

Christ's Eternal Glory

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[0 : 00] I wonder if I could ask you to start with, have you ever had one of those moments in life where you've maybe done something or acted in a certain way and then you've realized things were not as they first seemed?

You know the other day after the rain had been pouring down I set off early in the car and I was coming into town and it was about seven o'clock in the morning and there was all this traffic everywhere and I thought this is strange, there's not usually this traffic at this time and I looked down the road and I could see a car blocking the lane and being an ex-bus driver, quite impatient driving, I thought to myself, typical, can't get the right lane, blocking the road, now look at it.

It's a wee bit annoyed if I'm honest, I'm not a very patient driver. But you know what, when I got down to where that car was I realized there was about a foot and a half of water filling the road and that poor driver that I'd been so annoyed with was actually sitting there waiting for the road to be clear before he went through the water so he didn't get stuck.

And when I got down there I realized things were not as they seemed. I would get it a wee bit misconstrued. And here in our passage tonight Paul has this kind of similar theme going on.

Paul will speak of this idea that the reality of what we see with our eyes is not always the full picture. So let's have a look at it together. We're going to be looking at verses 16, 17 and 18 of 2 Corinthians 4.

[1 : 32] And our first point tonight is reality. Verse 16 Paul says, therefore we do not lose heart, though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

Therefore we do not lose heart, he said, though outwardly we are wasting away. Now at the time of writing this Paul, as we have been looking at over the last few weeks, is in a situation of a permanent reminder of death.

He's been beaten up, he's been persecuted. In this chapter he's said to us that he was hard pressed, that he's been perplexed. He's been persecuted, he's been struck down. But a change takes place in these verses.

Paul has been speaking to the church about their problems and now he changes his tone and he's just saying it like as a simple Christian man. To everybody else who's a Christian, this is what I want to say.

When he uses us and we, he's talking about us and we in general sense, all Christians everywhere realize this. What Paul does is he surveys the facts of life.

[2 : 39] He looks at the reality of life. The distress he faces, the life he has been living and he says, we do not lose heart.

We do not become faint. We do not draw back, though outwardly we are wasting away. Paul here faces a reality that outwardly that is our bodies, our physical frames, waste away.

For Paul the travelling, the beating, the persecution, the whipping, an old age it all set in. It had taken its toll on his body.

And he's looking death in the face daily and he says, my body is wasting away. The fact is friends, we are all in an irreversible decline going into the grave.

He's once been said, it's a bit morbid I know, but somebody once said, as soon as we are born it's a countdown until we die. Maybe a bit gloomy for a Sunday night, but there's an element of truth in that, isn't there?

[3 : 51] Problems in this life are numerous. We looked at this a few weeks ago. We all suffered, don't we? Old age will get us. We can't run from death. It will come around.

And there are many here who may feel the age problem setting in. But Paul says this is the truth of life. This is the reality we face.

The fact is that these things all point to us in our life that one day we will stop breathing. Physically our bodies waste away.

Sam 103 talks of this. As for man, his days are like grass, it says. He flourishes like a flower off the field, for the wind passes over it and it's gone.

And its place knows it no more. Friends we cannot run from death. But this isn't the whole story. This is only the beginning of it.

[4 : 49] Because things are not what they seem. Paul says yet despite this fact more significantly or more positively, don't be disheartened because yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

This is what Paul does in these three verses. He gives this sort of negative picture but then he wants to contrast it and show you this great positive picture. The negative he says is we are all heading to the grave.

But the positive he says is we are being renewed day by day. The great paradox is that as we physically, outwardly decay, inwardly we are being rebuilt.

This inward renewal is the spiritual we're talking about. It's the spiritual existence of the believer. The fact is that as we die God works within.

As we physically go down to the grave God works within bringing us up. Paul speaks of this in 2 Corinthians 4.6. He said, For God who said let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine into our hearts.

[6 : 04] God made his light shine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. God shines his glory into your life.

Through Jesus we are renewed daily in our knowledge of God, in his glory in our life. We are in a process of change friends. We are changing within.

God is creating something new within you. At this very moment he is working within you and he is creating a new something.

2 Corinthians 5.1. Paul will go on to talk about this. At this present time he is looking at as we die. In this next chapter he looked at things from the other side of death. And he says, For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, he is talking about our body.

He calls it a tent because it's weak and it's not permanent. He says, We know that if that's destroyed we have a building from God. He is talking about our eternal body.

[7 : 08] It's permanent. It's solid. An eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile in this life we grow, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling.

Paul is saying when we take Christ into our lives he begins to work within us. He begins to change us to make us more like him. He's preparing us for the day when we will go to be with him in heaven.

When we will be given a new body. You see when we die physically our bodies will go into the grave and they will decay. But our soul will be taken to God. And at Christ's return we will be given a new body, a heavenly body.

A body which does not age, a body which does not suffer from pain, does not suffer from cancer, does not suffer from illness. And God is beginning that work within us.

Paul is looking at the physical decay of his body. He says I will not be disheartened because I know things are not always what they seem.

[8 : 08] And whilst outwardly I am fading and I am wasting away spiritually God is recreating me.

Paul is looking forward to the day when he's given a new body in heaven. He's made complete and perfect in God's glory.

Where Paul is comfort is that in this life God is strengthening him within. He says in Ephesians 3, 16 onwards, I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit and your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Every Christian here I want you to know this, that as your body gets older and as age sets in and you get more fragile and you know death is approaching, it is close, God is working in you.

God is working within. He is renewing you spiritually every day of your life. For every Christian this is a source of great comfort, it's a source of great consolation.

[9 : 38] However friends, the unbeliever does not have that consolation. What a message, what a need we have to take it to them because they don't know that refreshing every day, they only have despair that as their body shuts down they have no hope, that as their physical pain continues so spiritually they will die, that as their physical bodies go into death, into the grave so too their soul goes into eternal death.

If you are not a Christian I beg you do not decay physically and spiritually tonight, do not let your head go down to the grave and know there is no hope for you.

Ask Jesus to come into your life, ask Jesus to come and start renewing you spiritually. Our first point friends is our reality that we are on the road to death but for the Christian we are also on the road to life.

Let's go on to our second point, we've looked at the reality, let's look at the rejuvenation. Verse 17 we'll pick up a 2 Corinthians 4. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

Here Paul calls our suffering light and momentary. I must be honest when I first read this I thought, I don't know if I would call my suffering light, I think it's a bit insensitive that's what I thought at first.

[11 : 21] I don't look at my own suffering as light but you see Paul's not being insensitive here, he's not saying just being different to suffering. The Bible never tells you to treat pain as if it's no pain at all.

The Bible never tells you just ignore things that were going wrong in your life. The Bible never tells you don't be grieved, it tells you the opposite. Jesus himself when his friend Lazarus died, what did you do?

He wept, he saw Lazarus' family and friends weeping and he wept with them, he grieved with them. Sam 88 is one of the darkest Psalms and what does it teach us? We are to grieve and go to God with our grief.

We are to be honest with God in 2 Corinthians 11 Paul tells the Corinthian church how he's been getting persecuted. He was whipped five times.

He faced dangers from the sea, from rivers. He's been beat up, he's been cast down and he doesn't just shrug off and say, oh never mind it's fine.

[12 : 21] Paul's not saying we're to treat our troubles as if we never exist but Paul wants to contrast the negative and the positive again. So he calls our present suffering, he calls the problems of age light and momentary because he's saying compare it to what it will be.

Compare your present suffering with the glory of God which awaits for you in heaven. Compare your present suffering, your present ill health with your future health in heaven.

Paul says when you do this your issues are not taken away but they're redefined. You see these problems in a new light. They take on a new perspective.

They take on a heavenly perspective, an eternal perspective. The eternal perspective is something every Christian should have.

The eternal perspective is looking at this world and its events through the eyes of the Bible and in light of God's kingdom. That what happens in this life will be reflected in the next.

[13 : 35] That if you suffer for Christ he will glorify you in the next. That if you witness in this life you will see those believers in heaven.

That in all events we can look at them and say what are you doing in this God? What is happening in this God? How is this going to make an effect in eternity?

That when we are given shame for being a Christian our eternal perspective is, yeah I am shamed now but in heaven Jesus will glorify me for bearing the shame of his name.

Our eternal perspective is seeing how reality, seeing how our eternity, sorry, is built upon what we face now.

It's seeing things through the perspective of eternity. So Paul contrasts again in this verse. He says the reason your troubles, the reason your pain, your old age is light and momentary, the reason your decline of your body is not so bad at these times is because these troubles as he says are achieving for us an eternal glory.

[14 : 49] That far outweighs them all. Paul's point is that your problems now, you're suffering now, they are achieving for you an eternal glory.

Our afflictions multiply our glory. That whatever we suffer God matches it and he exceeds it. In heaven you will be clothed with a new body and it is filled with Christ's glory and that surpasses any problems that we might have on this earth and Paul says if you take your suffering and you compare it to that you'll see it's light, it's momentary because you are going to be giving God's glory.

What's God's glory? We throw that term around quite a bit. What's God's glory going to be like? Well we can't fully describe it friends. It's so amazing we can't put it into the words but we have hints of it.

The Bible tells us in Psalm 19.1 the heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands.

When we look at the excellence of a sunrise and you're awed by its amazes you think wow you're getting a hint of God's glory. When you look at the stars in the sky and you think they're so numerous that it's amazing.

[16 : 11] You look at how big the sky is and you think wow you're getting a hint of God's glory. God's glory is hinted at all through creation. God's glory is hinted at through his word that when you read it and you know the Spirit is speaking to you and you're left thinking wow that is just awesome you know that is the hint of God's glory.

We experience a hints of God's glory so often in our life and as a Christian we are caught up with this glory being built from within.

2 Corinthians 3 18 Paul writes and we all who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is Spirit.

2 Paul says you are dying physically he's also saying but spiritually you are living and this life holds nothing over you because God's glory is building within you.

God's amazing glory is within. Friends we will be rejuvenated into God's glory in the next life. We will be dressed in the glory of Christ.

[17 : 30] Paul says your suffering is light and it's momentary because it will pass but in eternity you will forever be gloried in Christ.

Paul wants to look to the future. Friends when you're ill what do you think about? What gives you hope when you're ill? You think about being better don't you?

As you lie on your bed and you feel wrought and all you can think about is I can't wait to tell him about it again. When you're sitting and revising for exams and you feel tired and weary and you don't want to do it anymore what gives you hope?

You think about getting those exams finished it will be worth it then. When we are struggling and we are tired and weary we look to the future don't we? It's what we do and Paul says I'll make the same point to you.

When you are facing old age and you are facing your bodies are decaying and you are struggling in this life look to the future. You know orange got that slogan didn't they?

[18 : 34] The future is bright the future is orange. Future is not orange I can tell you that but the future is bright for the Christian. Paul holds a great hope for the future.

I hold a great hope for the future but tonight I want to ask you do you hold that hope as well? Friends if you have not yet asked Jesus into your life then I beg you this night ask him in.

Bring Jesus into your life. Set him as your hope for the future that when you die you will reign with him in heaven in a glorified and new heavenly body.

Where is your hope tonight? Where is your hope for the future? Some will say my hope is in my family.

Friends that is a mortal hope they are mortal too they will pass away. Some say my hope is remembering the good life I have had but memories fade.

[19 : 46] What are you looking forward to when you die? What are you setting your hope in? When your body dies and you are physically decaying what are you hoping for?

What is refreshing you spiritually? The Bible says God is refreshing me spiritually and I hope God is refreshing you spiritually and you are setting your hope on the day that you die and you pass the shadow of death and come into the Lord's presence.

Let's go on to our last point rejoicing what we are going to do with this knowledge we are going to put it into effect as Paul states here verse 18 so we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen for what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal.

He says we fix our eyes on things that are not seen. This is the outward working of the heavenly perspective look at Philippians 3.14 with me he says I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

He is saying we are going to be vision focused we are going to look forward we are going to set our sights on the future. We are not going to ignore the pain we are not going to pretend that the reality of this life is not happening but we are going to set our sights on the pleasure which awaits for us in heaven.

[21 : 16] We are going to remain hopeful for a better day. Don't set your sights Paul says on the things you can see what can you see you can see the human frailty you can see suffering you can see pain you can see your material possessions you can see the things that God has given you in this life but Paul says don't fix your hopes on that don't put your trust and your confidence in that because these things what you can see they will pass away they will fade away they are not eternal they are temporary.

He says fix your eyes on something greater fix your eyes on something eternal something which will never end set your hope on Christ glory.

2 Corinthians 4.14 says we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.

Our hope friends is in the glorified Jesus Christ risen from the dead. Our pleasure is looking forward to that day when we see the Lamb of God upon the throne glorified and exalted for saving us from our sin.

Are we looking to the future or is this world swallowing us up? Are we looking to the future in heaven or are worldly desires taking that place?

[22 : 53] Do we only think about heaven now and again and when we think about heaven do we only think about what I will get out of it? Paul's point is different.

Paul says Jesus is the centre of my life. Jesus is glorious key and when I get to heaven Paul is saying I want to glorify him.

I'm setting my sights on the glory of Christ. I'm setting my hope in my future with him. But he says these things are things unseen.

Doesn't he? He writes for what is seen as temporary but what is unseen as eternal. We are casting our eyes on something we can't see. Hebrews 11 talks of us, doesn't it?

It calls it faith. Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

[23 : 50] This is the essence of faith looking to the future. Some will object to this, some will say to you, ah the faith card, there he goes, he's played the faith card. A lot of people don't like this word faith.

They find it a bit like you're sweeping things under the carpet. People don't like this word faith because in this life at this time we like to have something in our hands that we can inspect, we can verify, we can test and then we can say okay I'll trust it.

But you can't hold faith. Faith is something unseen. Something Paul says you can't see this but everybody in this life has faith.

We all have faith. No matter what they'll tell you, they'll say to you, I don't have any faith, that's wrong. We all have faith of some sort.

When you go into a room and it's dark, you want to put on the light, what do you do? You've got the light switch, don't you? And you have faith when you flick that light switch, it's going to get light.

[24 : 53] You don't know how it's happening, you can't see the electricity but you have faith when you flick that light switch, the light will come on. You have faith when you get into your car and you turn the key even though you can't see what's going on in the engine, your car's going to start and you're going to make your journey.

What about things you read? Do you have faith in the things you read? When you pick up the paper in the morning and you see, oh, hearts beat, hebernity in 3 1. Do you question it?

No. We all have faith of different sorts. My question tonight, friends, is where does your faith lie?

What is your faith in? I have faith in God and in the Bible and what it teaches. I shape my life around the Bible. The Bible shapes me.

Others shape their life around their logic. What they think and what they can reason, that's their faith. Others say science is my faith. If science can prove it, then I'll believe it.

[25 : 54] What is your faith in? What is your faith lie? The Christian faith is in God who is unseen. The Christian faith is in the God who is unseen and we believe one day when we die and we physically, our bodies are put into the grave, our soul will be taken to heaven to be with Jesus.

And at his return, we will be given a new body, a glorified body, where we will dwell with him for all eternity in heaven.

When he's nearly finished, I just want to ask you, will you fix your eyes with me this evening? Will you fix your eyes with me this evening on the eternal one who is God, who is in heaven, who is within, who is working, refreshing within?

Will you fix your eyes with me and call Jesus into your life and ask him to be your Lord and Saviour? Will you fix your eyes with me and know that you have such a great hope that death holds nothing over us, that death can't stop us because we will pass just a shadow, just a hint of death because Jesus has taken it on the cross?

Will you fix your eyes with me and know with all certainty that you cannot be removed from the love of Jesus? Book of Romans chapter 8 says, who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[27 : 18] Shall trouble our hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us, through Jesus who loved us.

Friends, will you fix your eyes with me from the day Christ returns and you are dwelling with him in heaven, that you have no more pain, you have no more suffering, you have sheer joy, what we experience in this life is light and momentary to that day of great glory.

When the signs of age become apparent, we are to thrust ourselves upon God, we are to cry out to him, be my source, be my comfort, refresh me within, keep my eyes on you Jesus.

I hope I will see all of you in heaven, I hope I will vow beside you in heaven and worship Jesus.

I hope we will stand together as risen and exalted in the name of Jesus and worship Him. I hope we will glorify Him together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

[28 : 41] If you do not yet know Jesus, please come to know him tonight. I hope we will stand together and then we will know on this night Jesus began a good work in us, a work the devil could not for, the work nobody could take away and that we will the unday be refreshed with a new body and praise God.

Let's just pray together. Heavenly Father, we do glorify you that we have such a great hope for the future Lord, that Lord in you we can set our hopes and we know we will never be let down, that you will never let us down and that if we call upon you, you will come, you will keep us safe in your arms and that we know Lord you will refresh us daily in our days and you will not even as we approach death, we will have a great hope for our future with you.

That this life cannot swallow us for we are safe in you. Jesus we pray that you would bless these thoughts to us and that we would be fed from your word this evening.

Amen.