

In this powerful chapter, Paul has been defending his ministry as one of integrity. He has shared that if we will look upon the glory of the Lord we will be changed into the same image (3:18<sup>i</sup>). Though we are fragile, perishable bodies, within us is a priceless treasure (4:7<sup>ii</sup>). Our power does not come from us but from the Creator of heaven and earth. We die to our old self so that His life in us might deliver the wonder of the new covenant to others and dispel the darkness with the light of the Lord (4:12<sup>iii</sup>).

He continues now in our verses for today by quoting Psalm 116:10. <sup>13</sup> *Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak,* 2 Corinthians 4:13-18 When rabbis quoted a Scripture, they expected those who are grounded in God's Word to consider the passage they are referencing. Since our minds are so full of other things, there is probably not an individual among us who can instantly recall the passage to which Paul is referring. So let us go there and get some insight into why he quoted that particular verse.

<sup>1</sup> *I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.* Psalm 116:1 Paul had shared how he and his team suffered, and yet how God was their strength to help them endure (1 Corinthians 4:11-13<sup>iv</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> *Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.* <sup>3</sup> *The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.* <sup>4</sup> *Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!"* Psalm 116:2-4 In Romans 10:13<sup>v</sup> Paul declares that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. He despaired of life itself, but when he called on the Lord, God, in His time, delivered him. Paul takes the words of this Psalm and applies them to His own life. I have no doubt that he had memorized it as he refers to it several times. Are our thoughts about our situations formed by the Scripture we have committed to memory? Or do we just consider difficulty to be happenstance?

<sup>5</sup> *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful.* <sup>6</sup> *The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.* <sup>7</sup> *Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* <sup>8</sup> *For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling;* <sup>9</sup> *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.* Psalm 116:5-9 This is a psalm of thanksgiving for the answer to prayer. To Paul it was the hope he clung to in times of difficulty. His soul was not at rest regarding the Corinthian church until Titus brought word that his letter of correction was received and acted on. Surely this Psalm helped Paul during his years of imprisonment. He knew the church and his life were in God's merciful hands.

Now we come to the passage he quoted. <sup>10</sup> *I believed, even when I spoke: "I am greatly afflicted";* <sup>11</sup> *I said in my alarm, "All mankind are liars."* Psalm 116:10,11 He only quoted the first line. But what does the rest tell us. His heart ached over the church. The false teachers had sown lies about him. But as we go on through the psalm, we will see the same conclusion that Paul reached.

<sup>12</sup> *What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me?* <sup>13</sup> *I will lift up the cup of salvation (yeshua in Hebrew) and call on the name of the LORD,* Psalm 116:12,13 This is the thought of the next verse in our Corinthians passage. Paul believed in Jesus' death and resurrection. So even when his heart was not at rest and his concern for the

church overwhelmed him, he reminded himself of the coming victory we see in what he spoke as a response to his faith. He looked to the Word of God to reassure his heart.

*<sup>14</sup> knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.* 2 Corinthians 4:14 This is what Paul speaks from his believing heart, his faith response to the Scripture regarding Corinth. He knows - not hopes or wishes or dreams but knows with certainty - that the God who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us with Jesus! We die with Him daily, and we will be raised with Him right now spiritually. That is the power to face hardship and frustration in the resurrected life of Jesus (Romans 8:11<sup>vi</sup>). We have resurrected life in us because Jesus lives in us. He and the church of Corinth had taken the cup of Yeshua and called on His name. The seal of the Holy Spirit is what guarantees that when these bodies turn to dust in the grave, the Lord will call us out like He called Lazarus out, and our spirits will have a new tent to dwell in, an eternal one (2 Corinthians 5:1<sup>vii</sup>). That is what baptism declares, buried with Him and raised with Him to newness of life (Romans 6:4<sup>viii</sup>).

There is a day coming when we will all rise together into the presence of our risen Savior. Paul is declaring the glorious outcome of their faith and his. It makes the little squabbling issues of Corinth look pathetic by comparison. The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible and our spirits that are with Jesus will receive the new bodies that are like His glorious body (1 Corinthians 15:51,52<sup>ix</sup>). We are all going to experience that *together*. Woohooo! Paul declares, "I know this to be true!" That glorious day is coming. That is the outcome of all the dying to self and serving and sacrificing time and energy and heart felt compassion for others.

*<sup>15</sup> For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.* 2 Corinthians 4:15 Because Paul knows this is the outcome and where it is all headed, he can declare this. All his serving and sacrifice is for their sake. He is not serving himself like the false teachers. He wants to see them secure in Christ and rise with them into His presence. He wants to see that grace extend to more and more people! Is that what you want? I hope and pray that becomes the desire of our hearts. We cannot make it happen, but we can look to the Lord to do that through us and yield our lives to that service. We can be the instruments of delivering that message of grace to more and more people. And when that happens it increases thanksgiving, because when you receive grace, you want to thank God for His goodness. And it is all for the glory of God. When souls come out of darkness into the light, God is glorified, for we see His mercy and grace and give thanks not only for their salvation but for the opportunity to serve and be a part of God's grace extended to more people. That, as we saw in the preceding paragraph, is Jesus manifested in our mortal flesh (4:11<sup>x</sup>). There is no higher calling.

This calling takes so many forms. There is a young 20-year-old and his wife who are friends of Jesus in the House living in Phoenix. He witnesses to skateboarding youth. He started a church in his house and is seeing many of them come to Jesus. They would never come to a traditional church, so God anointed Maxamillion for that ministry.

Shari opened her store, Living Chocolate, about a year ago. God changed the name of the store before she opened it and impressed on her heart to close on Sunday. And as she serves her customers, she finds opportunities to share the love of Christ.

Zofya just opened her tattoo and hair salon called Awakenink. Guess who gave her that name? And think of the clientele she will reach with the message of God's love. She already is! You can support her by having your hair cut there.

And even if you are retired from your career, the love and joy you express in your daily encounters, with the local business employees, with your children and grandchildren can remind them there is more to life than we see with our eyes. Be bold in sharing the love of Christ. Remember Madi! We never know how much time we have.

Many of you serve the Lord by serving others. Some of you helped with Seizo and were the arms of Christ to help Sonoko while Seizo was still with us. I heard stories how you gave him some joy even in his condition. Do you think God sees that as a little thing? That was an expression of His heart! As the grace which Christ lavishes on us flows through us to others it increases thanksgiving to the glory of God.

*<sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.* 2 Corinthians 4:16 The chapter began by telling us that Paul and his team did not lose heart because God's great mercy has given them the honorable mission of telling people about the wonder of what Jesus has done for us. In this verse he is telling us that they do not lose heart for the same reason, but he has elaborated on what that ministry implies between the two verses. He explained that the ministry was shining the light of Christ into the darkness of this world, experiencing the life of Christ manifest in their mortal bodies, sustained through hardship by the power of God (4:8,9<sup>xi</sup>), continually dying to self so that the life of Christ is seen in their mortal bodies. It is also the assurance they had in knowing that the resurrection would include those to whom they were sharing the light of Christ; and all of this service ultimately bringing glory to God. If we can embrace this as our calling as well, we too should not lose heart.

These mortal bodies that represent Jesus to the world grow old and wear out even as our old nature is continually put to death. But our inner man, the new creation, is being renewed day by day. Our daily renewal only deepens as we mature. We call it the process of sanctification. It is like a child growing. Paul even referred to that in his first letter to the Corinthians as *putting childish ways* behind him (1 Corinthians 13:11<sup>xii</sup>).

Those of you who have grandchildren or cousins that live far away whom you only see once a year are sometimes amazed how much they grow. And if it is a few years, you can hardly recognize them. The same should be true of our spiritual growth. But unlike our physical bodies that age and deteriorate, our spiritual life should get deeper and richer if - and that is "if" is important - if we continue to behold His glory. While we decrease in physical strength and crucify the old nature, we can increase in spiritual depth and wisdom. Our last years here can be our spiritually best years.

Some people retire and retire from fellowship as well. I do not understand that. It makes me wonder if they saw church as a club rather than a spiritual family. Go deeper, dear brothers and sisters. Never slack off on seeking to become more intimate with your Savior and the knowledge of His Word that grace may abound to more and more people.

I have known several elderly people who could no longer walk ask why God still had them here and did not take them to heaven. I do not know the answer, but I always tell them that they can do the mighty work of prayer. They can pray for the believers. They can deepen their fellowship with Jesus. One missionary whose testimony I greatly admire spent the last years of his life bed bound.<sup>xiii</sup> But he received many letters and faithfully answered every one. Only heaven knows the fruit that came from his wise

Spirit filled responses. Our outer body is wasting away, but the new life in us should be renewed daily.

What does the unbeliever have to look forward to? They think it is the end and they cease to exist. It is the end of their joys, pleasures, hopes, and dreams. When they ask why they are still alive there is no answer they will accept, unless Christ is working in their hearts and they will be willing to lay down their pride and consider that there may be more. If not, there is only hopelessness.

While this verse certainly seems to apply to body versus spirit, especially for those who live a long lives, that is not really Paul's point. To Paul, the outer man is the Adam nature, the fallen sinful man. That is what is wasting away. Praise God! The inner man is the second Adam, Jesus on the inside, which is being renewed in us day by day. That is a more glorious contrast. Our sinful nature is dying and our new life in Christ is being renewed (a word that means reconstructed) day by day.

*The process of deconstruction and reconstruction is taking place right now as our new self "is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:10<sup>xiv</sup>). And the final reconstruction will occur at Christ's appearing when the whole person will be redeemed and conformed to the likeness of the last Adam, God's Son (cf. Romans 8:28,29<sup>xv</sup>). Thus Paul was heartened because amidst the stresses and perplexities of apostolic ministry, the old nature was deconstructing, and he was being reconstructed in the image of Christ. No faint heart here! The transformation is far too glorious and encouraging to allow that.<sup>xvi</sup>*

*<sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 2 Corinthians 4:17 Paul calls his daily dying to the old self and the wasting away of the outer self a light and momentary affliction. For those who are unfamiliar with the things Paul is referring to as a light and momentary we have his list later in this letter. <sup>23b</sup> ... far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. <sup>24</sup> Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 2 Corinthians 11:23b-25 <sup>27</sup> in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. <sup>28</sup> And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. 2 Corinthians 11:27,28 Why would Paul say that such things are light and momentary? Compared to what? He means compared to what we will inherit. But it is certainly lite compered to eternal judgment from a just and holy God. If his trials were light, how light should we consider our momentary afflictions? We dread affliction like Cancer. But what is that compared to eternal judgment? We fear rejection, but what is that compared to a life without Jesus? We are concerned about aging, but Paul says our spirit can continue to grow and be renewed every day!*

In 2 Corinthians 1:8<sup>xvii</sup> Paul wrote of the weight/burden that almost crushed him. But here he says that is nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory! That glory is so wonderful that it is beyond all comparison. That is how we should view all affliction we endure in this life. **Whatever we are going through is preparing us for this big load of glory that is incomparably wonderful.** In other words, we will look back and say, "If I had known that is all I had to endure to get *this*, I would have gone through it a million times more with joy."

I often say we are in a trial, coming out of a trial or going into a trial. There a few days when all is perfect. But realize what the trials are preparing you for. The old man is wasting away, and the new man is being renewed so that when you see your Savior and our reconstruction is completed that load of glory will overflow your soul. No wonder James says that when we face trials, we should consider it pure joy (James 1:2<sup>xviii</sup>).

Our reactions to circumstances in life depend mostly on our perspective. That is what the next verse is telling us. There is the wasting away of the body and the dying old nature with light and temporary afflictions, but on the other hand there is daily renewal and an eternal weight of glory <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.* 2 Corinthians 4:18 It depends on where we focus. If you are totally focused on the here and now, your old nature will crave physical things and whine when you do not get them, or when your health is not what you want it to be, or when your spouse does not respond like you want them to, or whatever. Ask yourself if the thing that is agitating your soul is temporal or eternal. If you can see it with your physical eyes, it is temporal. If you cannot see it, then it is probably eternal.

This is the dividing line upon which we can determine our values and use of our time. If we are laboring for a physical thing so that you can show the love of God to others, your spiritual eyes are on eternity. That is why Paul says in Ephesians that we are to work with our hands so that we may give to those in need (Ephesians 4:28<sup>xix</sup>). We provide daily needs for our family because God provides for us (1 Timothy 5:8<sup>xx</sup>). So, while we live in this world and work with the things of the world, the eyes of our soul are fixed on our Savior and what He has for us now and in eternity. <sup>3</sup>*For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* Colossians 3:3 That is what our baptism declared. But we must continue to crucify the old nature.

Sadly, there seems to be an ever-increasing passion in our day for the visible, and every imagination of the heart of man craves some variety of the tangible in hopes it will fill the emptiness within. Our passions are shaped by where our faith and hope are placed. The trials and disappointments of life help us turn our faith to the unseen. That faith determines how we live in the present. Every one of us is either living for what is passing away, or for what is eternal. Where is your heart set (Colossians 3:1,2<sup>xxi</sup>)?

Immediately following the messianic prediction in Isaiah 40:1-5<sup>xxii</sup>, the prediction which John the Baptist proclaimed was his calling (Matthew 1:3<sup>xxiii</sup>), comes Isaiah's question about what he was to cry out. The response is the message that Paul is conveying in this passage. I woke up this morning at 2:30 a.m. with this passage repeating in my mind. Isaiah 40:6-8 <sup>6</sup>*A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. <sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.* While in Israel we saw city after city once so glorious now in ruins, but our focus was the eternal Word of God. The beauty and passion of youth, the grand structures created by man, our treasured earthly possessions, wealth, and health, are all flesh, the fading grass of the field which is here today and gone tomorrow. There is only one thing that stands forever, only one thing investing you life in: the eternal Word of our God. And as we enter into the wonder of Christmas season, we know the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, and unfading glory of grace and truth (John 1:14<sup>xxiv</sup>)!

## Questions:

- 1 What are some of the points Paul has made previously in this chapter?"
- 2 What verse is Paul quoting in verse 13 and why?
- 3 What is the psalmists response to life's difficulties?
- 4 What is the Paul's faith response and why?
- 5 Why is he so certain?
- 6 For whose sake does he labor?
- 7 What is the outcome?
- 8 What happens to us as we mature?
- 9 What is the reward for our momentary affliction?
- 10 Why should we focus on the unseen?

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### <sup>i</sup> **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup>And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

### <sup>ii</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

### <sup>iii</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup>So death is at work in us, but life in you.

### <sup>iv</sup> **1 Corinthians 4:11-13 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup>To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, <sup>12</sup>and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; <sup>13</sup>when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

### <sup>v</sup> **Romans 10:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup>For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

### <sup>vi</sup> **Romans 8:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

### <sup>vii</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

### <sup>viii</sup> **Romans 6:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup>We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

### <sup>ix</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (ESV)**

<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.

### <sup>x</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup>For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

### <sup>xi</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup>We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

### <sup>xii</sup> **1 Corinthians 13:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

<sup>xiii</sup> Charles Cowman

### <sup>xiv</sup> **Colossians 3:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

### <sup>xv</sup> **Romans 8:28-29 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according

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to his purpose.<sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

<sup>xvi</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 99.

<sup>xvii</sup> **2 Corinthians 1:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

<sup>xviii</sup> **James 1:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

<sup>xix</sup> **Ephesians 4:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

<sup>xx</sup> **1 Timothy 5:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

<sup>xxi</sup> **Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

<sup>xxii</sup> **Isaiah 40:1-5 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. <sup>3</sup> A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. <sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

<sup>xxiii</sup> **Matthew 3:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'"

<sup>xxiv</sup> **John 1:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.