

August 29, 2021

“An Eternal Hope”
Lesson 34 of Unit

2 Cor. 4:16-18, 2 Cor. 5:1-10

Intro

This lesson is the last of our summer unit, therefore the last dealing with this theme of “Faith Gives Us Hope”. Today’s passage comes from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, and deals heavily with the idea that our hope is not based on the experiences of this earthly life, but on the reality of the life to come. Paul writes this letter with a strong sense of his potential death. Yet despite that, his comments are encouraging and filled with hope, because he knows that this life isn’t all there is; there is another, and better, life to come.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

1. vs. 16: Paul starts with “therefore”—a conclusion to what he has been saying earlier

The things that came before prevent them from “losing heart”

What things is he referring to?

They are preaching about Jesus, not themselves. (4:5)

If they suffer for doing that, that’s nothing to “lose heart” about.

They have received the knowledge of God’s glory through Jesus (4:6)

There’s no way to “lose heart” about that!

They can handle suffering and problems because they have eternal life (4:7-12)

Paul acknowledges that earthly life is temporary—it’s going to end at some point

“Outwardly we are wasting away”

While the body fades, the spiritual person inside is growing

“yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day”

Seeing spiritual growth (and knowing its greater value) keeps Paul from “losing heart”

2. vs. 17: This verse is a perspective check

Troubles to Paul are “light” and “momentary”

They can definitely feel “heavy” and “continual” to us

Paul’s view is based on the shortness of life here compared to eternity in heaven

By that standard, the amount of time we suffer here is “momentary”

Comparing our troubles now to the joys there makes those troubles “light”

Paul then connects those troubles to their end result

“...achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”

The struggles and challenges now aren’t irrelevant

They “achieve” something—they have a benefit

They help us to grow spiritually

That benefit makes the challenges worthwhile in shaping us for eternity

3. vs. 18: Paul is talking about perspective and choice here

“We fix our eyes” – we choose what to concentrate on

“Not on what is seen, but what is unseen”

The things we see are temporary, of this earth and time

The things we can't see are eternal, of the spiritual world

This perspective on how we see things is also a choice

We are called to focus on the eternal/spiritual more than the temporary/earthly

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

4. vs. 1: Paul's analogy of tents and houses

Paul refers to our bodies as tents

Tents are temporary dwellings, not a long-term living situation

He says when the temporary is gone, there is a permanent to replace it

The word “tent” reminds of the tent of meeting, the tabernacle

It was replaced by the more permanent temple

Our bodies (our “tents”) will one day be gone

They will be replaced by the permanence of a home in heaven

5. vs. 2-3: Paul “groans” here

This word indicates spiritual longing for something that hasn't been achieved yet

He longs for his ultimate spiritual destiny

“to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling”

The idea of being clothed is echoed in the phrases “to put on”

“Put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12)

“Clothed...with Christ” (Gal. 3:27)

“Put on the new self” (Eph. 4:24)

“Put on the full armor of God” (Eph. 6:11)

We are being clothed in Christ, putting Him on as part of who we are

When we die physically, who we are spiritually will be revealed

We won't be “naked” spiritually; we will be clothed in Christ's righteousness

6. vs. 4: This verse should ring true for all of us

“We groan” while we are in this tent, in this earthly body

We all know the physical and emotional challenges of this life

Paul acknowledges that, while saying he is looking forward to his heavenly dwelling

He is reminding us to focus more on the “to be” instead of on the “as is”

The problems of “now” can negatively affect our spiritual attention

He reminds us that “what is mortal may be swallowed up by life”

True life is in God, in spiritual truth and reality

This things of this mortality will be “swallowed” up by that life

7. vs. 5: Paul is not just a “pie in the sky” believer

There are spiritual benefits for the here-and-now

We have been given “the Spirit as a deposit”

Money put down as a deposit is an indicator that the rest is coming

The Spirit is a deposit showing that the rest of God’s promise is coming

See Rom. 8:16-23 and Eph. 1:12-14 also

8. vs. 6: Paul starts this verse with “therefore”

He is referring to the fact that the Holy Spirit has been given to believers

Paul says “we are always confident” because of the Spirit’s presence

However, we are not now in God’s presence

We are “at home in the body” but “away from the Lord”

We can’t be in two places at one time

While we are here in the body, we can’t be there (in heaven)

9. vs. 7: Because we can’t be in heaven, but must be in the body....

“We live by faith, not by sight”

We live our lives by a faith that is based on evidence

We live by what the apostles wrote about who Jesus was and what He did

We live by what the apostles wrote about how to live our Christianity

Our “sight” might cause us to doubt the truth about the spiritual realm

Instead, we must live by what we **know** to be true, not by what we **see**

10. vs. 8: Back in 2 Cor. 4:16, Paul wrote about “not losing heart”

He was faced with persecutions and the possibility of being put to death

All these trials were because of his faith in and witness for Jesus

In vs. 8, he returns to that theme—“We are confident”

Despite troubles and circumstances, Paul knows that God is faithful

Paul would prefer to be “away from the body”—in heaven with Christ

He accepts that he is called to live in faithful confidence while on earth

11. vs. 9: Because of this confidence in our life in Christ (our faith, not sight), we act appropriately

Paul says the Christian’s goal “is to please Him”

This isn’t a reference to salvation; this is a post-salvation expectation

We are to please Him in how we act and in what we say

These pleasing behaviors are to be the same all the time and in all places

“whether we are at home in the body or away from it”

12. vs. 10: Paul’s last verse here is a sober reminder

“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”

He references getting our “due” for both good and bad done “in the body”

This is a reminder to Christians that all we do (or say) is known by God

All will be judged / reckoned with

Christians have already been justified by the blood of Christ

We do not have to fear this judgment as it regards our salvation

Application: The world Paul lived in had a number of dangers. Roads likely harbored bandits at some point. It wasn't uncommon for ships to be sunk by storms or attacked by pirates. Courts were not always a place to receive justice.

The world we live in has its share of dangers as well. There are concerns about drugs, about violence, about diseases, about politicians and their impact on our lives.

Paul's words in the two passages for today encourage us: don't be afraid of death. That's the worst that can happen to us. And if it does, we will be with the Lord, in heaven and for eternity. We have the presence of the Holy Spirit, who daily brings us peace, comfort, and wisdom. Paul encourages us to walk by faith, and not by sight. God is now, and has always been, in control of what is happening.

Prayer: Father God, help us to walk by faith and not by sight. Help us to turn to You for help and comfort, and not to ourselves or the world. Help us to live in ways that will please You. In Jesus' name, Amen.