith, you need to look to the Lord. You need to look to these realities. You need to get your perspective completely right and in line with the Word of God.

You need to be able to see things for what they are. Our danger is losing sight of the things that are not seen. That's our danger.

We've got to watch our heart that we not fall into forgetfulness of the things that are not seen. Which again, you don't see them. But suffering is there to remind you to look there.

That's one of its purposes. And it's to remind you of how momentary your life is. Remember, before I was even converted, I thought I had a heart attack.

Granted, it was a doctor. I went to his house. I was laying on the floor.

That affliction made me just feel like eternity was right there. And as a lost person, it was absolutely terrifying. I thought I was saved.

But afflictions, they make you feel eternity is closer. I mean, think, if you're an unbeliever here, just let me give you this thought. Where are you looking when trouble comes and the clay pot of your life is finally broken? Is everything you're living for here, is it going to relieve you? Is it going to usher you into eternal weight of glory? I mean, what we hope for, it's eternal.

It's unchangeable. What you hope for if you're lost, it's temporary and always changing. There's no guarantee.

Nothing seen is ultimately going to relieve you. And you know what the things in the world do? They scream at us all the time. They want our attention.

As one brother said, the circle of hourly recurring duties, they're all saying to me with uplifted voice, look at me, look at me, think of me. I want you and I must have you. Whatever you neglect, you must not neglect me.

Give me all your heart. I mean, things are doing that in the world. Screaming at us.

The Lord is saying, come. Come to Me. You come to Me.

It will be an easy burden to bear. It will be light if you're relying on the Lord Jesus Christ. And by faith, you can believe in the Lord and you can no longer overvalue this world.

Because this world and the desires of the flesh possessions, it's passing away. But he who does the will of God will abide forever. Let me close with one quote.

Thomas Boston wrote this. Seen things are but temporal. Unseen things are eternal.

The world's smiles and frowns will soon be over. But God's smiles and frowns will last forever. Ere long this stage of vanity and misery will be taken down, but another scene will commence that will last forever.

Will you look forward to death? That will be the end of seen things to you. Look at the end of the world. That will be the end of them to all.

But then the unseen things take place. Never to give place to a change. Let me say then, will thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings and fly away as an eagle towards heaven.

And by the time you are in another world, the support which you derive from the world's goods, it will be gone. And you will awake and find yourselves faint. But through eternity, you shall not once taste the comforts of another world.

Father, Lord, we're thankful that we can taste the heavenly pleasures because Your Son tasted death for us. And He was bruised and crushed for us. Lord, thank You.

Lord, I pray that You would all the more grip us with an eternal perspective that we wouldn't lose heart. Lord, that we wouldn't faint. Lord, that we wouldn't be discouraged.

Lord, I pray if any here are discouraged in the race, Lord, encourage their hearts as their eyes are set on that which is unseen. Lord, show them how You're working these trials for good. And Lord, I pray, Father, I pray that You would keep our hearts from being attached to the things which are all going to pass away.

Lord, help us to guard our hearts. Lord, we feel it. There's just a war, a battle, to keep things in the right place.

Lord, You know, You said in the New Covenant You would cleanse us of all of our idols. Lord, if there's something in my own heart that's not right, Lord, cleanse us. Make us more like Your Son.

Renew us in the inner man. Make us more like Christ. And Lord, we thank You, Father, for sending Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In His name I pray, Amen.

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