

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

IN THIS WORLD, WE EXPERIENCE SUFFERINGS: BUT GLORY IS COMING

SECOND CORINTHIANS



An overview of the Book of Second Corinthians, by Given O. Blakely

Lesson #20

COMMENTARY ON: 4:16-18

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

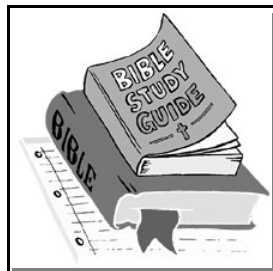
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

TWO DIFFERING REALMS

Because faith is alive and animating, we now read of "the spirit of faith" – something that constrains faith's possessor to **do** and **say** something. No merely human virtue or worldly experience has the powerful effects of faith. It is therefore a sin of great magnitude to attempt to elicit valid spiritual responses apart from faith. There is nothing in the world that can so this. There is no academic exercise of a human regimen that can accomplish "the work of faith with power." This lesson will confirm it will require more than an intellectual acknowledgment of this fact to realize its power.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 20



TRANSLATION LEGEND: AMPLIFIED or AMP = Amplified Bible, ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version, KJV=King James Version (1611), LIVING = Living Bible, MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament, NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster=The Webster Bible 1833, YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament, WILLIAMS = William's New Testament, PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament
LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG=Friberg Lexicon, UBS=UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA=Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT=Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER=Thayer's Greek Lexicon

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

TWO DIFFERING REALMS

“ 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸ 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 Cor 4:16-18)

INTRODUCTION

The “*newness of life*” that is realized in Christ Jesus cannot be lived out under a system of law. The “*law*” and “*life*” were not compatible because the boundaries of Law are too narrow to contain life. The Law could not produce life, and therefore righteousness could not come through it. As it is written, “ . . . if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Gal 3:21). The Law, which was comprised of “*the words of the covenant*” (Ex 34:28), could not reconcile men to God, empower them to correct their

behavior, or enable them to “*walk with God*” – not even for a single day.

Paul has contrasted the New Covenant with the Old Covenant, confirming the absolute superiority of the New. He is still in the process of expounding on that contrast. The New Covenant is one that engages “*the heart*” – the very center of man’s being. A brief recollection of this engagement will confirm the extensiveness of the work accomplished within the framework of the New Covenant. The heart is fundamental to “*pure religion*” (James 1:27).

- ☛ God “*opens*” the heart, that hearers may respond to the Gospel (Acts 16:14).
- ☛ The heart is circumcised, producing sensitivity to God (Deut 30:6; Rom 2:29).
- ☛ Hearts are purified by faith (Acts 15:9; 1 Pet 1:22).
- ☛ God writes His laws upon the heart (Heb 8:10; 10:16).
- ☛ We believe with the heart unto

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righteousness (Acts 8:37; Rom 10:10).

- ☛ We remain true to the Lord with “*purpose of heart*” (Acts 11:23).
- ☛ The love of God is “*shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit*” (Rom 5:5).
- ☛ We obey “*from the heart*” (Rom 6:17).
- ☛ The “*earnest of the Spirit*” is given “*in our hearts*” (2 Cor 1:22).
- ☛ In Christ, God has written upon the “*fleshly tables of the heart*” (2 Cor 3:3).
- ☛ In regeneration, God “*shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor 4:6).

- ☛ God sent His Spirit “*into our hearts crying Abba, Father*” (Gal 4:6).
- ☛ Christ dwells “*in our hearts by faith*” (Eph 3:17).
- ☛ In Christ, the will of God is done “*from the heart*” (Eph 6:6).
- ☛ The peace of God rules in our hearts (Col 3:15).
- ☛ Christ establishes our “*hearts unblameable before God*” (1 Thess 3:13).
- ☛ The Lord directs our “*hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ*” (2 Thess 3:5).
- ☛ We draw near to God “*with a true heart*” (Heb 10:22).

We must zealously thrust from us any tendency to view these things as kingdom superlatives – realities that are unusual for those who live by faith. Because things of this order are very extraordinary in the modern church, men have come to view them as a sort of option that is available for the especially gifted or devoted. **However, the things produced by spiritual life are not optional.** Where the attainments that have been mentioned are found, the presence of real spiritual life has been confirmed. Their absence, at the very least, is cause for one to examine himself to see if he is in the faith at all (2 Cor 13:5).

What the Law “*could not do*” still has to be done, else condemnation was sure. **The ending of the Law as a means to righteousness** (Rom 10:4) **did not remove the requirements demanded by the Law.** It is “*the righteousness of the Law*” that is fulfilled in those who “*walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Rom 8:4). This is one of

the objectives that was fulfilled in God “*sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,*” condemning “*sin in the flesh*” (Rom 8:3).

Paul is acquainting us with some of the issues of life – particularly those relating to dealing with opposition and conflict. Because the Corinthians were not suitable examples themselves, he has “*transferred,*” or applied to himself these things – as in First Corinthians 4:6. He is showing how life was exhibited in his own labors. Elsewhere he makes clear that this was not the result of his own personal effort – even though he did extend effort. It was, however, Christ that was living in Him (Gal 2:20), and the grace of God that was “*with*” him (1 Cor 15:10).

This is how Jesus lives within a person – causing the individual who is surrounded by trouble, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down to NOT be distressed, in despair, forsaken, or destroyed (4:8-9). It is what moves the person with faith to speak, even though he knows he will be opposed (4:13). **This is what the Holy Spirit does when He is not quenched or grieved.** It is what the grace of God does when it is not received in vain. What Paul has declared are not mere human achievements, but **evidence** of life.

Now the Apostle will further account for his faithfulness and indefatigable labors. In doing this, he is not providing a mere biography of his own life, or promoting his own personal interests. He is relating the manner of the kingdom. In this arresting passage he will establish that those in Christ have to do with two differing and contradicting realms. **How we respond to the experiences of life is determined by the realm upon which we focus.** There is a realm from which enabling grace and strength are imparted, but it must have our undivided attention.

THE CAUSE FOR NOT FAINTING

^{4:16a} **For which cause we faint not . . .**

The “*law,*” or principle “*of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*” not only

liberates us from “*the law of sin and death*” (Rom 8:2), it **involves** us in the

We have access to two differing realms. The one on which we focus determines our destiny– by Given O. Blakely

“good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom 12:2). From the perspective of our text, *“life”* is **participation** with God. It is being a *“laborer together with God”* (1 Cor 3:9). After all, in salvation, God works *“both to will and to DO, of His own good pleasure,”* **within** the child of God (Phil 2:13).

How does God *“work”* with the person who is laboring with Him, yet surrounded by trouble? How does the Lord Jesus live within the person who is *“perplexed”* while involved in His work? How does the Holy Spirit live within a person who is being *“persecuted?”* How does faith move a person to react who has been *“cast down?”* Those are the things Paul will now address.

What follows is not a rehearsal of the accomplishments of a person. Rather, it is a commentary on New Covenant life. This IS what happens when a person is living by faith, walking in the Spirit, and maintaining fellowship with Christ Jesus.

FOR WHICH CAUSE

“For which cause . . .” Other versions read, *“Therefore,”*^{NKJV} *“So,”*^{NRSV} *“Wherefore,”*^{ASV} *“That is why,”*^{NJB} *“For this reason,”*^{MONTGOMERY} and *“This is the reason.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

The *“cause”* of reference has been affirmed in the previous verses. It was an objective that had been determined in heaven, and in which Paul Himself was participating: *“the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound (redound,^{KJV} overflow,^{NIV}) to the glory of God”* (2 Cor 4:15).

Paul particularly has the *“last day”* in prospect, when the assembled universe will stand before the Lord. That is when the grand presentation of the elect shall be made by God Himself: *“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you”* (2 Cor 4:14). Then, when he himself is presented with all other believers, he anticipates a swelling chorus of praise and thanksgiving to be given to God. The loud chorus will reverberate throughout Throne room: *“Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth*

upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev 5:13). And again, *“Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb”* (Rev 7:10).

This is not a mere theological point with Paul. It is a *“cause!”* It is something that compels and motivates him. Faith takes the revealed facts and makes them fuel to the renewed heart. It provides stimulus, incentive, and confidence. Faith always produces results – results that are acceptable to God.

WE FAINT NOT

“ . . . we faint not . . . ” Other

grinding halt. The word *“faint”* comes from the Greek word ἐκκακοῦμεν (ekka-koo-men), which means “to behave badly in, hence to be weary in anything, or to lose courage, flag, faint,”^{THAYER} “strictly act badly in some circumstance, become weary or tired of doing something. Failing to hold out successfully, give up, become discouraged, lose heart,”^{FRIEBERG} “become discouraged, tire of,”^{UBS} “to lose one’s motivation to accomplish some valid goal, to become discouraged, to lose heart, to give up,”^{LOUW-NIDA} and “to lose heart, grow weary.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Psychology has taught the church to speak of *“burn-out.”* The idea is that a person worked too much, expended too much labor, burnt the candle at both ends, etc. Such a person is said to have

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versions read, *“we do not lose heart,”*^{NKJV} *“we do not give way to weariness,”*^{BBE} *“we are not discouraged,”*^{NAB} *“we do not waver,”*^{NJB} *“we never give up,”*^{NLT} *“we are not cowards,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“we do not become discouraged (utterly spiritless, exhausted, and wearied out through fear),”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“we never collapse.”*^{PHILLIPS}

If it were not for *“fainting,”* many religious professionals would be out of a job. A considerable percentage of contemporary religious specialists major on some aspect of recovery, where what was once possessed as been lost. This covers everything from marriage to ministry, and deals with all kinds of “quitters.” To be sure, each quitter can present reasons for dropping out. They may even present a convincing case. **But after all is said and done, the salvation of God makes no provision for fainting, quitting, ceasing, or dropping out.** That is actually one of the conditions from which Jesus delivers us.

To *“faint”* is to grow weary and quit. In such a case, strength dissipates, resolve withers, and work comes to a

gone beyond his limits, exceeded his ability, or simply been “too busy.” While such conditions do exist, they are by no means representative of a life of faith. This “science falsely so called” has ascribed all manners of meaning to the human experience of giving up, quitting, and losing heart. However, in Christ Jesus, an explanation for giving up is not acceptable. The inspired explanation that is provided pertains to **NOT** giving up.

What the Text Is Taking About

The subject under consideration is bearing the cross – something that is requisite to being a disciple of Christ. As it is written, *“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:27). For Paul, this involved *“tribulation”* and *“trouble”* (2 Cor 1:4). It was associated with being *“pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that”* he *“despaired even of life”* (2 Cor 1:8). He was *“troubled on every side,”* *“perplexed,”* *“persecuted,”* and *“cast down”* (2 Cor 4:8-9). Later he will testify to having been involved in *“abundant”* labors, *“frequent”* imprisonment, and skirmishes with

"death" itself (2 Cor 11:23). Five times he was beaten with thirty-nine stripes. Three times he was beaten with rods. Three times he suffered shipwreck. He was "stoned" once. He spent a day and a night alone in "the deep." He was constantly on the move in "frequent" journeys. Many times he encountered "peril" in waters, among robbers, among his own countrymen, among the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, , and among false brethren. He experienced "weariness and painfulness," frequently went without sleep, without food, and without drink. There were times when he was "cold and naked" (2 Cor 11:23-27).

All of this, Paul confessed, was the "dying of the Lord Jesus" being accomplished in him – it was Christ's work in him (4:10-11). From yet another view, all of this proved to be occasions in which Satan sought to discourage him, and compel him to give up. **Yet, Paul declares, "we faint not" – even though the cross was heavy, and the "dying" was painful.**

Why was he able to bear such a seemingly heavy cross? How was he able to continue pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? Why did he refuse to quit,

even when "all men" forsook him (2 Tim 4:16)? What was the secret of his strength – his remarkable stamina, even when he had many infirmities in addition to all of these hindrances (2 Cor 11:30; 12:5). This is the very thing Paul will clarify in this passage. He will show the spiritual rationale behind suffering, especially when doing so "for righteousness sake."

In this explanation, he is not speaking only of himself. **This is family language**, and accurately reflects the experience of all who are in Christ Jesus – all who are living by faith and walking in the Spirit.

THE PERISHING AND THE RENEWED

^{16b} . . . **but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.**"

From the precise and spiritually technical point of view, man is tripartite in nature – consisting of three parts: "spirit," "soul," and "body" (1 Thess 5:23). The unseen part consists of one's "spirit" and "soul," which are frequently mentioned together in Scripture (1 Sam 1:15; Job 7:11; Isa 26:9; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 4:12).

In this text, the Spirit will speak of

BUT THOUGH OUR OUTWARD MAN PERISH

"... but though our outward man perish . . ." Other versions read, "Even though our outward man **is** perishing," NKJV "but though our outer man is **decaying**," NASB "Though outwardly we are **wasting away**," NIV "Even though our outward **nature** is wasting away," NRSV "but though our outer man is getting **feebler**," BBE "but if indeed our outward man is **consumed**," DARBY "but though our outward man is **corrupted**," DOUAY "although our outer self is wasting away," NAB "though this outer human nature of

Paul introduces a certain line of reasoning here. **He is going to point to the vulnerable part of our persons, and declare that in spite of it, good things are happening within the believer.** What is occurring outwardly is significant, but not as significant as what is occurring inwardly. The argument is that the lesser cannot overcome the greater. The curse is not greater than the blessing. What comes on us from without is not as significant as what is experienced within.

"Perishing"

The "outward man" is the body, together with the "carnal mind" and affections that are joined to it. **It is the part of us that belongs to the order of this world, together with its lusts.** Because "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof" (1 John 2:17), that same experience is taking place in the part of us that is of the world.

Inclusive Unseen Parts

The "outward man" relates to Adam. It is there that we "bear the image of the earthy" (1 Cor 15:49). Everything about this part of our nature is perishing, decaying, and wasting away. This is what is call "mortality," or being "mortal." Thus Scripture speaks of "mortal man" (Job 4:17), "our mortal body" (Rom 6:12), and "your mortal bodies" (Rom 8:11). What is done "outwardly," is also said to be done "in the flesh" (Rom 2:28).

Paul introduces a certain line of reasoning here. He is going to point to the vulnerable part of our persons, and declare that in spite of it, good things are

an "outward," or visible, man, and an "inward," or unseen, man. Each "man" is rather complex in composition and nature. Each demands attention. Each has a fundamental trait. **One of the great secrets to not fainting is found in being able to distinguish these two "men," and giving attention to the proper one.**

ours may be falling into decay," NJB "Though our bodies are **dying**," NLT "Even though our physical bodies are **wearing out**," IE "Though our outer man is [progressively] decaying and wasting away," AMPLIFIED and "The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear." PHILLIPS

"Even Though"

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However, more is contained in the “outward man” than the body itself. This is a term that gathers together everything about us that is “natural” – “the natural man” (1 Cor 2:14). This part of us – “the natural man” consists of more than “flesh and blood,” as ordinarily conceived. It is said of “the natural man” that he does not receive “the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them.” This aspect of our persons, therefore, includes a “mind” as well as our physical bodies. Elsewhere, this is referred to as “the carnal mind,” which is “enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7).

Paul speaks of the unregenerate part of our beings as including “the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph 2:3). He also refers to “the flesh with the affections and lusts,” affirming that those in Christ have “crucified” the whole of it (Gal 5:24). All of these – corrupt affections and lust, and the mind that “desires” wrong things, are related to the “outward man.” They, together with this “vile body” are related to the earth, which it “passing away” (1 John 2:17). Therefore, “the outward man” in its entirety is also passing away together with “the lust thereof” – “perishing,” as our text affirms. Deliverance from “the body of this death” (Rom 7:24), will also be deliverance from “fleshly lusts that war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11), corrupt “desires of the mind,” and the base “affections” that are also connected to it.

The “outward man” is said to be wasting away because it has been consigned to death – that is its Divinely appointed destiny. This is the ultimate view of the “outward man.” It may appear at any given time as though the outward man is gaining strength, becoming more robust and enduring. However, that is only a temporary experience. When viewed from the standpoint of “the end of all things,” the “outward man” is in a constant state of erosion, deterioration, and decay – “perishing.” He is gradually moving toward his appointed end – “death,” for “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb 9:27).

The Rationale

If it were not for the “outward man,” the world would have no access to us at all. This is our vulnerable part – the part that is “perishing.” It is the **only** reason we can suffer, have pain, be disappointed, have sorrow, and weep.

Faith sees no sense in turning our attention toward the part of our persons that is decaying and waxing old. That is why those who believe in Christ keep under their body, and bring it into subjection (1 Cor 9:27). They are not seeking to prolong its existence, but to prepare for its demise.

Man’s Reluctance to Accept Mortality

Faith sees no sense in turning our attention toward the part of our persons that is decaying and waxing old. That is why those who believe in Christ keep under

By nature, men do not like to acknowledge the “perishing” condition of the “outward man.” Thus Ponce de Leon searched for the mythical “fountain of youth.” He learned from Indians of an island called Bimini (in the Bahamas) on which there was a miraculous spring or fountain that could rejuvenate those who drank from it (the fountain of youth). In search of this fountain, he led a privately outfitted expedition from Puerto Rico in March 1513 and in April of that year landed on the coast of Florida near the site of modern St. Augustine. While in Florida, he was wounded by a Seminole arrow during an Indian attack, and died upon his return to Cuba. He too was “mortal,” and thus his “outward man” perished.

Men have created a science called Gerontology – the scientific study of the phenomena of aging. Some, taking this supposed science even further than was intended, have imagined they can “reverse the aging process.” A current book that has become quite popular is “Reverse Aging,” by Sang Y. Whang. One editorial commending this book says, “Not

science fiction, but a scientific fact! This book is the first common sense scientific explanation of the aging process and ‘how to’ reverse it.” They continue, “Learn the scientific processes and devices available for ‘Reverse Aging.’ No need to accept ‘Aging’ as a fact of life. Anybody can do it.” ISP PUBLISHING

None of these people affirm they can produce a condition that will result in immortality. They are merely trying to slow the process down, so that life in this world may be lived more fully. However, this is not a proper mind-set for the child of God. **Excellence in this world is not the objective. The aim is to prepare for death, not attempt to postpone it.** While some may laugh at the foolishness of trying to find a “fountain of youth,” or

“reversing the aging process,” the person who does not prepare for dying is also foolish. Those who live for this world, satiating their worldly lusts, and seeking to live in pleasure, have created their own “fountain of youth,” attempting to escape the unavoidable fact of death. Our text will show us a higher objective and a more noble incentive.

YET THE INWARD MAN IS RENEWED

“... yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” Other versions read, “yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day,” NIV “our inner nature is being renewed day by day,” NRSV “our inner man is made new day by day,” BBE “yet the inward is renewed day by day,” DARBY “yet the inward man is renewed daily,” GENEVA “our inner self is being renewed day by day,” NAU “at the same time our inner human nature is renewed day by day,” NJB “our spirits are being renewed every day,” NLT “our inner strength in the Lord is growing every day,” LIVING “our spirits are getting younger every day,” IE “my inner nature is constantly renewed from day to day,” WILLIAMS “yet our inner self is being

[progressively] renewed day after day,”
AMPLIFIED and “*but every day the inward man receives fresh strength.*” PHILLIPS

“Yet”

The word “yet” is a “conjunction indicating contrast, difference,” FRIEBERG and is generally introduced after a negative. Even though our “outward man” is perishing, **there is another process going on within the believer**, and it neutralizes that experience. It is this “inward” experience that enables us to live with the perishing of the “outward man.”

The “Inward Man”

The “inward man” belongs to the

God, in Christ Jesus, and by the Spirit.

Those outside of Christ are not said to have an “inward man.” Rather, within, they are “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph 2:1), and are “*within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness*” (Matt 23:27). You might view “the inward man” as a sort of spiritual citadel in which Jesus resides (Rom 8:10), the Father dwells (1 John 4:15), and the Spirit indwells (Rom 8:11). It is also associated with a “*heart of flesh*” (Ezek 36:26), upon which is written the laws of God (Heb 8:10; 10:16).

No part of “the inward man”

toward the predestined purpose of God, to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29).

This is the “*renewing of the Holy Spirit*” that is the second aspect of salvation. The first is “*the washing of regeneration*” (Tit 3:5). That “washing” **begins** the process of conformation. Renewal is the process by which that conformation is brought to completion.

The meaning of this text is not that we get a fresh start every day. It is true that this occurs. However, that is not the proclamation of this text. **If this were the case, a person could remain in a static condition, unchanged and without progressing toward the goal.** Such a scenario would be like this: a person receives a gallon of strength each morning. Through the duties, challenges, and difficulties of life, the gallon is dissipated by the end of the day. The person therefore blissfully goes to sleep, knowing the gallon jug will be refilled during the night. I do not doubt that some people attempt to live for Christ in this manner. But that is by no means the nature of spiritual life, nor is that what our text means.

This is speaking of the process involved in being changed “from glory unto glory.” That process involves the waning of the powers of the “outward man,” and the increase of the powers of the “inward man.” This is what it means to be “conformed to the image” of God’s Son – less of flesh and more of Spirit.

“*new creation.*” It is the regenerated part of us. While every person has an inner and unseen part, not every person has an “inward man.” This is the “inner man” that is strengthened with God’s Spirit, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:16). It is the “inward man” that finds great delight in the law of God (Rom 7:22). This is the “new man” that is renewed “*in the image of Him that created him*” (Col 3:10).

The “new man” is “**created in all righteousness and true holiness**” (Eph 2:15). He **begins** to be, when the individual is born again – delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13). This is the part to which Scripture refers when it speaks of those who are “*born of God*” (1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18), or “*begotten of God*” (1 John 5:18), “*born of the Spirit*” (John 3:6,8), or being “*in Christ*” (Rom 8:1; 1 Thess 2:14; 1 Pet 5:14). **It is this “inward man” that gives us acceptable identity before**

is subject to mortality or vanity. It has been “*created after the image of Him, who created him*” (Col 3:10) – an image that was marred in Adam, causing the whole of man by nature to “*come short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23). This is the part of us that is being “*renewed,*” “*changed,*” and “*transformed.*” There are mysterious things about this complex nature of man that are most difficult to perceive, much less explain. This, however, provides a sort of thumbnail view of our situation.

“Day by Day”

The meaning of “*day by day*” is harmonious with the revealed work of the Holy Spirit – changing us from one stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). Being renewed “*day by day*” is **not** like your strength draining out at the end of the day, then renewed by a good night’s sleep. This renewal process is **not** a refurbishing, or renovation – like pumping air into a flat tire. **This speaks of kingdom progression – advancing**

This is a text of contrast. While our “outward man” is decreasing, our “inward man” is increasing. While the “outward man” is losing ground, the “inward man” is gaining ground. **The very circumstances** that causes wear and tear to the “outward man” causes advancement and growth in the “inward man.”

This is speaking of the process involved in being changed “from glory unto glory.” That process involves the waning of the powers of the “outward man,” and the increase of the powers of the “inward man.” This is what it means to be “*conformed to the image*” of God’s Son – **less of flesh and more of Spirit.** Less of Adam and more of Christ. Less of this world, and more of the world to come.

This is a description of spiritual growth. Peter refers to this process when he exhorts, “*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet 3:18). That is nothing less than the “inward

man” being “renewed day by day.” The Scriptures frequently refer to this gradual transformation, spiritual growth, or renewal. **It is an aspect of salvation:** “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and **renewing of the Holy Spirit**” (Titus 3:5). A salvation that does not include this renewal is no salvation at all. It is nothing more than a fabrication of men.

Notice how the Spirit emphasizes this matter of growth, which is nothing more than being conformed to the image of God’s Son, or being changed from glory to glory. **All of these are addressed to people who are already in Christ Jesus.** They must be taken seriously by the church.

- **TRANSFORMATION.** “And be not conformed to this world: but **be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2).
- **HOLINESS.** “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness in the fear of God**” (2 Cor 7:1).
- **MATURITY.** “But speaking the truth in love, may **grow up into Him in all things**, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15).
- **RENEWAL.** “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and **be renewed in the spirit of your mind**; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:22-24).
- **GROWING.** “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, **that ye may grow thereby**” (1 Pet 2:2).
- **SANCTIFICATION.** “And the very God of peace **sanctify you wholly**; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless

unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23).

- **PERFECTION.** “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, **let us go on unto perfection**; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Heb 6:1).

All of these texts, and more, are speaking of the daily renewal to which our

modern church becomes more apparent. In the most favorable view, the majority of American and European churches are filled with baby Christians. The tragedy is that they are **old** babies, remaining in an infantile state for many years. Jesus teaches us that such a state is totally unacceptable – i.e. those who “**bring no fruit to perfection**” (Lk 8:14). Other versions read, “bring no fruit to maturity,”^{NKJV} “they do not mature,”^{NIV} and “and their fruit does not ripen (come to maturity and perfection.)”^{AMPLIFIED}

All of these texts, and more, are speaking of the daily renewal to which our text refers. This is not a seasonal renewal, but one which takes place “day by day.” It does not happen annually, like some of the feasts observed by Israel, but is an ongoing process.

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The Nature of Newness of Life

This reveals something of what is involved in being born again. We are not simply “delivered from the power of darkness,” but are **also** “translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son” (Col 1:13). There cannot be a participation in Christ’s kingdom until we are delivered from the power of darkness. Conversely, it is not possible to be delivered from the power of darkness without also being translated in the Christ’s kingdom.

Just as surely as our tenure in the domain of darkness was a daily one, so it is with our experience of life in Christ Jesus. We do not move from a life of constant involvement with darkness to a static condition in the light. If “evil men” are described as waxing “worse and worse” (2 Tim 3:13), then there must be a corresponding experience where the path of the just “shines more and more” (Prov 4:18).

The Modern Church Is Deficient

Right here the deficiency of the

What does Jesus have to say about these people? He says they are the ones who “are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life.” **There is not the slightest suggestion in His words that they will be saved in spite of this miserable condition.** The word “choked” means “to strangle completely.”^{STRONG’S} That is, the Word of God is stifled in them, so that it can do no work – no transforming work.

Perpetual spiritual infancy means more than that the person simply did not grow. **Such people have been overcome with worldly cares and interests.** They are “choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14b). They have, by an act of their will, and through their own preference, given their attention to the things of “this life” – that is, life in “this present evil world.”

Whatever case may be made for the acceptance of these people, it will be exceedingly difficult to support it. They are contrasted with those who received the Word and brought forth fruit. Those people are described as “good ground,” who “which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15).

Those who do not bring forth fruit are NOT called “good ground.” They are NOT said to have had “an honest and good heart.” Men may regard them as such, but Jesus does not. Matthew says of those termed “good ground,” *“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty”* (Matt 13:23). **This cannot be said of those who do not bear fruit, or come to maturity.**

If fruit bearing is seen as unrelated to maturity, the point of the parable has been missed. **The whole point to sowing the seed was to bring forth a crop.** It was never the intention of the sower to simply have a field full of plants. The bearing of fruit takes place **when the plant becomes mature.** It is the purpose for which the seed was planted.

Jesus affirmed that those who did

who is the Husbandman (John 15:2). Jude said those whose fruit “withered” were “twice dead,” and would be “plucked up by the roots” (Jude 1:12).

In a most solemn exhortation to “go on to perfection,” the Spirit reminds us of the alternative. **It is inevitable that such a person will fall away and be rejected by God.** “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned” (Heb 6:8).

could possibly be brought to God if, after sowing good seed, watering it with grace, and feeding it with truth, it did **not** grow up, mature, and bring forth fruit. What angel in heaven would praise God for such a thing? How could Christ possibly be glorified by such a condition? What is there in all of God’s Word that even remotely suggests that God will favor such a person? What did Jesus or the Apostles ever say that would lead a person to the conclusion that lifelessness, a lack of fruit, and the inconsistency of one’s response to God is acceptable? What is there about redemption that would lead a person to think in this manner?

The seriousness of this matter is seen in the state of the modern church. For the most part, it has nothing more in which it can boast than its institutional aspects, its structures, and its worldly organization. For the most part, it’s members do not mirror the Person of Christ. They do not even display an unquestionable appetite for the things of God, much less exhibit a blessed acquaintance with the Lord, His Word, and His ways.

I understand that it is not fashionable to speak in this manner, but this text demands that we do so. It does **not** say that the “inward man” OUGHT to be “renewed day by day,” but that He **“IS.”** That is what takes place as we “*behold the glory of the Lord*”—we **“ARE changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”** (2 Cor 3:18). **There is not the slightest chance that this will not take place if we gaze steadfastly upon Jesus.**

If fruit bearing is seen as unrelated to maturity, the point of the parable has been missed. The whole point to sowing the seed was to bring forth a crop. It was never the intention of the sower to simply have a field full of plants. The bearing of fruit takes place when the plant becomes mature. It is the purpose for which the seed was planted.

not bear fruit would be **removed** from the Vine, which is Christ Himself. *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned”* (John 15:5-6). Who is willing to affirm that an individual can abide in Christ, and Christ dwell in Him, yet remain fruitless and immature? Is there any person of sound mind that is willing defend such an absurdity? Jesus said the person in Him who did not bear fruit would be “*taken away*” by the Father,

Everything about salvation—I say, “*everything*”—is calculated to produce spiritual growth. **From within**, the Holy Spirit is working to this end (Rom 8:13-14, 26-27). **From heaven**, Jesus is interceding to this end (Heb 7:25). The grace of God is working to this end (Tit 2:11-13). The Word of God works to this end — “*that the man of God may be perfect*” (2 Tim 3:16-17). The “new man” is intended to “*grow*,” and be “*conformed*” to the image of God’s Son.

Who, then, is the person who imagines that all of this work could be stifled, and yet, in the end, the person be saved? What kind of glory

Where this process is not taking place, carnality has been vaulted into prominence, and this world has become the focus of attention. Such a condition is soundly condemned in Apostolic doctrine. Those who wear the name of Jesus, yet are being dominated by the flesh are solemnly told, “*Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience*” (Eph 5:6). After itemizing some of “*the works of the flesh*,” we are reminded, “*as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (Gal 5:21).

It ought to be clear to every soul that God has made no commitment to save such people – none at all. It is

apparent, therefore, that we are speaking of critical issues! This is not something intended to provoke controversy and

debate, but is assisting us to be sober. Such a stance is required in order to make it safely through life in this world.

LIGHT AFFLICTION

^{17a} **For our light affliction...**

Other versions read, “For momentary, light affliction,” ^{NASB} “For our light and momentary troubles,” ^{NIV} “For this slight momentary affliction,” ^{NRSV} “For our present trouble, which is only for a short time,” ^{BBE} “For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation,” ^{DOUAY} “The temporary, light burden light burdens of our hardships,” ^{NJB} “For our present troubles are quite small and won’t last very long,” ^{NLT} “for the momentary light matter of our tribulation,” ^{YLT} “For this light and transitory burden of suffering,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “This light, temporary nature of our suffering,” ^{WILLIAMS} “For our light, momentary affliction (this slight distress of the passing hour),” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “These little troubles (which are really so transitory).” ^{PHILLIPS}

The afflictions he has already mentioned appear very significant, and sometimes massive. Here he refers to them as “our light affliction.” The word translated “light” comes from the Greek word ἐλαφρόν (elaf-ron), and means “light in weight, quick, agile,” ^{THAYER} “of a burden easy to bear, insignificant,” ^{FRIEBERG} “pertaining to being relatively light in weight, not heavy,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} and “light to bear, not burdensome, easy.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

This is the word Jesus used to describe His “burden” – “My burden is light” (Matt 11:30). Jesus did not mean He did not require much of us, or that we sort of coast into heaven with great ease. He was not suggesting that He really did not expect much out of His followers, although judging from the state of the modern church one might imagine this is really the case.

The Era of Religious Professionalism

The era of religious professionals is upon us again – just as surely as it was found in the times of the Scribes and Pharisees, and when papal Rome arose with its pope, bishops, cardinals, and

priests. These professions stand above the flock of God, and by their very presence lessen the involvement of the people. They are not to be compared with the “apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor and teachers” that Jesus placed within the church (Eph 4:8).

Whether it was originally intended to do so or not, the introduction of the clergy system and religious specialists has led the religious populous to conclude that

Whether it was originally intended to do so or not, the introduction of the clergy system and religious specialists has led the religious populous to conclude that what Christ requires is really too heavy for the ordinary person. Therefore, the more challenging duties are left to an elite few, greatly lessening the “burden” Jesus puts upon His followers.

what Christ requires is really too heavy for the ordinary person. Therefore, the more challenging duties are left to an elite few, greatly lessening the “burden” Jesus puts upon His followers.

In view of this uncomely circumstance, the very concept of “light affliction” is dissolved. The perspective of the average “Christian” is that this world is the primary one, and that life in this world is the fundamental life. Earthly relationships are thus viewed as preeminent, and personal interests are consequently pushed the top of life’s agenda. **What is even more tragic, the agenda of the nominal church is actually designed to promote these corrupted interests.** That, of course, removes any emphasis on the “things above” (Col 3:1-2), “the world to come”

(Lk 18:30; Heb 2:5, or appearing “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24).

Given the perspective that is being nurtured by spiritual Babylon, Paul could not possibly speak of the “light afflictions” that he had experienced. They ranged from fighting “with beasts after the manner of men” (1 Cor 15:32), to being beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, persecuted, and in constant peril (2 Cor

11:23-27). What person immersed in the affairs of this world would call that kind of affliction “light?” If we were to consult with the psychiatrists of the land on such experiences, which one of them could call them “light?” Where is the counselor who, after hearing such a testimony, would refer to the person’s “light affliction?” **Beyond all controversy, this is not the assessment of a person who is at home in this world.** These are the expressions of one who is truly a stranger and a pilgrim in the world (1 Pet 2:11).

A STATEMENT OF COMPARISON

The expression “our light affliction” comes from a person who is aware of a **better** condition. The afflictions are “light” **in comparison** to something else that is known, and is

associated with the one who is testifying. The afflictions are not “light” from the standpoint of experience, but from the viewpoint of “spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). Something is known that effectively neutralizes the “affliction” that is being endured.

This fact is fundamental to our consideration: **There is more to life than what is being experienced in the body.** When a person is in Christ, possessing a dominating faith and a sustaining hope, it causes all affliction, regardless of its intensity, to appear

“light” when compared with the future.

It is “light” because it becomes bearable. Rather than the “affliction” causes despair, **it only confirms that we are temporary residents of the place of trouble** – “strangers and pilgrims.” This does not mean the “affliction” is not painful. It does not suggest that it can simply be ignored, pretending as though it did not exist. Rather, during the “affliction” the sufferer is given “grace” that makes him superior to the tribulation through which he is going. The believer is able to

rebound from seeming setbacks, and recover from being “cast down.” There is a very real participation in “the power of His resurrection.” This “power” enables those who are “cast down” to arise and once again enter into the fray of battle.

Because the “affliction” does not have the power to overthrow faith or neutralize hope, the glory that awaits us can still be perceived, for where faith and hope are present, trouble cannot blur the vision. Thus the trusting soul is able to rest in the lion’s den, walk in the fire, and sing in the prison.

BUT FOR A MOMENT

“^{17b} . . . which is but for a moment . . .” Other versions read, “For momentary,” ^{NASB} “which is only for a short time,” ^{BBE} “For that which is at present momentary,” ^{DOUAY} “The temporary,” ^{NJB} “and won’t last very long,” ^{NLT} “will last only a short time,” ^{IE} “transitory,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “temporary nature,” ^{WILLIAMS} “the passing hour,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “(which are really so transitory).” ^{PHILLIPS}

While the word “light” emphasizes

afflictions to seem “but for a moment.” It is written that Jacob loved Rachel, and was willing to “serve seven years” for the right to marry her (Gen 29:18). The Scriptures say that, at the end of those seven years, they “seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her” (Gen 29:20). Even then, because of Laban’s treachery, Jacob had to serve seven more years before Rachel could actually be his wife (Gen 29:27,30). When compared to being second in the land of Egypt, being over all the land, Joseph’s nearly thirteen

things” will not merely been seen as “but for moment,” they will not even be remembered (Isa 65:17).

In this world, when we come into the blessing, the “afflictions” that preceded it are viewed as “but for a moment.” This is precisely what Jesus was talking about when He addressed His disciples during the last supper. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (John 16:22). The experience of the blessing would overshadow the intensity and duration of their sorrow.

This is speaking of what is seen by faith, not what is experienced in the flesh and time. When faith, which accesses the eternal realm, is being realized, it causes all affliction to be seen as “momentary.” This does not suggest that Paul’s stripes and bruises did not hurt. It does not say he was no longer sensitive of cold

the **weight** of affliction, “but for a moment” underscores its **duration**. The “light afflictions” are “momentary” in **light of eternity**, not in view today or tomorrow.

LOOKING BACK ON AFFLICTION

It is true that we can come into blessings that, looking backward, cause

years (from age seventeen to thirty, Gen 37:2; 41:46) in prison were “but for a moment.” Once Joshua and Caleb arrived in the promised land and received their inheritance, their forty long years in the wilderness were “but for a moment.”

When, at last, we enter in through the gates of the city, all of the “former

THE FORWARD LOOK

However, this is **not** the perspective of this text. **This is speaking of what is seen by faith, not what is experienced in the flesh and time.** When faith, which accesses the eternal realm, is being realized, it causes all affliction to be seen as “momentary.” This does not suggest that Paul’s stripes and bruises did not hurt. It does not say he was no longer sensitive of cold. Grace, however, made him equal to the occasion.

While Paul and Silas were in prison, the contemplation of Christ and the future that awaited them, caused their perspective of being in prison and in stocks to change. They “sang” that night – something that someone who is dominated by affliction cannot do. In consideration of the glory that awaited him, Paul’s two years in prison at the behest of Felix was “*but for a moment*” (Acts 24:27).

When our “*inward man is renewed day by day*,” it erases the time factor of “*afflictions*.” Faith sees them with the perspective of eternity. Hope consciously compares them with the glory that awaits us, and also sees them as “*momentary*.” Because they are tied to our bodies and to time, they also are perceived as “*a tale that is told*” (Psa 90:9). Like our natural lives, in which, for the righteous, all afflictions occur, they also are seen as “*a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*” (James 4:14).

Sufferings in the body take on all of the characteristics of the body itself, together with the things associated with it. **For the godly, sufferings and afflictions can last no longer than the body!**

- Jacob said of his entire life prior to being joined with Joseph in Egypt: “*FEW and evil have been the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years*” (Gen 47:9).
- A godly woman from Tekoah said to David, “*For we must needs die, and are as water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again*” (2 Sam 14:14).
- David himself said, “*our days upon the earth are as a shadow*” (1 Chron 29:15).
- Job, a leader in the area of suffering, observed, “*My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle*” (Job 7:6), and “*are not my days few?*” (Job 10:20), “*Man that is born of woman is of few days*” (Job 14:1).
- The Psalms say, “*Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee*” (Psa 39:5). “*For He*

remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again” (Psa 78:39). “*Remember how short my time*” (Psa 89:47). “*My days are like a shadow that declineth*” (Psa 102:11). “*Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away*” (Psa 144:4).

- “*Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils*” (Isa 2:22).
- “*All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field*” (Isa 40:6; James 1:10).
- “*Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*” (James 4:14).

It is interesting that nearly every Scripture that emphasizes the

those in Christ, the fundamental point is **not** how we are to live in this world. Rather, the anticipation of “*the world to come*” constrains them to treat their life in this world as a pilgrimage. They are sojourners here, not true citizens. **In view of this, the brevity of life is seen as a thing most blessed, and is not a cause for sorrow and regret.**

Faith does not despair at the brevity of life, as Solomon did (Eccl 6:12), but assigns that brevity to suffering, affliction, and sorrow. The thought of our days being “*few*” upon the earth rejoices the heart. As an old camp meeting song affirms, “We’ll soon be done with troubles and trials!” Another one of those exhilarating songs says, “Just a little while to stay here!”

Seen from the real perspective, mortality is actually a blessing. The brevity of life is really a merciful consideration. There have been at least

It is interesting that nearly every Scripture that emphasizes the brevity of life is found in Moses and the Prophets. The Apostles do not make a lot of this fact, because “life and immortality” have been brought to light “through the Gospel” (

brevity of life is found in Moses and the Prophets. The Apostles do not make a lot of this fact, because “*life and immortality*” have been brought to light “*through the Gospel*” (2 Tim 1:10). James is the only New Covenant writer that makes a special point of life’s brevity, and that is because of the carnality of his audience. As he said, “*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*” (James 4:4).

The Apostolic doctrine itself does not make a large point of the brevity of life in this world. That is because “*the just shall live by faith*” (Rom 1:17; Heb 10:38), and faith is not enamored of this “*present evil world*.” For

seven men who lived over nine hundred years. **Adam** (930, Gen 5:5), **Seth** (912, Gen 5:8), **Enos** (905, Gen 5:11), **Cainan** (910, Gen 5:14), **Jared** (962, Gen 5:20), **Methuselah** (969, Gen 5:27), **Noah** (950, Gen 9:29). Additionally, **Mahalaleel** lived to be 895 years old (Gen 5:17). **Lamech** lived for 777 years (Gen 5:31).

When the Lord promised, “*With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation*” (Psa 91:16), everyone of understanding knows he was not speaking of living 800 or 900 years! The average life-span of man finally leveled off to around 70-80: “*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years*” (Psa 90:10). Even in this statement, made during the Old Covenant by Moses (Psa 90:1), there is a note of despair. The

Psalmist adds *“yet is their strength **labor and sorrow**; for it is **soon cut off**, and we fly away.”*

However, no such perspective is ever declared to the righteous by Jesus and the Apostles. The reason is that, with Jesus, light was shed upon *“life”* itself. Now, by faith, it is seen as a time of preparation, during which great spiritual benefits are realized, which are only a pledge, or earnest, of the glory to come. Insightful souls do not see life itself as being brief, for, in Christ, there is a sense in which we will *“never die”* (John

that point he confessed, *“For I am now **ready** to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand”* (2 Tim 4:6). As the time of Peter’s death approached he wrote, *“Knowing that **shortly** I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me”* (2 Pet 1:14). There is not a single note of Solomonic despair in any of their expressions! There is not an indication of regret to be heard. And why so? Because *“life and immortality have been brought to light through the Gospel!”*

Now faith anticipates the end

Insightful souls do not see life itself as being brief, for, in Christ, there is a sense in which we will “never die” (John 11:26). Now, faith ascribes brevity to our sufferings and our affliction! They are what is “momentary,”

11:26). **Now, faith ascribes brevity to our sufferings and our affliction!** They are what is *“momentary,”* The *“newness of life”* in which we are walking is *“eternal life.”* It is **not** like a *“weavers shuttle,”* or a *“vapor,”* or a *“tale that is told!”* It will **not** be *“cut off,”* or *“wither,”* or *“vanish away!”* The life we have in Christ Jesus is **not** like *“water spilled on the ground,”* or a *“shadow!”* It is **not** *“short,”* or its days *“few!”* God has *“raised”* us up and seated us in *“the heavenly places”* where such terms and concepts do not apply (Eph 2:6).

Now, being *“absent from the body”* is preferred, not dreaded (2 Cor 5:8). When Simeon’s time to die arrived, he said, *“Lord, **now** lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word”* (Luke 2:29). When Paul came to

of trouble, the cessation of weakness, and the conclusion of opposition. Job saw this faintly when he said, *“There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest”* (Job 3:17). He was speaking of the grave, not of being with the Lord (Job 3:13). He lamented he had not died *“from the womb”* (Job 3:11). It was not that he was unbelieving or unspiritual. Rather, it is that *“life and immortality”* had **not** yet been brought to light. He never spoke of afflictions being *“light”* or *“momentary,”* for he lived in a time when the things that have now been revealed were hidden from men (Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 3:3-5; Col 1:26).

The Divine Intention in Mortality

When man was driven from the garden of God, and barred from having

access to the *“tree of life,”* a holy intention was stated. *“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, **lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever**”* (Gen 3:22). The meaning of *“live forever”* is *“live forever in their sin.”* God was not content to leave man in this state. In His infinite mercy, God chose to terminate life in the flesh – the life given to Adam (Gen 2:7), and create *“newness of life”* through Jesus Christ – a life where men would *“never die.”*

This Is Why

It is this situation that allows for the insightful observation of our text: *“For our **light affliction, which is but for a moment**, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (2 Cor 4:17). Notice that *“affliction”* is in the singular, not the plural. This is the proper rendering of the Greek word θλίψις, which is in the singular. The NIV, International English, New Living Bible, and New International Bible, are **wrong** in rendering the word *“troubles.”* Other translations also mistranslate the word: the Living Bible (*“sufferings”*), and the New Jerusalem (*“hardships”*).

This is not the detailed view of difficulty, as though Paul was viewing a montage of individual experiences. He rather takes all of the various levels of suffering – from physically painful experiences, to dangerous surroundings and cares – and casts them into the single container of *“affliction.”* **He then views that whole lifetime of adversity, opposition, and persecution, and says it has been “light” and “for a moment.”** He is going to take every trying and oppressive experience in his life, and compare it to the future – **a future that faith has made certain to his heart.** His hope has opened the joyful wells of salvation to Him, and he is drinking.

THEY ARE WORKING FOR US

*“^{17c} . . . **worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”**”*

The Spirit now informs us that *“affliction”* is actually a productive employee, bringing certain and lasting

advantages to us. Whether *“affliction”* is considered as a whole, or in its individual parts (as in 2 Cor 11:23-28), certain

We have access to two differing realms. The one on which we focus determines our destiny– by Given O. Blakely

advantages are accruing from it. **Here, we are not being confronted with mere human experiences, but with things that have a purpose, and are monitored and controlled from heaven for a certain lasting purpose.** The Kingdom of Christ, into which we have been “translated” (Col 1:13) is driven by Divine “purpose” – an “eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11).

When some religious men speak of “purpose driven,” they are **not** speaking of heavenly objectives, but of human motivations. They attempt to move men to establish certain goals and objectives, and then work toward fulfilling them. It all sounds rather good, but such procedures are not as valuable as they appear to be. This, however, is not the manner of the Kingdom. **Nothing related to salvation is actuated by merely human objectives.** In Christ we have embraced an agenda that was established “before the world began” (2 Tim 1:9).

WORKING FOR US

“... *worketh for us* ...” Other versions read, “*is producing for us*,”^{NASB} “*are achieving for us*,”^{NIV} “*is preparing us*,”^{NRSV} “*is working out for us*,”^{BBE} “*causeth unto us*,”^{GENEVA} “*is earning us for*,”^{NJB} “*doth work out for us*,”^{YLT} “*will result in*,”^{LIVING} “*continues to accumulate*,”^{WILLIAMS} “*is ever more and more abundantly preparing and producing and achieving for us*,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*are winning for us*.”^{PHILLIPS}

Often the saints declare that marvelous and insightful affirmation, “*And we know that all things **work together** for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*” (Rom 8:28). The text we are considering provides some details of that “working.” The fact that the concept of “working” is used confirms this is not something that occurs by chance or randomly. **In Scripture “work” is undergirded by purpose, and is always deliberate.** In Romans 8:28, it is God Himself who does the working. The text is not saying that things automatically fall together, gravitating to some grand objective without Divine involvement. Thus other versions read, “*God causes all things to work together*,”^{NASB} “*in all things **God works***,”

^{NIV} and “*We are assured and know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and are [fitting into a plan]*.”^{AMPLIFIED} That is, this is part and parcel of salvation. This is one of the ways in which God “performs” the “good work” begun in us “until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6). Make no mistake about this, He will “finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness” (Rom 9:28).

being exposed to a facet of salvation that is rarely proclaimed among men. Even though afflictions are being experienced by the saints, insipid and career-oriented preachers and teachers are not declaring the message of this passage. This is not the sort of message that will be helpful in building an institution, but it certainly does build up the saints, which is the real work of God.

That is, in comparison to the affliction, what we obtain through it is infinitely greater than the affliction itself. Also, however debilitating the affliction may be, what is put into us through it is far greater than what is taken out.

Now Paul looks at our “affliction” – affliction that is very real, and very much felt. **Faith does not make us impervious to pain, but equal to it.** Paul did not laugh as he made his way to that barbaric shore following a stressful shipwreck during a fierce storm (Acts 27:42-43). **What he is here affirming is that trouble actually works FOR us, NOT against us!** That is, we will be better after it than we were before and during it. Trouble is like an employee that is serving our best interests – God’s appointed interests.

The Spirit is now going to tell us what “affliction” produces,^{NRSV} for in Christ it is, indeed, productive! He is going to tell us what is “causes,”^{GENEVA} for there are some results that depend upon the experience of affliction. There are wages that are actually “earned”^{NJB} when we pass through the furnace of affliction. It is there – in affliction – that we are “counted worthy of the kingdom for which you suffer” (2 Thess 1:5). There are very real “results”^{LIVING} that are realized in the crucible of suffering, and it is imperative that we know about them! There is a “preparation”^{AMPLIFIED} that is taking place when we are under the weight and pressure of affliction.

I will tell you that we are now

FAR MORE EXCEEDING

“... *a far more exceeding* ...” Other versions read, “*far beyond all comparison*,”^{NASB} “*far outweighs them all*,”^{NIV} “*beyond all measure*,”^{NRSV} “*God’s richest blessing*,”^{LIVING} “*worth so much more*,”^{IE} “*a preponderating, yes, a vastly preponderating*,”^{WEYMOUTH} “*beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons and all calculations, a vast and transcendent glory and blessedness never to cease!*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*out of all proportion to our pain*.”^{PHILLIPS}

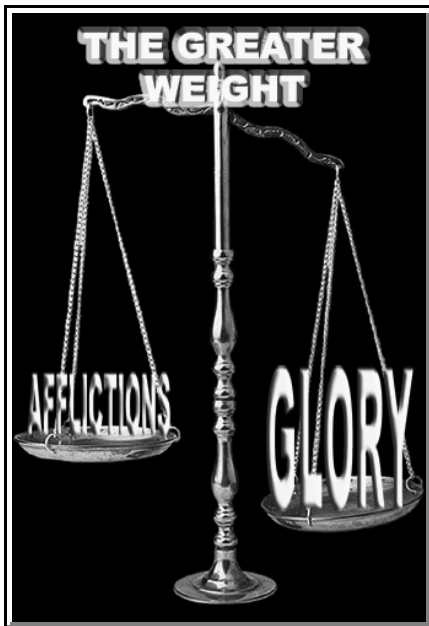
So, what is it that our affliction produces? What are these appointed results? We ought to expect them to be good. Whatever it is, it is called “*far more exceeding*,” or “*out of all proportion to our pain*.”^{PHILLIPS} **That is, in comparison to the affliction, what we obtain through it is infinitely greater than the affliction itself.** Also, however debilitating the affliction may be, what is put into us **through it** is far greater than what is taken out. Ultimately, when all the facts are in, and all of the earthly experiences have been completed, **our affliction will only have caused us to obtain much more.**

Ultimately, no person who has lived by faith will be the worse because of his affliction. In the end, affliction will

leave us with no real handicaps. When God is in the “work,” our heavenly bank account becomes larger, and our character is made more stable, and better suited for the glory and the “eternal inheritance” toward which we are advancing. If our earthly person and resources seem to be diminishing, our “new man” and our stake in glory is simultaneously increasing!

ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY

“... and eternal weight of glory.” Other versions read, “eternal glory that far outweighs,” ^{NIV} “a much greater weight of glory,” ^{BBE} “an immeasurably great glory that will last forever,” ^{NLT} “an age-during weight of glory,” ^{YLT} “far greater eternal glory,” ^{IE} “a solid and eternal glory,” ^{WILLIAMS} “an everlasting weight of glory,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “a permanent, glorious and solid reward.” ^{PHILLIPS}



There are degrees of glory – all glory is not the same. Jesus, for example, has infinitely more glory than any of the angels (Heb 1:6), and the angels presently have more glory than us, who have been, by nature, created “a little lower than the angels” (Psa 8:5; Heb 2:7). In the world to come, the Apostles will have more glory than the rank-and-file of the saints, for their names are written on the “twelve foundations” of the “city” of God – the glorified church (Rev 21:14). In the universe, there is also

a greater glory in celestial “bodies” than in “terrestrial” ones (1 Cor 15:40). There is also a greater glory in the sun than in the other heavenly bodies, and in the moon, as well as among the stars (1 Cor 15:41-42). Concerning the saints themselves, the resurrection body has a greater glory than the body of flesh and blood, which “cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 15:42-43,50).

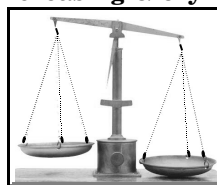
There is a sense in which “glory” is like a series of weights that can be added one on top of another, causing one side of the balance-scale to be heavier than the other side. It can also be a single weight-unit with which something else is compared. Before the time of electronic scales, I remember how butchers, for example, weighed meat. When someone would purchase five pounds of meat, the butcher would place a five pound “weight” on one side of the scale. He would then begin placing meat on the other side of the scale, continuing until the two sides of the scale were perfectly balanced. At the top of the scale there was a small scale that indicated when the two sides were perfectly balanced. This is the kind of measurement that is being portrayed in our text.

“More Glory”

In our text a “weight of glory” describes a “glory” that can, in effect, be measured and compared with other values. There is such a thing as “more glory.” For example, it is said of Jesus, “This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house” (Heb 3:3). Notice that here “honor” is related to “glory.” The one who has more honor is worthy of more glory. When comparing one of the best men of all history – Moses – with Jesus, it is obvious that Jesus has more honor, for all of the angels worship him, while Moses was opposed by those he was appointed to lead. Therefore, Jesus gets the greater glory, for he is deserving of it, having fulfilled the greatest work.

The Picture of Increasing Glory

Our text is describing a process that occurs when afflictions are endured. The afflictions



themselves are not the point, even though that is what “the flesh” wants to emphasize. As the child of God experiences “affliction,” a corresponding action takes place. Afflictions on earth add more glory in heaven for the individual – that is the process that is described by the words “worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Jesus referred to this principle when He spoke of His people being persecuted. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for GREAT is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Mat 5:11-12). This is also one way of laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven (Matt 6:20).

Heaven and Earth

For the child of God, there is a direct relationship between what is taking place in this world, and what is occurring in heaven. Speaking parabolically, if, for the sake of Jesus’ name and righteousness, a person receives “a pound” of affliction in this world, “five pounds” of glory are added to his account in heaven.

The idea of “greater weight” is that the increase of glory is exponential. That is, the rate of return exceeds the rate of experience. The “greater weight of glory” is proportionate to the degree of suffering, but far greater in amount. Mathematically, this is like a number being raised to a higher power. What is even more, the rate of return continues to increase throughout our life. Put simplistically, a new believer may suffer affliction equal to an ounce, then have a pound added to the glory accruing for him in heaven. That same person, after walking with the Lord for many years, may very well receive a return of a hundred pounds for one ounce.

Our Lord spoke of this principle when He opened up the matter of rewards in the world to come. Although He was speaking of entering into the labor of the Lord rather than of suffering affliction, the same principle of return applies. “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a

righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt 10:41-42).

Now, speaking as a man, what is **receiving** a prophet, compared with being a **prophet**? And what is **receiving** a righteous man, compared with **being** one? According to human reasoning, there is no comparison. In fact, such an arrangement would **not** appear just and good in any human court. It violates every principle of return that is honored by the flesh. Yet, in the Divine economy, such a thing is wholly right.

Getting More to the Point

Paul has affirmed himself to be an example of the principle being taught. **To him, the fundamental experience is what takes place AFTER life in this world, not what is experienced in the temporal realm.** For earthly experiences to have genuine and lasting value, there must be a relationship between those experiences and *"the world to come."* If this world is the place where the **pinnacle** of experience is reached, then all professing Christians are nothing more than fools who have wasted their time. Godliness makes no sense at all if this is the case, not to mention suffering that is incurred because of that godliness. Thus Paul writes, *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"* (1 Cor 15:19).

This is the (if I may use the term) "value system" of the child of God. **What lies ahead is not only worth going through the fire and the water, it is actually enhanced because of those afflicting circumstances.** This manner of thinking violently overthrows modern psychological approaches to hardship, affliction, tribulation, and the likes. Trouble is no longer seen as an intrusion or interruption of normality. Rather, it is the appointed means by which we are *"counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer"* (2 Thess 1:5). Those imposing the affliction will be duly judged, as this text teaches (vs 4-5). However, those who are afflicted are becoming better suited for the *"ages to come."* This not only involves the

formation of their character, but the accrual of their rewards as well – the *"greater weight of glory."*

The Perspective of the Believer

There are at least two responses to trouble that are found among professing believers. Jesus declared that **one** of them **excluded** a person from participation with God. He spoke of the person who had *"not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended"* (Matt 13:21). These know nothing of *"the greater weight of glory,"* for it does not apply to their kind of response. For them, affliction was the means by which they were **excluded** from glory. Those who were genuine, mocked the affliction, bringing *"forth fruit with patience,"* or by enduring that affliction (Lk 8:15).

It was their contemplation *"the time to come"* (1 Tim 6:19) that empowered them to wade through deep waters and walk through fiery trials. They were, in other words, *"saved by hope"* (Rom 8:24-25). They knew that what is *"laid up for you in heaven"* (Col 1:5) is *"eternal,"* and thus cannot be taken from those who live by faith. It can also tend to increase, being a *"greater weight,"* so that the adversity that is experienced in this world is offset by an ever increasing weight of glory – participation in *"the world to come."*

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

It is not possible to exploit the grace of God, using it for fleshly advantage. Equally true, it is impossible to take advantage of heavenly principles for personal earthly gain. **Everything about salvation is calculated to**

What lies ahead is not only worth going through the fire and the water, it is actually enhanced because of those afflicting circumstances. This manner of thinking violently overthrows modern psychological approaches to hardship, affliction, tribulation, and the likes.

Paul articulates the other response for us – a response that walks through *"the valley of the shadow of death,"* becoming even more determined to continue in the faith. *"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us"* ^{NKJV} (Rom 5:3-5). For these tender souls, tribulation was *"working"* for them, producing a *"greater weight of glory."* It was the contemplation of that *"exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* that caused hope to flourish and grow, anchoring them in heaven, *"within the veil"* (Heb 6:19). What brought the outward man down moved the inward man up!

contribute to the glory of God. Not a single facet of His *"great salvation"* can be applied to those who love the world and the things that are in it.

One of the ways in which the kingdom cannot be exploited or abused is in this area of *"greater glory."* If a greater *"weight of glory"* is brought on by *"affliction,"* **the flesh is deliberately excluded, for it will not, and cannot, volunteer to die or to suffer.** If it is true that *"we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22), then this is one of the ways God has barred the entrance to those who live after the flesh. The door of entrance is *"strait"* – too narrow to allow the incoming of those who prefer *"this present evil world"* (Gal 1:4) to *"the world to come"* (Heb 2:5). **Until the individual is willing to share in "the**

fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil 3:10), **there is no hope of dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.**

In our text, Paul is not merely stating a doctrine. He is affirming what he knows by experience – what has been

confirmed in the crucible of suffering! This was perfectly harmonious with what had been revealed in Scripture.

NOT LOOKING AT THINGS THAT ARE SEEN

^{18a} ***While we look not at the things which are seen . . .***

The Spirit will now confirm **how** the knowledge of which he speaks has been attained. How is it that a person can endure affliction, and at the same time know, *"being fully persuaded,"* that this very affliction is *"working"* for him a *"far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?"* **How can such a marvelous and sustaining perception be realized?** That is the consideration that will now be placed before us.

WHILE

"While . . ." Other versions read, *"So,"* ^{NIV} *"because,"* ^{NRSV} *"as,"* ^{ESV} *"since,"* ^{NJB} *"We shouldn't,"* ^{IE} and *"for."* ^{PHILLIPS}

and godliness" is realized *"through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue"* (2 Pet 1:3). That is, **in the process of Divine fellowship, into which we have been "called"** (1 Cor 1:9), **the required resources are delivered to us.** It is not possible to obtain what God gives through Jesus Christ while remaining at a distance from Him, not abiding in Him, or not *"looking"* to Him. It is not possible to realize the benefits of redemption while fellowship with Christ is not being experienced.

As soon as our attention is diverted from the Lord, everything that He has becomes inaccessible. The understanding of this registers a powerful impact upon the human spirit.

from succumbing to such an attack, everything that Christ has procured for us is forfeited. I want to state this as strongly as is possibly, without my personal inabilities of expression clouding the issue. The things with which the Western Christian world is being confronted are like a band of wicked robbers. People are being inoculated with enough religion, so that they become immune to the real thing. They have just enough knowledge of the Bible to lose any real appetite for it, or experience any real power of the Word. They are exposed to just enough of Jesus to ensure that they will not abandon everything to participate in His sufferings and the power of His resurrection.

Speaking in the language of our text, the *"while"* is taken out of religion. That is, the people are actually deprived of the means through which Divine resources are obtained. **This is precisely the reason for the sudden and rapidly increasing trend to religious specialists, counselors, workshops, methods of personal discipline, and other approaches that depend upon human wisdom and strength.** Because faith is at an unacceptable level, the things that are appropriated by faith are beyond reach of the people.

This may appear to be a very strong statement of the case, **but it is not nearly strong enough.** It is only because I find it difficult to put these things in stronger words that I now cease to comment on the subject.

Bringing Us Back to the Point

Paul now traces the awareness of a present *"far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* to two things: something that is NOT being done, and something that IS being done. These are **not** things that ought to be done, but that **ARE** being done. It is **in the process**, and **only** in the process, of doing these things

When a society has been bombarded with frothy and surface religion that does not require fellowship with Christ and constantly looking to Him, it has actually been invaded by the wicked one. Commensurate with the lack of spiritual depth that comes from succumbing to such an attack, everything that Christ has procured for us is forfeited.

The blessing that is being considered – that of knowing a *"far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* is being produced by our affliction – **is something that takes place within a certain environment.** This is not something that is learned by rote, like memorizing multiplication tables. Neither, indeed, is this knowledge acquired through some academic process, whereby we add more knowledge to the reservoir of our minds.

Everything *"that pertains to life*

The things that take place *"while"* the following posture is being maintained cannot possibly be experienced apart from that stance. It is imperative that this be seen.

The Twentieth Century Dilemma

When a society has been bombarded with frothy and surface religion that does not require fellowship with Christ and constantly looking to Him, it has actually been invaded by the wicked one. **Commensurate with the lack of spiritual depth that comes**

that the human spirit becomes aware of, and is sustained by, the discernment of something more wonderful and more significant than *"affliction."*

WE LOOK NOT

"... *we look not* ..." Other versions read, "*we fix our eyes not*,"^{NIV} "*our minds are not on*,"^{BBE} "*since what we aim for is not*,"^{NJB} "*SO we don't look*,"^{NLT} "*we are not looking to*,"^{YLT} "*We shouldn't look at*,"^{IE} "*because we do not look*,"^{ISV} "*because I do not keep my eyes on*,"^{WILLIAMS} "*while I am gazing not*,"^{MONTGOMERY} "*Since we consider and look not*,"^{AMPLIFIED} and "*For we are looking all the time not*."^{PHILLIPS}

In Scripture, particularly the Apostolic writings, the word *"look"* is very significant. This word comes from the Gr4eek word *σκοποῦντων* which means "to scrutinize, observe, to fix one's mind on, direct one's attention to, aim at, and care for;"^{THAYER} "to keep a watchful eye on, notice carefully, keep thinking about;"^{FRIBERG} "keep one's attention on;"^{UBS} "to continue to regard closely;"^{LOUW-NIDA} and "to behold, contemplate, watch, consider, examine."^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Here, therefore, when Paul says "*we look not*," he will specify things upon which we do **not** dwell. These are things upon which our attention is **not** fixed. They are things we do **not** scrutinize, aim at, or care for. These are the things we do **not** keep thinking about, closely regard,

or contemplate. And what are these "*things*?" What is it that neither has nor deserves our unwavering attention?



THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN

"... *at the things which are seen* ..." Other versions read, "*what is seen*,"^{NIV} "*what can be seen*,"^{NRSV} "*visible*,"^{NJB} "*things seen*,"^{YLT} "*what we can see right now, the troubles around us*"^{LIVING} "*the things that are seen*,"^{AMPLIFIED} and "*the visible things*."^{PHILLIPS}

These are the things related to this world and life in the flesh. They are the afflictions themselves and the circumstances that surround them. They involve the people who perpetrate them, and the effects of their work upon our "*outward man*," that is "*perishing*." They have to do with the "*here and now*."

These are the things that **cannot** transfer into "*the world to come*." They include the "*trouble*," perplexity, persecution, and being "*cast down*" that accompany them. Things that are "*seen*" include sorrow, pain, tears, and even death itself. Circumstance, seeming advantage, and the luster of this world are part of the "*things that are seen*." Religious institutionalism, careers, health, and wealth, together with being deprived of them are in this category. **None of these "*things*" are worthy of our attention, our emphasis, or our contemplation.** While we are "*looking*" at them, the resources required to finish our course are pushed away from us, and become inaccessible.

Those who emphasis the "*things that are seen*" are not our helpers. In a very real sense, they are our enemies, who threaten to rob us of the things grace is bringing to us. In my judgment there is no exception to what I will now affirm. "*While*" we "*look at the things that are seen*," heaven becomes irrelevant. Fellowship with Christ is no longer important. Holiness is not seen as vital, and faith is treated philosophically. When this world looms large, "*the world to come*" is perceived as of little consequence. In such a case, the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, and the day of judgment are no longer fundamental. Life will thus be lived as though this world was the only world.

LOOKING AT THINGS THAT ARE NOT SEEN

"^{18b} ... *but at the things which are not seen* ..."

Spiritual life does not consist primarily of rejecting, but is fundamentally one of receiving from God. In view of this, what has gotten our attention is of critical importance. I want to stress that this is the manner of the kingdom – this is the norm for those who are in Christ Jesus. It simply is not possible to remain in Divine favor if we do not **refuse** to "*look*" at the "*things that are seen*," and consequently fashion our attention on the "*things that are not seen*."

BUT

"... *but* ..." Other versions read, "*rather*,"^{NLT} and "*instead*."^{IE}

The posture of the person walking in newness of life is not merely that of not doing what is wrong, or refraining from what is not advisable. In Christ Jesus, there are at least three reasons for "*abstaining*" from the lusts of the flesh (1 Pet 2:11), and casting off "*the sin that so easily besets us*" (Heb 12:1).

☛ **Faith constitutes us "*strangers and pilgrims*" in the world** (1 Pet 2:11), thereby making us

fundamentally incompatible with it. Those who are in Christ Jesus are "*not of this world*," and sin has to do with "*the world*" (John 15:19; 17:14,16).

☛ **The "*new creation*" (2 Cor 5:17) has a certain revulsion for sin.** The one who is "*born of God*" confesses with David, "*I hate every false way*" (Psa 119:104,128). More and more these people come to "*abhor that which is evil*" (Rom 12:9), being made like the One who redeemed them, who was noted for hating iniquity (Heb 1:9).

• **The realization of salvation and all of its marvelous benefits cannot be realized until the umbilical chord to this world is severed.** In order to participate in Christ's redemption we must not *"be conformed to this world"* (Rom 12:2). Thus, in a every real sense, we let go of everything that caused our sinful state, in order that we may appropriate what God has provided in His Son.

The small word **"BUT"** is emphasizing the reason for us abandoning sinful manners and expressions. This is why we refuse to fasten our eyes upon transitory things. It is why we are adamant about not being drug down to *"the plain of Ono"* (Neh 6:2), where this world looms large and heaven becomes unimportant. **"But"** is the line of demarcation that, when crossed, moves us from the realm that is condemned to the one that is accepted. If what now follows is **not** realized in our lives, nothing else is of any importance at all. Should there be a person who rejects fastening his attention upon what is now expounded, **everything he does becomes wrong**, and will condemn him, regardless of what it is. As it is written, *"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled"* (Titus 1:15). Nowhere, I say "nowhere," is *"eternal salvation"* (Heb 5:9) promised to the *"unbelieving,"* or those with minds and consciences that are *"defiled."*

THINGS NOT SEEN

"... at the things which are not seen ..." Other versions read, *"what is unseen,"* ^{NIV} *"what cannot be seen,"* ^{NRSV} *"invisible,"* ^{NJB} and *"the joys of heaven which we have not seen."* ^{LIVING}

The words *"not seen"* do not mean *"invisible,"* as ordinarily perceived. As the New Revised Standard Version suggests, these are things that *"cannot be seen."* **It is not that they are simply far away from us, they are of another order – an order that no natural aptitude can access.** They are *"not of this world,"* and are thus totally inaccessible to, and out of reach of, those who are part of the world order.

These are **"things"** for which redemption prepares us. They are *"things"* for which the new birth qualifies us. They are *"things"* that will *"remain"* after the heavens and earth that now are have *"passed away"* (2 Pet 3:10-12). Speaking of the entire natural order, the Spirit affirms, *"And this word, Yet once*

presently presides. This is a kingdom that *"is not of this world"* (John 18:36). These are things that are as the Person of Christ and the kingdom over which He rules – both of which are *"unseen."*

I want to keep before you that the "things" of reference, when duly

"But" is the line of demarcation that, when crossed, moves us from the realm that is condemned to the one that is accepted. If what now follows is not realized in our lives, nothing else is of any importance at all. Should there be a person who rejects fastening his attention upon what is now expounded, everything he does becomes wrong, and will condemn him, regardless of what it is.

more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb 12:27). The *"things which cannot be shaken"* are *"the things which are not seen"* of our text. Those who are *"born of the Spirit"* (John 3:6,8) have a keen interest in these *"things"* – **that is why they have fastened their attention upon them.**

We have gained no advantage from *"not"* looking at the *"things that are seen"* **until we focus our attention** on the *"things that are not seen."* This is one of the great failings of contemporary religion. Even stress is now being placed on *"the things that are seen."* As a consequence, the Word of God is largely seen as a manual of conduct – a means to establish acceptable behavior in this world. Once this perspective is adopted, it becomes like a theological template that is superimposed upon the Scriptures. When they are read through this template, the Divine emphasis upon unseen things cannot even be seen. Such *"things"* are filtered out of the individual's view so that he becomes blinded to them.

What are these *"things that are not seen?"* Are they real, or are they just theological novelties? **First, these are things pertaining to another realm – to the kingdom over which Jesus**

heeded, make all of the trials and difficulties of life bearable. The perception of these *"things"* reduces the magnitude of suffering, and causes *"afflictions"* to be seen properly. When *"the eyes of the understanding"* (Eph 1:18) are opened, we are more persuaded of the accumulation of a *"far greater and eternal weight of glory"* than of the hardships and pain endured in the flesh. This is part of the *"spirit of a sound mind"* that is realized in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 1:7).

It is, of course, the eyes of faith that penetrate the *"unseen"* realm, beholding the things that cannot otherwise be seen. It is said of Moses, *"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible"* (Heb 11:27). Moses cut loose from Egypt because he *"saw"* something better. He forsook unspeakable worldly advantage, *"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward"* (Heb 11:26). **In other words, and in accord with the light given at that time, he looked at the "things that are not seen" – "the reward" – and was thereby enabled to "endure."** He even saw the sufferings involved with leaving Egypt in association with the coming Messiah – *"the sufferings of Christ."*

All sufferings by the righteous, from Abel to the end of the world, have been sanctified by Christ. They are related to His own suffering, which was the means of delivering us from this present evil world. As compared to what has now been revealed, Moses knew precious little about the coming Messiah. Until His time, all that had been revealed was that He would bruise the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15), and would be the source of blessing for the whole world (Gen 12:3). It was revealed to Jacob that the Messiah would be a gathering Point for the people, and that the scepter belonged to Him (Gen 49:10). Moses was told the coming Messiah would be a Prophet like unto

that the word should not be spoken to them any more” (Heb 12:18-19).

This is a reference to Mount Sinai from which the Law was given. The entire realm was “*seen*.” Everything was accessible to the human senses, and was of the order of this world. The mountain could be “*touched*” with human hands. The blackness, fire, and the tempest could be seen with human eyes. The blasting trumpet and the voice of words could be heard by the human ear. That is **not** the kind of mountain to which “*we are come*.”

The things Israel saw and heard involved the Divine nature impacting upon the temporal order, and thus “*they*

Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:22-24). None of these “things” are seen, yet all of them are real. Faith is fully persuaded of their reality, and confronts life boldly in their light.

☛ **Mount Zion.** The is the place of Divine utterance, and is compared with Sinai, from which a trumpet-like voice drove the people away from God. This is the mount Zion in which God Himself dwells. Thus Isaiah refers to “*the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in Zion*” (Isa 8:18).

☛ **The City of the Living God.** This again accents the dwelling place of God Himself, versus places where He was partially made known. This is nothing less that “*the city*” that God has “*prepared*” for those who are strangers and pilgrims in the earth (Heb 11:16). It is a “*city*” where the saints will blend, and there will be no friction or opponent.

☛ **The Heavenly Jerusalem.** Just as surely as there is a Jerusalem on the earth, there is one also in heaven. It is “*heavenly*” in the sense of not being of this world. It is not made for this world, but, through Christ, men in this world are being prepared for it. It is a place of spiritual commerce, and is the place where God has placed His name.

☛ **An Innumerable Company of Angels.** The vast host of heavenly messengers and servants are described as “*ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*” (Rev 5:11). This is not intended to be a literal count of the angels (which would be 100,000,000 plus thousands of thousands – or thousands of groups of a thousand, **the minimum** of which would be 100 million plus one billion (10,000 X 10,000 + 1,000 X 1,000 X 1000). This is a way of saying, as the Hebrew text

Here we are introduced to the unseen realm. It is very real, as will be apparent. By saying we have “come” to this realm, the Spirit means that we are aware and fully persuaded of it. We are even involved in it. We have some cognitive thoughts about it, and can enjoy many of its benefits now.

him, and that the people would, in fact, give heed to Him (Deut 18:15,18). **Yet, with that sparse amount of information, Moses was more persuaded of the coming Messiah than of the power of the king of Egypt.** What marvelous sacrifices can be made now that God has pulled back the veil covering His eternal purpose, making known more of the glory to come?

SOME UNSEEN THINGS

Some of these “*unseen things*” are collected together in a single passage. They are things to which we “*are come*” – things that are ours in Christ Jesus.

Where We Have NOT Come

First, in a telling statement of the facts, we are reminded what we have **NOT** come to: “*For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated*

could not endure what was commanded.” We are told that the sight was “*so terrible*” that even faithful Moses said, “*I exceedingly fear and quake*” (Heb 12:21). Emphatically we are told this is “*not*” where we are come in Christ Jesus.

Where We HAVE Come

Here we are introduced to the unseen realm. **It is very real, as will be apparent. By saying we have “come” to this realm, the Spirit means that we are aware and fully persuaded of it.** We are even involved in it. We have some cognitive thoughts about it, and can enjoy many of its benefits **now**. The person who concentrates on these things is “*looking*” at “*the things that are not seen*.” Ponder, now, the glories of this sight, and see what incentives for holiness are found in them. See how, for sheer magnitude, this sight causes the “*sufferings of this present time*” (Rom 8:18) to pale in comparison.

“But ye are come unto mount

states, “innumerable.” This vast multitude of angels surround the throne upon which God and Christ sit – “they encircled the throne.” ^{NIV} These are all intensely active – “His ministers of fire” (Psa 104:4), “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:13-14).

- **The General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are Written in Heaven.** I understand this to refer to all the redeemed who remain upon the earth, for those who have gone on before us are mentioned later. Those whose names “are written in heaven” are generally considered to be those who are living by faith, remaining in the body (Luke 10:20). This, however, is a view of them that cannot be obtained by human eyes. It is the invisible view of them, for there is no external indication of participation in this awesome assembly. They may be seen as members of this congregation or that congregation. But here they are seen as members of “the church of the Firstborn” – that is, they are brethren who are being conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29). No man is able to see the book in which their names are written, but faith persuades the heart of this reality, and freely embraces such precious souls.

- **God the Judge of All.** It is of note that God is here declared to be “the Judge of all.” Under ordinary circumstances such a view would spark fear in the hearts of men. But here is a view of God that brings great comfort and consolation to those living by faith. They have no fear of judgment, for “perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18). We have come to God in His most intimidating posture, and it only brings us comfort!

- **The Spirits of Just Men Made Perfect.** These are the precious souls who have finished their race. They have left the arena of conflict, and are “present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8). Now, they comprise a vast gallery of “witnesses” that surrounds those who are running the “race”

that has been set before them (Heb 12:1). The degree to which we have fellowship with them is not fully known this side of the veil, but they are there, testifying to the result of completing the good fight of faith.

- **Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant.** We have been called by God Himself “into the fellowship” of His Son (1 Cor 1:9). He has taken up His abode in those who are living by faith (John 14:21,23; Col 1:27), and they are “one spirit” with Him (1 Cor 6:17). We have access to the “throne of grace” upon which He is seated (Heb 4:16). He is presently teaching us (Eph 4:20-21), and is giving us “an understanding” (1 John 5:20). By faith we are experiencing His intercession, as He is bringing us “to glory” (Heb 2:10; 7:25).

- **The Blood of Sprinkling.** Jesus has taken His blood “into heaven itself,” having “obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb 9:12,24). That “precious blood” is presently

slightest concern among that vast heavenly host of angels that are sent forth to minister to us. No difficulty we experience is too great for them, even if it is the army of Sennacherib. And what of the “general assembly and church of the Firstborn?” Is there some persecution or assault of the wicked one that has even a minuscule effect upon this gathering? Have they not been made to “sit together” with Christ in the heavenly realms, from which Satan has been expelled (Lk 10:18; Rev 12:10)?

Is there any form of opposition that can remove a single name that is “written in heaven?” Is there any adversarial influence that can move God the Judge to be “against” those who have been “made accepted in the Beloved?” (Eph 1:6). There is no power or principality that can touch “the spirits of just men made perfect,” or successfully raise an accusation against them! And what earthly disturbance or foe can thwart the activities of the Mediator of the New Covenant? There is no such thing as a circumstance or a personality in

Remember, “while” we look at the “things that are unseen,” all trouble ceases to intimidate us. Sin loses all of its power, and the race to glory becomes “runable.” Even if they are “cast down,” the righteous rise again, even “seven times” (Prov 24:16). Oh, how we need men and woman who will put us in mind of the “things that are unseen!”

cleansing us as we “walk in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7).

We Are Looking At These Things

By looking at these “unseen” things, the Spirit means we are living in view of them. It is our awareness of these realities that causes our sufferings to have a diminishing effect upon our spirits. No “affliction” can move “Mount Zion” to which we have come. No “trouble,” however great it may be, can penetrate “the city of the Living God,” or cause agitation in the “heavenly Jerusalem.” There is no tribulation that can cause the

heaven, earth, or under the earth, that can neutralize the power of the “blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel!”

OTHER UNSEEN THINGS

Remember, “while” we look at the “things that are unseen,” all trouble ceases to intimidate us. Sin loses all of its power, and the race to glory becomes “runable.” Even if they are “cast down,” the righteous rise again, even “seven times” (Prov 24:16). Oh, how we need men and woman who will put us in mind of the “things that are unseen!”

Ponder them once again. They is an “*eternal inheritance*” that is promised to you (Heb 9:15). It is presently “*reserved in heaven for you*” (1 Pet 1:4). A “*hope*” is “*laid up for you in heaven*” (Col 1:23). You have a very real “*anchor of the soul*” that is cast “*within the veil*” – where Jesus is – and is keeps you from drifting in this vile world (Heb 6:19). There is even “*a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*” that presently exists for you – a resurrection body (2 Cor 5:1-5).

Among the vast array of “*things that are unseen*” you will find a very real “*peace*” that will keep the heart and the mind (Phil 4:7). There is a “*joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (1 Pet 1:8). In Christ there is an unseen Intercessor

within who takes up your cause when you do not know what to pray for as you ought (Rom 8:26-27). There is a “*reward in heaven*” (Matt 5:12), a “*crown of righteousness*” (2 Tim 4:8), and a “*white stone*” that has your “*new name*” inscribed upon it (Rev 2:17). There is “*treasure in heaven*” to be possessed (Mark 10:21), and a “*better and enduring substance*” (Heb 10:34).

In Jesus you have “*access*” to God Himself (Eph 2:18), and to the “*grace wherein ye stand*” (Rom 5:2). There is also “*grace to help, in the time of need*” (Heb 4:16), and “*all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Col 2:3). There are an abundance of things that you have right now, even though you cannot see them. They include Paul, Apollos, Cephas,

the world, life, death, things present, and things to come (1 Cor 3:22). There are “*things above*” upon which you can set your affection, and which you can expectantly seek (Col 3:1-2).

The “*things that cannot be seen*” can be seen through faith, which is “*the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb 11:1). The sight of these “*things*” produces spiritual stamina, and reduces the effect of affliction and opposition. They strengthen our spiritual sinews, making us equal to life. There is a great need in our time for the people of God to see them and be persuaded of their reality. It is well past time for the religious merchants of “*seen*” things to be driven from the house of God!

THE SEEN THINGS ARE TEMPORAL

“^{18c} . . . for the things which are seen are temporal . . .”

FOR

“ . . . for . . . ” The posture that has been declared – **not** looking at seen things, but at things that are not seen – is driven by “*spiritual understanding*.” We do not assume this posture because of a

present world” (Tit 2:11).

The little word “*for*” means that, through godly reasoning, we have assessed the true situation, and have therefore chosen to occupy our minds and hearts with “*better things*.” Now a succinct summary statement is made that totally invalidates

(*brief and fleeting*). ”AMPLIFIED

Everything connected with Adam, together with the total environment in which he was placed, is “*temporal*.” Any experience realized within, and confined to, the framework of that environment, is temporary. Whatever is wed to the natural surrounding will not last – it is transient. Nothing that depends upon the present heavens and earth will extend one second beyond the revelation of Jesus Christ in all of His glory (Rev 20:11). If it is something that is confined to “*the body*,” it is temporal. If your eye can see it, it will not last. If your ear can hear it, it has a terminal point. If it can be touched, it is destined to pass away.

If it is a religious experience that has its locus in the body, it must not be the center of your concentration. You must not hang your hopes upon such an experience, or imagine that it will compensate for the sorrows of life. It will not. What occurs “in the body” will go when the body goes.

law that has been imposed upon us. Our vision is not directed toward these unseen realities out of a sense of fear, or because we dread the reprisal for not doing so. In Christ an “*understanding*” is ministered to us that makes any other posture unreasonable and offensive (Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20). Grace “*teaches*” us to proceed through life with very real and enjoyable preferences, “*denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*,” and living “*soberly, righteously, and godly, in this*

any emphasis of the things of this world.

TEMPORAL THINGS

“ . . . the things which are seen are temporal . . . ” Other versions read, “*What is seen is temporary*,”^{NIV} “*what can be seen is temporary*,”^{NRSV} “*the things that are seen are transient*,”^{RSV} “*the things which are seen are for a time*,”^{BBE} “*the troubles we see will soon be over*,”^{NLT} “*what is seen is only temporary*,”^{IE} and “*the things that are visible are temporary*

Anything and everything that can go no further than your body, whether it is persecution or some imagined benefit, is temporal. Such things are unworthy of your attention. You must not let your mind dwell upon such things, for they will turn your heart from the destiny of the elect, and from the God who has appointed it. If it is a grievous experience of pain, or persecution, or sorrow – **it will not last.** Do not “*look*” at such things! Do not fasten your attention upon them, concentrate on them, or treat them as

though they were deserving of extended contemplation. They are not!

If it is a religious experience that has its locus in the body, it must not be the center of your concentration. You must not hang your

hopes upon such an experience, or imagine that it will compensate for the sorrows of life. It will not. What occurs *"in the body"* will go when the body goes.

If it is an earthly advantage – something that makes life more tolerable,

or eases the burden of life, yet is only for the body, do not let it take hold of your heart and mind! Such a consideration is not sufficient to buoy up the human spirit during your tenure in this world. Such advantages, as wonderful as they may be, must finally be given up.

THE UNSEEN THINGS ARE ETERNAL

^{18d} **... but the things which are not seen are eternal.** Other versions read, *"what is unseen is eternal,"* ^{NIV} *"what cannot be seen is eternal,"* ^{NRSV} *"but invisible things eternal,"* ^{NJB} *"but the joys to come will last forever,"* ^{NLT} *"but the things not seen are age-enduring,"* ^{YLT} *"but what is unseen lasts forever,"* ^{IE} *"but the things that are invisible are deathless and everlasting,"* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *"it is the invisible things that are really permanent."* ^{PHILLIPS}

ETERNAL THINGS

Here is the real circumstance. In Jesus Christ we have obtained **"eternal life"** (John 17:3; 1 John 5:13). The established objective is to **"receive the promise of eternal inheritance"** (Heb 9:15). The **"glory"** that is accruing for us is **"an eternal weight of glory"** (2 Cor 4:17). The **"house"** that we anticipate putting on is **"eternal in the heavens"** (2 Cor 5:1). The purpose in which we have become involved is appropriately termed **"the eternal purpose"** (Eph 3:11). The glory to which we have been called is **"eternal glory"** (2 Tim 2:10). The salvation we have received is an **"eternal salvation"** (Heb 5:9). The judgment toward which we are advancing is an **"eternal judgment"** (Heb 6:2). The redemption we now enjoy is an **"eternal redemption"** (Heb 9:12).

Everything directly related to the salvation accomplished by Jesus death and resurrection is eternal – eternal in substance, and in its ramifications. **At no point did Jesus bear the sins of the world and die, in order that men might obtain temporal benefits.** Although this is commonly taught in our day, it is an absurdity that is unworthy of

even a moment of consideration. When Adam was disobedient, sin entered the world in a dominating capacity, and death was passed upon everything created, both animate and inanimate. The **"whole creation"** is aware of this, as it has been consigned to mortality, and is travailing **"together in pain until now"** (Rom 8:22).

Jesus did not die to sustain nature, but to liberate it from mortality! That is so elementary, one wonders how it could possibly be missed. Yet, there remains within the professed church those who continue to market the

under their feet, and they would have no successful opponent. That is the appointed destiny of men, **but not in this present heavens and earth,** which is destined to pass away when Jesus comes **"as a thief in the night"** (2 Pet 3:10-12).

If we allow our financial well being and our bodily health to occupy our attention, are we not looking at what is "seen?" Will that not accentuate the trial of being surrounded by trouble, being perplexed, experiencing persecution, and being cast

If we allow our financial well being and our bodily health to occupy our attention, are we not looking at what is "seen?" Will that not accentuate the trial of being surrounded by trouble, being perplexed, experiencing persecution, and being cast down – which are all experiences of the saved?

heresy that the **"curse of the Law"** is poverty and sickness, and that Jesus died to usher in an era of health and wealth. Such a thought is just as reasonable as the notion that Jesus died so we could restore the original Garden of Eden. Or that Christ's death caused the cherubim with the flaming sword to step back from the tree of life and let certain men have access to it. If this was the case, then those in Christ would have all nature

down – which are all experiences of the saved? What will a person do during **"affliction,"** whose mind is stayed on the **"things that are seen?"** I will tell you what they will do. They will question their salvation and doubt their acceptance.

If we have been called to an **"eternal inheritance,"** and are experiencing an **"eternal salvation,"** what possible reason can be adduced for being

enamored of *"the things that are seen?"*

The fact of the matter is that the very nature of *"eternal life"* demands that

we be occupied with things directly related to it – things that are themselves *"eternal."* **I will tell you, however, that until the individual is**

convinced of the reality and eternality of *"the things that are unseen,"* they will not occupy his attention, but will be ignored.

CONCLUSION

We have dealt with a passage of Scripture that is at fundamental variance with the thrust of contemporary Christianity. The modern church, particularly in our nation is too **unacquainted** with *"the things that are*

This dreadful blight of spiritual ignorance has been caused by the false preachers and teachers of the day. They are in precisely the same predicament as the *"lawyers"* (experts in Moses' Law) of Jesus' day. He

men's faces," and *"not allow those who are about to go in to do so?"*^{AMPLIFIED} Jesus said that is precisely what the scribes and Pharisees were doing!

In our time, the problem has advanced to an even worst condition. This is *"the day of salvation"* and the *"acceptable time"* (2 Cor 6:2). It is the time when the mystery has been made known and *"all saints"* can comprehend *"what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth all knowledge"* – the time when we can be *"filled with all the fulness of God"* (Eph 3:18-19). This is the era when, the Lord Himself says, *"they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest"* (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11). Now, in this time, is when the saints can be *"filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"* (Col 1:9). This is the time when God is giving *"the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of His will,"* and opening *"the eyes of the understanding"* (Eph 1:17-18). **To remain in a state of spiritual ignorance in this time is a monumental transgression!**

To remain in a state of spiritual ignorance in this time is a monumental transgression!

unseen." Something is fundamentally wrong, for *"eternal salvation"* makes no provision for such ignorance. **The salvation that is *"in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"* (2 Tim 2:10) delivers us from *"ignorance"* and *"blindness of heart,"* which caused our *"alienation"* in the first place.** Thus it is written, *"So this I say and solemnly testify in [the name of] the Lord [as in His presence], that you must no longer live as the heathen (the Gentiles) do in their perverseness [in the folly, vanity, and emptiness of their souls and the futility] of their minds. Their moral understanding is darkened and their reasoning is beclouded. [They are] alienated (estranged, self-banished) from the life of God [with no share in it; this is] because of the ignorance (the want of knowledge and perception, the willful blindness) that is deep-seated in them, due to their hardness of heart [to the insensitiveness of their moral nature]. In their spiritual apathy they have become callous and past feeling and reckless and have abandoned themselves [a prey] to unbridled sensuality, eager and greedy to indulge in every form of impurity [that their depraved desires may suggest and demand]. But you did not so learn Christ!"* AMPLIFIED (Eph 4:17-20).

said to them, *"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered"* (Luke 11:52). **Their approach to the Word of God actually caused people to become ignorant of the Person, purpose, and Law of God.** They took away what the people needed to unlock the door of understanding, and Jesus did not let the matter escape His attention.

Jesus also upbraided the scribes and Pharisees for their approach to teaching. Although godly teachers are intended to bring the truth within the grasp of the people, enabling them to make sense out of it, and see the Divine intention in it, here is what our Lord said of these men. *"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in"* (Mat 23:13). Is it really possible to *"lock people out of the kingdom of heaven?"*^{NRSV} Jesus said it was not only possible, but that the scribes and Pharisees had done it! Is it reasonable to say that men – mortal men – can actually *"shut the kingdom of heaven in*

And how is it that this condition exists? What is at the root of it? It is that men are looking at *"the things that are seen,"* rather than *"the things that are not seen."* Their attention has been turned away from the eternal to the temporal, **and much of it has been done in the name of religion.**

There are certain results that have accrued because this distracted vision, and inappropriate concentration. Just as surely as stability is traced to a focus on *"the things that are unseen,"* so instability is traced to a concentration on *"the things that are seen."* The fallout of this is a remarkable level of spiritual instability. Falling away has become common. Immorality has broken out in

"the church." It is now common to hear of "fallen leaders," and all manner of transgression among professing believers. Preaching has now been upstaged by music. Frequent gatherings of believers have been supplanted by family get-togethers and various forms of entertainment. Any extensive Bible knowledge is virtually unknown – even among religious leaders. When people are surrounded with trouble they are now "distressed" instead of "not distressed." When they are "perplexed," with no apparent way of escape, they "despair"

instead of being "not in despair." When they are "persecuted," and pushed through the sieve of opposition, they imagine they have been forsaken, and they quit – rather than knowing they are "not forsaken." When they are "cast down," they often never get up again, rather than being described as "not destroyed." **That is an extremely high price to pay for looking at the wrong things!**

Praise God, all of this has not changed what remains available to every

"honest and good heart." There is still a salvation that promises God "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). That marvelous promise requires your steadfast attention to the "things that are not seen." Should you choose to do this, your "afflictions" will be perceived as being totally outbalanced by an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Now, I encourage you to devote yourself to looking at the right thing, concentrating on things that are unseen.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 2/18/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The twenty-first lesson will cover verses one through five of the fifth chapter: **"CONDITIONED FOR IMMORTALITY."** The resurrection of the dead is an unavoidable appointment. In salvation, God is preparing us for that time, so that our spirits will be compatible with an immortal and incorruptible body. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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