

Momentary light afflictions * 2 Corinthians 4:16-18
May 5, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

In the passage we looked at on Sunday (2 Corinthians 4:7-9), Paul says some pretty incredible things - we are pressed but not crushed, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed. In all things, the power of God-in-us preserves us, even though we are but jars of clay. That's an incredible spiritual truth.

But in the nitty gritty reality of everyday life, the trials remain – we may not be crushed, but we're still hard pressed on every side. We may not be destroyed, but we can still get knocked down. What do we do with that?

Well, Paul says, 'it's all a matter of perspective.' You can focus your attention on the hardships in your life, or you can fix your eyes on God who can do something about it.

Verse 16, Paul acknowledges that 'our outer self is wasting away.' We are pressed but not crushed – but it doesn't mean that the pressure's off! That's just a reality. Our bodies wear out; we get sick. We get tired and stressed under pressure and some of us deal with pain every day. A younger congregation might not entirely get this, but I think that we've been through enough to know that this is true – our outer self is wasting away.

BUT, Paul says, our outer self is not all there is.

He says in verse 16 - Though our outer self is wasting away, our *inner self* is being renewed day by day.

Your inner self is being renewed day by day, each day a bit more like Christ, until the day comes when we will all be like Him, God pouring His energy and grace into our hearts so that we can live for Him, no matter what our bodies are doing. He takes our weakness and puts His strength on display in us.

I remember the morning after I had my appendix out, lying in the hospital, feeling this energy and desire to encourage you, even after I'd gotten drugged up and chopped open. That's God renewing my inner self. And so, as verse 16 actually began: we do not lose heart.

And this is where 'perspective' comes in – we can fix our eyes on our outer selves and despair, or, we can choose to believe that God is at work.

And what's coming can help us with that Paul says. What we are going through now is *nothing* compared to the glory that's coming.

Verse 17 he says - 17 For this momentary light affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison...

It's all about perspective, isn't it? Paul looks at the trials he's faced – shipwrecked, stoned, left for dead, jailed for Jesus and he says – that's nothing compared to the glory that God has for us. Adversity? Weakness? It's just for a moment. And it's hard, but alongside Jesus, it is LIGHT, compared to the EVERLASTING, ETERNAL weight of glory.

I had a prof in seminary whose son was suffering from a degenerative disease; they didn't think that he would live much past his twenties, and yet they spent money and time giving their son every opportunity that they could. They renovated their house, spent their sweat and tears, all the while knowing that they would soon lose their son.

I heard this verse on his lips more than any other – this momentary light affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory.

Therefore we have hope. And so we do not lose heart.

And... verse 18 continues - 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

If our eyes are constantly on our weakness and our pain, then, sure, we are going to get overwhelmed. But, Paul tells us, these things that are seen will not last forever. Wheelchairs, walkers, trials, tribulations, they will not last forever, but the faithfulness of God will. And so we walk by faith and not by sight, our eyes fixed on Christ above, in whom we have the hope of glory.

I want to encourage you today; you're going through some tough stuff. Some of you are dealing with things that I can't even imagine, young whippersnapper that I am. But from God's Word, I can tell you this.

You are beautiful in God's eyes. You are capable in God's eyes. He is renewing you from the inside out, day by day, every day all the more capable of making a difference in your world.

Don't let these earthly things weigh you down, but instead, look to the things that are unseen - the love and mercy and compassion of God – and let God bless the world through you. It's all a matter of perspective.

Because this momentary light affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory.

16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

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

18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

(2Co 4:13-18 ESV).