

Don't Lose Heart

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Joel Pickett

Media Reference Number GSX733

Wednesday, June 15, 2022

Introduction

It has been said before that perspective is everything and when it comes to many things in life this is absolutely true! It's true when it comes to things that are on sale. You only know that it's a good deal when you have the perspective of what that item normally costs. A lot of stores will flash the term sale, but the item was marked up so much that now it just costs what it should cost but without perspective you wouldn't know.

Perspective is everything when it comes to driving a vehicle! It is crucial that you factor everything in around you and not just what is directly in front of you. That's why cars have mirrors so that you can have a good perspective on what is around you. On Tesla's they have it where the side shot of the vehicle will actually pop up on that giant screen! Accidents usually happen due to a lack of perspective!

This is not only true when it comes to sales or driving but perspective is everything when it comes to living our lives for Christ. Without the proper perspective, we can all be prone to lose heart.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 & Pray

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

Context of the Passage

Paul here comes back to the same topic that he started with within the first verse of chapter 4 where he states that in light of the ministry and mercy of Jesus, "we do not lose heart." He now repeats this again in verse 16 with another "therefore we do not lose heart." *I believe this to be noteworthy for us.*

What does Paul talk about within this chapter that he can say a statement like this with such confidence? Well, if you look through the 4th chapter of 2nd Corinthians you will find that he talks about how God opened their eyes by the light of the gospel! He talks about how this light or treasure is contained within earthen vessels referencing the physical body.

And though they experience being hard pressed on every side, they aren't crushed. Though they are perplexed, they are not in despair. Though they are persecuted, they are not forsaken and though they are struck down they are not destroyed because of Jesus Christ in them!

And so, the direct context within our passage today is Paul talking about truth that because God raised up the Lord Jesus, so we also will be raised up too.

THEREFORE, we do not lose heart.

What Does It Mean to Lose Heart?

Lose Heart

To be discouraged and disheartened, to lose spirit, to give up and grow weary.
To be wearied out and exhausted. To lose courage and be utterly spiritless.

In our world today, there are plenty of factors that can play into us losing heart. So much to be discouraged by and disheartened by. You turn on the news, you see things on social media, you overhear conversations in public, even when trying to buy food for your family or gas to go to work, you have a death in the family or a bad diagnosis, and on and on it can go.

And Christians are not immune to losing heart! In fact, sometimes we can find ourselves struggling with discouragement more as Christians than when we were without Christ! Ignorance is bliss, as they say.

Paul was never immune to discouragement in this way...

2 Corinthians 1:8

⁸ For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

Maybe some of you find yourself able to relate to Paul in this way today.

If we weren't prone to losing heart, then Paul wouldn't have had to encourage those he wrote to.

Galatians 6:9

⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

To grow weary is the same word as to lose heart within our passage. Paul specifically encouraged those he loved to not grow weary in doing good. Why? Because there is much that can cause us to be discouraged in the good things we do. *We can think to ourselves what's the point? Especially when we don't see the fruit of our labor.*

Now you might say today, "if you were only in my situation" or "you don't know what I am going through". And I don't know but I do know what Paul went through! (*just a few chapters over*)

2 Corinthians 11:23-28

²³ Are they ministers of Christ? —I speak as a fool—I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; ²⁷ *in* weariness and toil, *in* sleeplessness often, *in* hunger and thirst, *in* fastings often, *in* cold and nakedness— ²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Paul was not a foreigner to suffering. It was a part of his call upon His life from Jesus Himself.

What we will see today is that we lose heart when we lose sight. Lose sight of what? Lose sight of what really matters and what really lasts.

In light of all that Paul went through, Paul could confidently say, “we don’t lose heart.” How is that even possible? Paul goes on to give us three points of focus that we might not lose heart. You will notice that with each point of focus there will be a sharp contrast.

First, Paul focused on the inward renewal rather than the outward perishing.

1) Inward Renewal vs. Outward Perishing (verse 16)

Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

Outward Perishing

The outward man, this is our physical bodies. Earlier in this same chapter (2 Cor. 4:7), he uses the phrase “earthen vessels”. This is the same concept.

It is outward man or our physical bodies that are....

Perishing: to decompose, the physical process of breaking down and wearing out, to wear out gradually and waste away.

We can all attest to the truth of this statement to some extent! Now there are some who could attest to this more than others, but this is the truth for all of us regardless of our age!

The reality of this can cause us to lose heart. We all know how connected our spirit is to our physical body. *God knew this when all Elijah needed was a nap and a snack. Yet at times our physical perishing can be all consuming in our life.*

That is why it is so important that our inward man is being daily renewed! *There is nothing we can do to stop the aging and decay of our physical bodies but there is something we can do to renew our inward man.*

Inward Renewal

If the outward man is a reference to our physical bodies, then of course the inner man is in reference to our spirit and soul. The immaterial part of who we are. Our conscience, our heart, our mind.

This is this part of who we are that is made alive and new in Christ. Within the next chapter Paul will say that we are new creations in Christ. (5:17) We obviously know this isn’t in the physical sense.

Paul makes reference to this in his prayer for the Ephesians in...

Ephesians 3:16-17a

¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;

Notice here that it is through His Spirit that strengthens that inner man.

Renewed: to make new, to restore, to change into a preferable state, to renovate, there is an implication in superiority (changing for the better) – opposite of perishing

Additionally, it can mean to add strength.

This word only appears twice in the NT... the other time is in....

Colossians 3:10

¹⁰ and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

This gives us insight into that day-to-day process of renewal. That inward man is renewed by knowledge of Jesus who is the image of the invisible God. As we know Him more and more, we are renewed more and more.

We are transformed inwardly as we renew our minds!

Romans 12:2

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

As we spend time in the word of God and prayer, our inward person is strengthened by His Holy Spirit. We are renovated and invigorated each day as we abide in Christ!

If you aren't experiencing the daily renewal of the Holy Spirit, you are going to lose heart QUICKLY. For some this might be the very reason you are so discouraged right now. Shift your focus inward!

Second, Paul focused on the weight of glory rather than the momentary light afflictions.

2) Weight of Glory vs. Light Afflictions (verse 17)

¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

Light Affliction

Light: small in weight, featherlike, a breeze of air, easy

We find this same word used by Jesus when he said....

Matthew 11:30

³⁰ For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.

This was during Jesus' invitation to come to Him for rest to those who were heavy laden. This was of course in comparison to doing life without Jesus that His burden is light in comparison.

Key to Understanding: *we must think comparatively*

Don't think that Paul is dismissing whatever affliction it might be that you go through by calling it "light". It might feel wildly heavy but in comparison of what he is about to bring up, he can confidently call it "light" regardless of what it might be.

While weight is absolute, heaviness is relative.

What is heavy to one person might not be to another. What is heavy for a child could be considered light to an adult. What is heavy for a car might not be heavy for a truck.

And so, what Paul is seeking to do is give us a fixed point of reference and comparison so that we can shift our perspective of the afflictions that we go through onto the glory that will follow.

Affliction: distress, trouble, oppression, tribulation, literally a pressing together, PRESSURE

This is the exact thing that Jesus promised that we would go through.

John 16:33

³³ These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

He even says here that because He has overcome the world, we can still be of good cheer in light of the hardest things we might go through.

Why? Because it is momentary. It won't last forever.

Which is but for a moment: *(one word in the Greek)* fleeting, brief, momentary

- relatively a short period of time
- only time this word appears in the NT

Key to Understanding: *(once again) to think comparatively (not only in difficulty but in length)*

While time is absolute, a long time is relative.

What might be a long time to one person could be a short amount of time to another. It is all dependent on perspective.

What can feel like an eternity to a child who has only lived 5 years so 1 year is 1/5th of their whole life to someone who is 50, it feels a lot different.

Do you remember when one day during the summer lasted forever as a kid? Now life is going so fast it's hard to keep up!

The Scriptures consistently remind us that our life is short, and eternity is long because we can so easily get caught up in the MOMENT and lose sight.

Psalm 39:4-5

⁴ "LORD, make me to know my end, And what *is* the measure of my days, *That* I may know how frail I *am*. ⁵ Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age *is* as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state *is* but vapor. *Selah*

Now that can sound discouraging but it is actually encouraging for the believer because our hope is in Christ. *We are trusting the promises of God that this isn't all there is! And regardless of how bad it gets here, it is only for a short time.*

The thing with suffering is that it has a way of prolonging time, so it seems. When you are sick, the hours just drag on and on. And then you regret taking for granted those times that you were able to breathe without being stuffed up. Have you ever noticed how long a night can be when you aren't sleeping well vs. when you fall right asleep and wake up and be like wow its already morning?

And not only that, but suffering has a way of taking all of our focus. Have you ever been with someone who is experiencing great suffering? Often times it is all that is on their minds and understandably so. When we go on hospital or home visits, we not only seek to pray for the family but seek to get their focus on eternity.

And in addition to this, not only can we consider our affliction light and short but as we go through it, we can know that the very affliction we are experiencing is actually **working for us.**

Working: to cultivate and prepare, to bring about a result

Word picture - how soil would be prepared before planting

HOW AWESOME IS THIS?! God is using the difficult things that we go through now in a way that is getting us ready for eternity. So, we can know not one tear that is shed is ever wasted within the kingdom of God. ***ITS WORKING ON OUR BEHALF***

We know that God uses these afflictions in our life to draw us close to Him, to produce in us an enduring faith, to purify our lives, and to get our focus off of the world! James 1 & Romans 5 tell us that it is the testing of our faith and tribulations that God uses to produce good things in our lives.

And so, what are these afflictions working for us to do? To produce something so much greater.

Eternal Weight of Glory

A far more exceeding: extraordinary overabundance - having more than is necessary to the extreme - surpassing greatness - beyond all measure

It is so much better that the measurement to compare is not even possible.

One use of this word in Greek was not enough....

Excess unto excess or Exceedingly exceeding

NASB

¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

The reason it is so exceedingly beyond, first has to do with time....

Eternal: everlasting, an unlimited duration of time

Unlike our afflictions that are momentary, our glory will be eternal.

Second, it has to do with the weight or quality...

Weight: gravity, importance, significance

Eternity will not only be long, but it will be good!!!

We apply the word weighty now to that which is valuable and important, compared with that which is of no value, probably because the precious metals and jewels are heavy; and it is by them that we usually estimate the value of objects.

SO BEYOND, SO MUCH BETTER, NO COMPARISON

Parallel Passage

Romans 8:18

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Worthy: comparable, deserving

You'll notice the translators added "to be compared" for our understanding but that is EXACTLY what Paul is communicating here!

It's almost like Paul is telling us to pull out a scale and one side put the weight of glory that we will experience for all eternity. Then put the momentary light affliction you are currently experiencing and see the difference!

IT IS AS WE DO THIS THAT WE WILL BE ENCOURAGED.

It will infuse us with excitement and expectancy which changes how we live now!

It all comes down to which side of the scale is our focus. When we lose perspective, we lose heart.

People say that hindsight is 2020 and its true. But faith enables us to have the proper foresight into what is coming our way. And this world that we now live in is passing away, praise the Lord!

Finally, Paul focused on that which is unseen and eternal rather than the seen and temporary.

3) Eternal Unseen vs. Temporary Seen (verse 18)

¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Here is our direction and point of action. We must do this, or we will lose heart. This is the key to Paul's ability to not lose heart in the most difficult of situations and afflictions. *Paul takes that topic of eternity and expounds on it here in verse 18.*

We are given what we are to look at and what we are not to look at by Paul's example.

Look: to fix one's attention toward, to turn one's interest and expectations towards something, to ponder and keep thinking about

The Bible often seeks to fix our focus and adjust our perspective.

Colossians 3:1-2

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Our natural inclination is to look down and the Bible tells us to look up.

Paul makes this clear distinction for his last contrasting idea between the seen and unseen.

He says that we are to not look at the 'seen' because what we see is all temporary.

Temporary: not permanent, not lasting, only for a short time

Rather we are to look at the things which are unseen because it is the unseen things that are eternal. Meaning it is the things that we can't see that will actually be that which lasts forever.

But how does one see what is unseen? That seems rather strange.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Through the eyes of faith, we can see the unseen. We can even have absolute confidence in those things that we cannot see without physical sight because of our faith.

Just a few verses later Paul would say that we are not to walk by SIGHT, but we are to walk by FAITH.

THIS IS OUR HOPE. We hope for what we do not yet see. We look for it. We wait for it.

Romans 8:24-25

²⁴ For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

If we only look at things we can see, we are going to lose heart. It is as we look at the things which are unseen that will we be encouraged.

When you have your focus on the end, it gives you motivation during the now to KEEP GOING. This rings true if you are a runner, seeing that finish line. If you are a student, seeing that graduation. If you are a mom, seeing that adult who loves Jesus. If you are a truck driver, getting to that destination.

WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT TODAY IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO WALK BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT. *To see things for not what they are now but for what they will be.*

Reminding ourselves that this old body is perishing and that's okay because God promises us a new and glorious body!

Reminding ourselves to invest into the renewal of our inner man because that is what will go on into eternity.

Reminding ourselves that whatever it is that we are going through it is not only momentary, but it is light compared to the future eternal weight of glory that is being prepared for us.

Reminding ourselves that the things we see don't last but it is the unseen promises of God that will endure forever.

The apostle Peter would put it like this...

1 Peter 1:6-9

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.

We don't yet see Him with our physical eyes, but we see Him with our eyes of faith. We know Him and we can say that we LOVE HIM. Because of that we rejoice with joy inexpressible, fully glory! Looking forward to the day where faith ends, and we see Him clearly.