

## 2 Corinthians

“Winning Through Weakness”

III. Main Teaching: 1:15-13:10

B. 2:12-6:18 Dying To Live

2 Corinth. 4:16-18

“Living in light affliction”

### I. Intro.

### II. Vs. 16-18 Becoming real

#### I. Intro.

Given Paul’s recorded history and own statements with regards to his affections the phrase, “*we do not lose heart*” is amazing.

- One reason for this was that Paul looked to a future home that was a certainty.
- The other reason for this is that Paul saw that such squeezing was part of his preparation for this future home.

In other words *his present transformation was security in his final transformation.* His old fleshly sin nature was being *deconstructed* while his new inward nature was being *constructed*. Thus when he was being deconstructed he was also being constructed and that gave him hope! C.S. Lewis once said, “*Whatever is not eternal is eternally out of date.*” The tragedy of many in the church is that they have lost their eyes for the unseen because they have become blinded by what is only visible for a short time. This truth will be what Paul will cause him to write in 2 Cor. 5:17 “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*”

What constantly think that the “*old things*” that have “*passed away*” refers to the things of the flesh and sin but in the next few verses we see that Paul didn’t specify as he says “*all things have become new.*”

## II. Vs. 16-18 Becoming real

Vs. 16-18 Paul starts this last section with a great conviction based upon the truths he just proclaimed, “*Therefore we don not lose heart.*” Paul has from the beginning of this chapter all the way through been able to look beyond his circumstances, beyond their accusations and be thankful. Paul describes this reality in three ways: ***Trivial***, ***Temporary*** and ***Transforming*** as he gives his reader’s three reasons why even though he was being squeezed to the point of death he leaked praise.

1. **Trivial**: In verse 16 Paul agrees that “*the outward man is perishing*”. The “*outward man*” should not be confused with that the “*old man*”; which is the flesh or old carnal nature. The “*outward man*” is the body and mind which if you haven’t noticed yet is slowly falling apart. The fact is that the outward man is deteriorating, growing weak and feeble. But Paul wasn’t discouraged by this because the inner man was being renewed day by day. And by the “*inward man*” Paul means “real me” the human spirit inside that has its conscious expression in the soul, that unique character, that combination of soul and spirit that marks mankind as different from the animals. Paul says that this is daily being renewed. Even as his outward clay pot was breaking away and falling apart he was becoming more like his real self. That is the hope of the believer. Even though their physical man is being squeezed the end result is God is leaking out through the cracks and we become more real all the time.

2. **Temporary**: In verse 17 Paul says our hope for the future is the basis for this kind of renewal. The amazing thing is that Paul links it directly to the afflictions and the struggles of our present time. ***There is a direct tie between the affliction and the glory*** one is preparing for the other. **That means that no matter how great the trial may seem to us to be, two things are always true of it:**

- A. **It is not that bad**: When compared with what is coming for us in glory it is extremely light. Now, if that was all you ever read of Paul, you would be tempted to say, “*Obviously he didn't have to go through what I have had to go through.*” But we know this is not the case as chapter 11 of this very letter, he goes through a long list of his afflictions and there is nothing like it in the annals of literature. Nobody has ever gone through more than Paul, other than our Lord himself. He speaks of being beaten five times, of being beaten with a rod three times, of being thrown into jail many times, of enduring hunger and thirst, hardships as being shipwrecked. All this was part of his life experience, yet he sums it all up in that wonderful way, “*this slight momentary affliction.*” In Romans 8:18 Paul put it this way saying, “*the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us.*”
- B. **It is preparing us for something great**: C. S. Lewis put it this way saying, “*The door on which we have all been knocking all our lives will open at last.*” Our present sufferings are preparing us for

something so incomparable, so amazing, and so marvelous that there are no words to describe it. That means that no trial, no pain, no isolation, no heartache, no loneliness, no weakness or failure, no sense of being put aside is without significance. All of it is playing its part in accomplishing God's work in your life and the lives of others. It is building for us an incomparable weight of glory.

3. **Transforming**: In verse 18 Paul answers the question, “*How do we know that is true?*” It has always been difficult for men to believe that there are unseen realities, invisible to human eye and investigation, but, nevertheless, very real and very important. What are the real things? Paul calls them, “*the things that are unseen,*” the invisible forces at work which the world is almost totally unaware. The Bible tells us what they are:
  - A. **There is the Word of God**: God spoke and it was. Jesus said in Matthew 24:35 that “*Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away*”. The Word is the one reliable thing in the unreliable universe. We understand by the Word of God that all things are held together by him. He is the Creator and the supporter of all things.
  - B. **We learn that there are angels, both good and bad, working both for and against human beings**. We are part of a *great invisible conflict* in which we are both under attack and supported by invisible hands. Paul put it this way in Ephesians 6:12, “*we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,*

*against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* These invisible forces are the ones that are behind headlines every day.

- C. **Ultimately, there is God himself.** Invisible to the human eye, the Lord Jesus, Lord of earth and heaven and the created universe, and though we do not see him yet we love him and follow him. He is in control of history. As we approach the end of life these things will become more and more significant to us.

Paul’s basis of coping with his life’s experiences was twofold:

1. He experienced daily renewal of his inner man even though his outward man was perishing.
2. He had a different world that linked his affliction to eternal glory.

D. L. Moody’s last words were, *“Earth is receding. Heaven is approaching. This is my crowning day.”* That is looking at reality. Nothing is more encouraging to me than to realize that when I believe the Word of God, I am becoming more and more realistic. It is these truths that caused G. Campbell Morgan to write, *“Happy is the man on earth who lives in a tent not literally, but spiritually.”* Did you know that the Church is the only organization in the world which exists entirely for the sake of those who are not its members!