

2 Corinthians 4:16 – 5:10

I. Introduction

- A. Paul: why not lose heart in face of trials (v. 16, 6, 8)
- B. Many of you facing trials of various kinds: goal is that you would not lose heart.
 - i. On firm biblical basis, not just emotional lift

II. A Word to Unbelievers

- A. What is most real and important
 - i. Puff of vapor versus ages of ages
 - ii. Tangible things seem most real to us, but the things of God are far more real; Mark 8:36

III. The contrasts between this age and the age to come help us not to lose heart (16-18)

- A. Trials now are “light” and “momentary” (17)
 - i. Yet Paul's sufferings were intense and prolonged. 6:4-5; 11:23-28.
 - ii. So is Paul more spiritual than us, so that he doesn't feel his trials?
 - a) No! Paul deeply felt his afflictions. 1:8; 5:4.
 - iii. So how can he say this? Only in comparison with the glory that is to come. (18)
 - iv. Paradox of looking at what can't be seen. Cf. 5:7 walk by faith, not sight. 1 Pet 1:8-9
John 16:22
 - v. More than simply sufferings now, glory to follow; God uses trials to prepare us for glory. (4:17, 5:5).
 - a) No wasted suffering (Piper).
 - b) Michelangelo: The more the marble crumbles, the more the statue grows.

IV. The hope of the resurrection of our bodies helps us not to lose heart (5:1)

- A. Our present body: an earthly tent:
 - i. Tent: No foundation; movable, temporary, flimsy.
 - ii. Earthly: Dust you are, and to dust you shall return. (BCP)
 - iii. True of rich and poor, etc.; can take care of body, but it remains an earthly tent.
- B. Future body: a building from God, eternal, heavenly.
 - i. Contrary to philosophy, pop culture: future is not disembodied souls. Body not a “prison” of the soul.
 - ii. Resurrection, Christ as firstfruits 1 Cor 15:22
 - iii. Illustration for kids: Three Little Pigs.

V. Three alternatives for the future facing Paul and each believer, in order of preference (5:2-10)

- A. First Alternative: The Return of Christ (2-4)
 - i. Transformation of mortal body to resurrection body when the Lord returns 1 Cor 15:51-52 Phil 3:21
 - ii. Without dying. Death is still an enemy. Paul recoils at prospect of separation of body and soul; this is like being naked (3,4).
 - iii. Image of adding a layer of clothing to what you are already wearing v. 4 1 Cor 15:53
 - iv. Illustration of outline of drawing swallowed up by final painting
- B. Second Alternative: Death (6-8)
 - i. Why would he choose this? To be with the Lord.
 - ii. To be present in the body is to be absent from the Lord; not absolute separation, but still

real.

iii. For the believer, to die is to depart and be with Christ, which is far better Phil 1:21-23

iv. Caveat: the experience of dying is not what we look forward to, but may still shrink back from. Illustration of amputation.

v. To die well: look not at the event of dying, but to being at home with the Lord. (v. 8)

vi. Is this how you think of death? More as gain, or as loss? Guard vs. influence of worldly thinking here. 2 Tim 3:17

C. Third Alternative: Remain in the flesh, serving the Lord (v. 9-10)

i. Ambition to be pleasing to the Lord v. 9 Phil 1:21 Matt 6:9,10

ii. Prospect of judgment seat of Christ as motive for service v. 10 1 Pet 1:17 Heb 10:24 Matt 25:21

iii. No tension with justification by faith. No condemnation for those in Christ Rom 8:1

VI. Conclusion