

We live in turbulent times, and it is not always easy to endure in faith. It's painful to see youth who once were growing in faith lose heart and fall away. Even if you have not experienced hardships, if you have been sharing life together with brothers and sisters in church, you know how cruel and tragic life can be. In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul tells us how not to lose heart in these turbulent times (vv. 1, 16). We must keep our eyes on the gospel message, which tells us that the God whose face was turned away from Israel due to their disobedience now shines His face on the whole world, and all we have to do is turn to look at Him. This restored relationship with God is only possible because of the work Jesus did for us. We didn't do anything to earn it. It sounds too good to be true, but there is no catch. But the gift of God through Jesus Christ is more than eternal security. Life in Christ also gives us spiritual blessing and strength for today.

Verse 16 says that we do not lose heart because though we are outwardly wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day. The word "outwardly" is literally the outer man, the visible physical body, the flesh, which is in contrast to the inner man, which is the invisible immaterial spirit. The outer man experiences the ongoing process of wasting away. Our bodies begin to decay once we are born. We must accept this fact. When my father became ill and realized his body was wasting away, he became discouraged. But my mother dealt with cancer and remained a pillar of strength. What was the difference? Both were faced with the fact that their bodies were dying, but my mother focused on the inner being, which is being renewed daily. Her hope was in eternity, not in the temporal. The outer man approaches death, but the inner man approaches ultimate glory.

Then in v. 17 Paul uses the imagery of scales to compare the eternal glory we have in Christ to our troubles. Our troubles now may seem heavy and may cause us to lose heart if that's all we see. Like the sun that scorched the plants on rocky soil, hardship and trials in life may turn us away from faith. However, if we look on the other side of the balance, we will see an eternal glory that far outweighs all our troubles. God's eternal gift isn't merely equal in weight to our troubles. In the Greek it says it is of overwhelmingly overwhelming weight. Our troubles are light and temporary, but the glory that awaits is heavy and eternal. It weighs so much more that

when it is placed on the scales it flings our troubles into the sky like a catapult. Our eternal glory is well worth going through any troubles in this life. Eternity will be so awesome that we can't even conceive of how great it will be.

Finally in v. 18, Paul tells us to fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. What is seen refers to the material world, which is sin-cursed. But in order for us not to lose heart, we must fix our eyes on the invisible. How do we look at what is invisible with our eyes? To see the invisible, we have to close our eyes to the visible. That's why we usually close our eyes when we pray. The physical distracts us from the spiritual. Many churches do topical series on practical issues like parenting. These things are important because many of us are going through these issues. But although these issues may be addressed with principles derived from eternal truth, usually these issues themselves are primarily temporal. I want to talk about eternal things during Sunday service, because that is what satisfies us and helps us not lose heart, and that is what we really need to focus on. As good or bad as life is now, know that it is not all there is. Eternal glory is before us. Close your eyes and see it. Trust in the promise of God, and all we experience in this world will fade to nothing in comparison to the eternal glory that awaits us, which far outweighs any troubles we have.