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“We Do Not Lose Heart”

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-18

Introduction

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1. In 2 Corinthians 4:1, the apostle Paul writes these words:

“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart.” (2 Corinthians 4:1, NASB95)

2. What does it mean to “lose heart?”
3. According an internet search to “lose heart” means “to become discouraged, despondent, or to lose hope, confidence, and the motivation to continue trying.”
4. The search indicated that “it often happens when facing adversity, failure, or when progress is slow, leading to a feeling of wanting to give up.
5. So what Paul is saying is because Christ has given us this ministry and shown us mercy, we are not discouraged, we haven’t lost hope and we don’t plan to give up.
6. To this point in this letter, Paul has been defending himself against false accusations by some in Corinth who have accused him of being weak, double-minded and preaching the Word of God for his own personal gain.
7. In 2 Corinthians 4:5, it appears that Paul and his associates were even being accused of promoting themselves.

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8. Beginning in verse 7, Paul provides us with a description of what he and those with him have experienced.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the

dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you." (2 Corinthians 4:7-12, NASB95)

9. Considering all of this, we have to ask, how did these men keep preaching God's Word?
10. In the verses which finish out this chapter we find what we might call the sunshine after the rain.

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11. Notice what Paul writes in verse 13:

"But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak," (2 Corinthians 4:13, NASB95)

12. When Paul wrote these words, "I believed therefore I spoke," he was quoting from Psalm 116:10.
13. It is what the psalmist believed that prompted him to speak. What was it that he believed? We find it in the previous verse, Psalm 116:9.

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"I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 116:9, NASB95).

14. Paul went on to say almost the same thing in the next verse here in 2 Corinthians 4:14.

"knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you." (2 Corinthians 4:14, NASB95)

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15. He then added this, "For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 4:15, NASB95)
16. In spite of how he and others were being treated, Paul declared, it is all for

their benefit so that more and more people might be reached and God might be glorified.

17. In the time we have left, I want us to put up our tent next to these last few verses and put our focus where Paul had put his.

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I. Looking Ahead

A. OUR DAILY RENEWAL

“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16, NASB95).

1. For the second time in this chapter, Paul repeated his statement, “we do not lose heart” (cf. v. 1).
2. He now proceeds to tell us why he and his associates do not lose heart — “though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”
3. When Paul speaks of our “outer man,” he is speaking of our physical body and mind which, as he says, is “decaying” (NASB), “wasting away” (ESV, NIV84).
4. Many of you can speak to this fact.
5. As we age, we find that . . .
 - a. So many things about our physical bodies change.
 - b. We aren’t as strong as we once were, our minds don’t seem to be as sharp.
 - c. We don’t see or hear as well as we once did.
 - d. Our gait slows down. We are more careful navigating steps.
6. The truth is our bodies are wearing out.
7. What gives us hope is the fact that our soul and spirit, that which our physical body has housed all these years, “is being renewed day by day.”
8. Earlier, in 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul said that we are “being transformed into

the same image” as our glorious Lord (cf. 1 John 3:2).

9. It is this daily transformation which gives us hope, increases our faith and causes us to be optimistic about what awaits us.

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B. THE CONTRAST

“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

1. Notice that Paul makes a connection between the affliction we experience here and the glory that is to come.
2. Our afflictions prepare us for the glory that awaits us.
3. Paul addresses this same theme in his letter to the Christians in Rome (Romans 8:16-17).

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“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” (Romans 8:16–17, NASB95)

- a. He said the Holy Spirit testifies to three things — we are “children of God . . . heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”
- b. He then inserts a condition — “if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”
- c. Before we can be glorified, we must suffer with Him.

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4. In the next verse in Romans 8, Paul says almost the same thing as he writes here in 2 Corinthians 4:17, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18).
5. There are two things which Paul is telling us in these two passages:
 - a. First, compared to what is coming, the affliction, trouble and hardship

which we experience as Christians is relatively slight.

b. Second, any trial, pain, or heartache we may experience as we carry our cross cannot begin to compare to the glory that awaits us.

1) As Paul said, it is “an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”

2) It is indescribable.

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C. OUR FOCUS

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

1. Seven verses after this verse, in 2 Corinthians 5:7, Paul wrote, “for we walk by faith, not by sight.”
2. In Hebrews 11:1, the writer tells us that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”
3. What is here, what we see around us is temporary, it will all one day be gone.
 - a. According to the apostle Peter, we who belong to Christ are destined to “obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4).
 - b. The temporary of this world, he says, will be replaced by “an unfading crown of glory” (1 Peter 5:4).

“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.” (1 Peter 5:4, NIV84)

- b. Six verses later, Peter tells us that this “an eternal glory” is found “in Christ.”

“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.” (1 Peter 5:10, NASB95)

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4. It is very important that we “keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.” (Colossians 3:1).
5. We “set [our minds] on the things above, not on the things that are on earth,” because, as Paul wrote in Colossians 3:3, we “have died and [our] life is hidden with Christ in God.”
6. Where is your focus? Is it on Christ and the things which are above?

Conclusion

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1. Near the end of Paul’s second letter to Timothy, the letter which he wrote just before his death, he penned these words, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).
2. It is evident from these words that Paul did not “lose heart,” he did not give up and quit — he remained true to the end.
3. Will you do the same?
4. If so there is “an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” which awaits you.
5. In addition to that there is “the crown of righteousness” which, according to Paul, “the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to [you] on that day” (2 Timothy 4:8).
6. I promise you that Heaven will surely be worth all the affliction and hardship you experience here while serving our Lord.
7. If you haven’t submitted your life to Him in obedient faith, why not do so today?