

An Eternal Hope

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10
SS Lesson for 08/29/2021

Devotional Scripture: Rom 8:18-25

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: 2 Cor 5:1

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

HOPE IN THE ETERNAL GLORY (2 COR 4:16-18)

Daily renewal (16)

Renewal into a new creation (2 Cor 5:17)

Renewal into a spiritual covenant (Gal 6:15)

Renewal of the old self (Col 3:10)

Renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)

Renewal of a steadfast spirit (Ps 51:10)

Renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2)

Momentary afflictions (17)

Affliction that leads us to obedience (Ps 119:67)

Affliction through testing (Isa 48:10)

Affliction that leads us to hope (Lam 3:19-23)

Affliction that refines our faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)

Affliction that leads to God's restoration (1 Peter 5:10)

Seeking Eternity (18)

Seeking eternity in a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:28)

Seeking eternity in God's eternal glory (1 Peter 5:10)

Seeking eternity in Jesus (Col 2:6-7)

Seeking eternity by remaining in Jesus (John 15:5-7)

HOPE IN THE FUTURE HEAVEN (2 COR 5:1-5)

Heavenly home (1)

A heavenly home that Jesus is preparing for us (John 14:2-3)

A heavenly home whose architect is God (Heb 11:10)

A heavenly home that is the goal of our service (Phil 3:14)

A heavenly home where our citizenship belongs (Phil 3:20)

A heavenly home that is the result of our calling and election (2 Peter 1:10-11)

Heavenly clothed (2-4)

Clothed with immortality from God (1 Cor 15:53-54)

Clothed with Jesus Christ (Gal 3:27)

Clothed with Jesus so we can resist the desires of our sinful nature (Rom 13:14)

Clothed with the full armor of God (Eph 6:11)

Heavenly guarantee (5)

Guaranteed because God established it (2 Cor 1:21-22)

Guaranteed because we have been sealed (Eph 1:12-14)

Guaranteed because God has vowed it (Heb 7:22)

Guaranteed because God owns us (2 Cor 1:22)

Guaranteed as a deposit of our inheritance (Eph 1:13-14)

Guaranteed until the day of redemption (Eph 4:30)

HOPE THROUGH FAITH (2 COR 5:6-10)

Faith through seeking to be with God (6-8)

With God so that we will be filled with joy being in His presence (Ps 16:11)

With God so that we will see God's face (Ps 17:15)

With God because Jesus desired it (John 17:24)

With God through the rapture (1 Thess 4:17)

With God as a reward of being faithful (Matt 25:23)

Faith through seeking to please God (9)

Seeking to please God through living as a child of the light (Eph 5:8-10)

Seeking to please God through living a life worthy of Him (Col 1:10)
Seeking to please God through serving Him (Rom 14:17-18)
Seeking to please God through doing His Will (Heb 13:20-21)
Seeking to please God through our words and thoughts (Ps 19:14)

Faith in God's judgment (10)

Because God's judgment is based on truth (Rom 2:2)
Because God judges in righteousness and justice (Ps 9:7-8)
Because God is righteous in all His ways (Ps 145:17)
Because God will judge the world through Jesus (Acts 17:31)
Because God's judgment is right (2 Thess 1:5)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

Our Dying Produces Great Good in the Present and in the Future (4:16-18)

Our Dying: The Means by Which We Exchange Inferior Bodies for Superior Ones (5:1-5)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

A science-fiction movie portrays a future world where an evil alien monster can influence people through eyesight. Those infected this way commit destructive acts, even suicide. The solution is to live blindfolded—unable to be infected but also ill-equipped to navigate the currents of life. A climactic scene has the heroine attempting to navigate a dangerous river with two small children, all three blindfolded in a rowboat. That fictional tale bears resemblance in some ways, but not in others, regarding how a Christian is to live. Christians are not “blind” to the evils of the world. We see them. And the way we can avoid that dark influence is because we also “see” the Lord’s way—the way of faith based on evidence. Ours is not a blind (folded) faith. It is a faith based on evidence, a faith grounded in the facts of history. When a crisis looms, will we walk by faith or by something else (see Proverbs 3:5)?

As Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in AD 57, his contemplation of death was more than a spiritual exercise. Paul admitted to his readers that adverse circumstances resulted in being “under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself” (2 Corinthians 1:8; compare 11:24-27). This expectation of the potential end of his life forms the background for almost everything he writes in the initial chapters of 2 Corinthians. However, he emerges from this contemplation with a triumphant note, proclaiming in 4:8-9: “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” Paul did not allow the prospect of death to deter him from his mission to bring the gospel to Gentiles in cities like Corinth. Some of Paul’s anguish may have been caused by false teachers who had come to Corinth to undermine his teachings and his authority. These are the sarcastically designated “super-apostles” referred to in 2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11. Whether their opposition included death threats is uncertain. But we know that Paul’s opponents were not above resorting to such intimidation (example: Acts 18:12-17). Even so, Paul did not fear dying, for he knew that Jesus had defeated death (1 Corinthians 15:12-32; 2 Corinthians 4:14). Paul also knew that in his day there were many theories of what happened to people after death. The Greeks generally believed in an underworld place, the realm of the dead ruled over by the god Hades. It was a place of residence for souls released from their bodies, resulting in a shadowy spiritual existence. This place, also called Hades, was thought to be filled with gloom and despair, with no hope of ever being released (compare Acts 17:32). Some Jews and Greeks believed there was no existence after death. The party of the Sadducees was known for teaching there was no resurrection (Matthew 22:23). This was a minority opinion, though, for most Jews believed in a future resurrection of all the dead, who would receive reconstituted bodies in order to stand before God for judgment (examples: John 11:24; Acts 23:8). Being a Pharisee, this had been the general mindset of Paul as well (Acts 23:6). But the resurrection of Jesus from the dead on the third day (rather than at the end, at the general resurrection) brought everything into sharper focus.

Key Verse: 2 Cor 5:1

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

4:16. Paul was not immune to discouragement in his ministry (1:8). In fact, Titus' failure to meet him in Troas disturbed him deeply (2:13; 7:5-6). It was just one of many experiences (e.g., 4:8-9; 11:23-29) which wore him down and reminded him of his mortality (4:11). But God had given him "this ministry" (v. 1) and God—the triumphant Son (2:14), the glorious Spirit (3:18), and the powerful Father (4:7)—was at work in it. God was also the assurance of his resurrection (4:14). Because of all this Paul did **not lose heart** (i.e., "give up"; cf. v. 1; Luke 18:1). True, his earthly mortality was increasingly evident; **outwardly** he was **wasting away** (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 4:8-12). But his heavenly destiny was also increasingly evident (vv. 17-18). While physically he grew weaker, spiritually he experienced the renewing (cf. Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:10) work of the Holy Spirit **day by day**. He was becoming increasingly like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18), a prelude to what will be (cf. Rom. 8:23; 1 John 3:2).

4:17-18. Part of the means used by God in this transforming, renewing process is suffering (cf. 1 Peter 4:1, 13-14). Paul compared the sufferings he had experienced, severe as they were (2 Cor. 11:23-29), to **light and momentary troubles** (*thlipseōs*, "pressures, hardships"; cf. 1:4). They were nothing in view of the **eternal glory** that would be his when he would be in Jesus' "presence" (4:14) and would be like Him (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2). This is amazing: all of his heavy, continuous burdens were, he said, "light" (the Gr. *elaphron* means "light in weight, easy to bear"; used in the NT only twice: here and in Matt. 11:30) and "momentary" (the Gr. *parautika* means "brief, for the slight moment, on the spot"). Though, as he wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:8, his hardships were "far beyond" (*hyperbolēn*) his ability to endure, he said his coming **glory... far outweighs them all** (*hyperbolēn eis hyperbolēn* is lit., "extraordinary unto the extraordinary"). This eternal perspective and hope in things to come sustained Paul in the midst of the temporary sufferings that marked his ministry. As he elsewhere reminded the Corinthians, the world and its present sufferings are passing away (1 Cor. 7:31). **What is seen** (the material) **is temporary, but what is unseen** (the spiritual) **is eternal**. The temporal will be replaced by a "glory that will never fade away" (1 Peter 5:4), an "eternal glory in Christ" (1 Peter 5:10). Therefore, Paul said, believers should look not on what is seen but, ironically, on what cannot be seen. What the inner man "sees" surpasses what physical eyes see.

5:1. Few chapter divisions are more unfortunate than this one since what follows (5:1-10) details the thought expressed in 4:16-18. Failure to appreciate this fact unduly complicates these already difficult verses by removing their contextual constraints. Paul had referred to his mortal "body" (4:10-11) as "wasting away" (4:16). Now he compared his body to a worn-out **earthly** (*epigeios*, "on the earth") **tent** (*skēnous*) soon to be **destroyed**. In Christ's incarnate body He "lived (*eskēnōsen*, lit., "tabernacled or tented") among us" (John 1:14). This is why the eternal perspective (2 Cor. 4:17) should be maintained (the second Gr. word in 5:1 is *gar* ["for"; trans. **now** in the NIV], introducing the reason for what preceded). An earthly body is temporary; a heavenly body is **eternal**. The reference to the heavenly body as **a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands** is reminiscent of Jesus' description of His own resurrection body as a temple "not made by man" (lit., "not made by hand"; Mark 14:58). Second Corinthians 5:1 briefly summarizes what Paul had earlier written to the Corinthians about the nature of the resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:34-54). The confident assertion, **we know**, was based on the argument set forth in 1 Corinthians 15.

5:2-4. Paul had written about fixing his eyes "not on what is seen but on what is unseen" (4:18). These verses express the same sentiment. Paul's present life was "wasting away" (4:16) and he faced "death" (4:11-12). Using a figure of speech (metonymy of the effect [groaning] substituted for the cause [suffering]), Paul twice said **we groan** (5:2, 4; cf. Rom. 8:22-23). But someday, when **our heavenly dwelling** (2 Cor. 5:2, 4) is received, all such groaning and being **burdened** will give place to laughter and exultation (cf. Luke 6:21; 1 Cor. 15:51-55). **What is mortal will be swallowed up by life** in immortal, imperishable spiritual bodies in heaven (Phil. 3:21). For Paul his present mortal life was like nakedness, marked by humiliation and privation. Who would want to focus on this abject state in view of the eternal glory that awaited him? (2 Cor. 4:17-18). A number of commentators and theologians have seen in these verses reference to an "intermediate state," a period between death and resurrection. This view takes one of two forms: (a) Dead (though conscious) believers are without a body while awaiting their resurrection bodies, or (b) dead (though conscious) believers receive an "intermediate body" that somehow differs from their forthcoming resurrected bodies. (According to either of these intermediate-state views, Paul was suggesting that he hoped to live till the return of Christ so that he would not experience an "intermediate state.") These views, however, seem unwarranted. Paul had only two conditions in view since 4:16, the temporal and the eternal. The introduction of a third is therefore unlikely. It seems clear from 5:4 that being

in this tent (cf. 2 Peter 1:13), and **unclothed** describe mortality while being **clothed** and possessing a **heavenly dwelling** depict immortality, without specifying any intervening stages.

5:5. This present condition of fading mortality, however disquieting it may be, is not without design. As Paul had just written, ordinary mortals, like common jars of clay, are the means through which God displays, by contrast, His own all-surpassing power (4:7). Equally encouraging is the realization that in the life of each Christian God has begun the transforming process that will one day culminate in possessing a heavenly body and perfect Christlikeness. The surety of that consummation is the Holy **Spirit**, whose presence and transforming work (3:18) forms the beginning and is guaranteeing the completion of God's gracious salvation (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30). (On the words **as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come**, see 2 Cor. 1:22.)

5:6-8. With this perspective Paul could be **confident** (5:6, 8; cf. 7:16) and encouraged (cf. 4:1, 16), even in his period of mortality. These verses (5:6-8) recapitulate the theme first discussed in 4:16-18. To be **at home in the body** means to dwell in "the earthly tent" (5:1), to be outwardly "wasting away" (4:16), to be in a state of mortality **away from the** immediate presence of the **Lord** (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). What sustained Paul was the realization that this was a temporary and transitory state (2 Cor. 4:18). He focused not on present but on future conditions, not on the seen but the unseen. To live this way is to **live by faith, not by sight**. It is to live in light of ultimate rather than immediate realities (cf. Rom. 8:24-25), to be obedient to God's commands despite the hardships that obedience produces (e.g., 2 Cor. 11:23-29). Such was Paul's life. If the choice were his, he would have seized the opportunity to depart this pilgrimage life and take up residence (be **at home**) **with the Lord** (Phil. 1:21-23). But the constraints of his commission caused him to press on (cf. Phil. 1:24; Eph. 3:1-13).

5:9-10. Motivating Paul in this perseverance was his **goal to please** his Lord (cf. Gal. 1:10; Col. 1:10), a desire in effect during his earthly sojourn (**at home in the body**), which would be undiminished in heaven (**away from it**) (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6). Contributing to this goal was Paul's knowledge that he would one day be evaluated by his Master. He wanted to please Him and to hear from Him, "Well done, My good servant!" (Luke 19:17) In his previous letter Paul had mentioned this judgment (1 Cor. 3:12-15) with particular reference to Christian teachers (1 Cor. 4:1-5). Now he affirmed that **all** Christians will be evaluated at **the judgment seat of Christ** (cf. Rom. 14:12), which will follow the Rapture of the church. Believers will be recompensed **for the things** they have **done** in their earthly lives (**while in the body**). Their **good** deeds will evoke one response (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5; Eph. 6:8) and the **bad** (*phaulon*, "worthless") will evoke another (1 Cor. 3:15; Col. 3:25). Salvation is not the issue here. One's eternal destiny will not be determined at the judgment seat of Christ. Salvation is by faith (Eph. 2:8-9), but deeds issuing from that faith (1 Thes. 1:3) will be evaluated. This perspective on a day of judgment and the prospect of eternity had a salutary effect on Paul. It enabled him to persevere in the face of hardship (2 Cor. 4:7-12). And it motivated him to be faithful in discharging his ministry (5:11; cf. 1 Cor. 4:2-4).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Hope in the Eternal Glory (2 Cor 4:16-18)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Daily renewal (16)

Renewal into a new creation (2 Cor 5:17)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Renewal into a spiritual covenant (Gal 6:15)

15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.

Renewal of the old self (Col 3:10)

10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)

5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

Renewal of a steadfast spirit (Ps 51:10)

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2)

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Momentary afflictions (17)

Affliction that leads us to obedience (Ps 119:67)

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

Affliction through testing (Isa 48:10)

10 See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

Affliction that leads us to hope (Lam 3:19-23)

19 I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. 20 I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. 21 Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: 22 Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Affliction that refines our faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Affliction that leads to God's restoration (1 Peter 5:10)

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Seeking Eternity (18)

Seeking eternity in a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:28)

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

Seeking eternity in God's eternal glory (1 Peter 5:10)

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Seeking eternity in Jesus (Col 2:6-7)

6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Seeking eternity by remaining in Jesus (John 15:5-7)

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

Hope in the Future Heaven (2 Cor 5:1-5)

1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,

3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.

4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

Heavenly home (1)

A heavenly home that Jesus is preparing for us (John 14:2-3)

2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

A heavenly home whose architect is God (Heb 11:10)

10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

A heavenly home that is the goal of our service (Phil 3:14)

14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

A heavenly home where our citizenship belongs (Phil 3:20)

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

A heavenly home that is the result of our calling and election (2 Peter 1:10-11)

10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Heavenly clothed (2-4)

Clothed with immortality from God (1 Cor 15:53-54)

53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory.

Clothed with Jesus Christ (Gal 3:27)

27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Clothed with Jesus so we can resist the desires of our sinful nature (Rom 13:14)

14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Clothed with the full armor of God (Eph 6:11)

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Heavenly guarantee (5)

Guaranteed because God established it (2 Cor 1:21-22)

21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Guaranteed because we have been sealed (Eph 1:12-14)

12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

Guaranteed because God has vowed it (Heb 7:22)

22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

Guaranteed because God owns us (2 Cor 1:22)

22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Guaranteed as a deposit of our inheritance (Eph 1:13-14)

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

Guaranteed until the day of redemption (Eph 4:30)

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Hope through Faith (2 Cor 5:6-10)

6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.

7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Faith through seeking to be with God (6-8)

With God so that we will be filled with joy being in His presence (Ps 16:11)

11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

With God so that we will see God's face (Ps 17:15)

15 And I — in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.

With God because Jesus desired it (John 17:24)

24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

With God through the rapture (1 Thess 4:17)

17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

With God as a reward of being faithful (Matt 25:23)

23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Faith through seeking to please God (9)

Seeking to please God through living as a child of the light (Eph 5:8-10)

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord.

Seeking to please God through living a life worthy of Him (Col 1:10)

10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

Seeking to please God through serving Him (Rom 14:17-18)

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Seeking to please God through doing His Will (Heb 13:20-21)

20 May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Seeking to please God through our words and thoughts (Ps 19:14)

14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Faith in God's judgment (10)

Because God's judgment is based on truth (Rom 2:2)

2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.

Because God judges in righteousness and justice (Ps 9:7-8)

7 The Lord reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment. 8 He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice.

Because God is righteous in all His ways (Ps 145:17)

17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.

Because God will judge the world through Jesus (Acts 17:31)

31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

Because God's judgment is right (2 Thess 1:5)

5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Our Dying Produces Great Good in the Present and in the Future (4:16-18)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Once again, Paul reiterates the theme of this great section of 2 Corinthians—the confidence the apostles experience in the midst of great adversity and affliction, “**dying**” for the sake of Christ. “**We do not lose heart.**” This is the basis for Paul’s boldness and perseverance in the face of great adversity and opposition. The reason for his confidence is that while his (their) “**outer man is decaying,**” the “**inner man is being renewed day by day.**”

Initially, it seems Paul is speaking about the on-going natural disintegration of our physical bodies with which most of us are all too familiar. Those who have reached (or passed) middle age know that our bodies are sending us some very distressing messages. All of the proverbial “red lights” on our bodies’ dashboards are beginning to flash, indicating that trouble lies ahead. Our various body parts and organs are in rebellion. We are over the hill. Stuart Hamblen spoke of this phenomenon when he wrote and sang the song, “*This Old House.*”

While Paul’s words certainly encompass the natural decline of our physical bodies, this does not seem to be the thrust of his focus. Paul explains to the Corinthians why he and his associates (“**we**”) do not lose heart in the midst of their trials and tribulations as ministers of the gospel. Paul’s outer man, his physical body, is being destroyed²⁵ at an accelerated rate, due to the abuse it receives at the hands of Paul’s adversaries, of nature, and even Paul’s own lifestyle. This may not set too well with those who make much of “taking care of ourselves so they can minister more effectively.” While their point has some validity, there are far more Christians who indulge themselves in rest, relaxation, and recovery than those who burn themselves out for Christ.

Paul finds comfort in knowing that while his outer man—the physical body which can be seen and touched—is deteriorating, his inner man—his spirit—is being renewed daily. The deterioration of Paul’s body (and others’ who are preaching the gospel), is not simply the result of natural processes. If this were the case, Paul’s “**affliction**” (4:17) would be no different than that experienced by an unbeliever. Rather, Paul’s body is “**dying**” as he lives out the sufferings, and thus the life of Christ, in his earthly body.

If Paul’s body were a used car, it would quickly be wholesaled out by a dealer who ends up with it. The quality and value of a car are judged not only by how new or old it is, but by its mileage and how it has been used. Paul’s body evidences high mileage and hard use. His body is wearing out, due to the abuses it suffers as Paul dies daily for the sake of the gospel. We know that he has been beaten a number of times; no doubt, he has scars to prove it. He has been stoned and left for dead. I wonder if he also has a few teeth missing. His body is probably not a beautiful sight.

Paul wants us to know the basis for his encouragement and endurance when he continues to boldly proclaim Christ at the expense of his own body. His body is being destroyed at a rapid pace. Like most of the other apostles (and others), he will die a seemingly “premature” death. What comfort does Paul find in living in such a way that he will die sooner than others? Even though his body is being destroyed, simultaneously his spirit is being renewed day by day. Some churches have revivals once a year, which is probably not all that bad, but Paul’s spirit is revived daily, and he seems to indicate that our renewal should be daily as well.

This daily renewal of the spirit is not only simultaneous with Paul’s daily dying, it is the consequence of his daily dying. I may take my car to the airport and on the way be involved in an accident which does \$350 in damage (in our dreams!). As I get out of my car at the airport, I may find an unmarked envelope containing \$1500. After the money remains in lost and found for 30 days, it becomes mine. I certainly feel a lot better about my crumpled fender because of finding that envelope with the money. But the positive experience of finding money is not a direct result of having an accident. I certainly will not try to collide with someone else in the hope of finding more money!

A person who works out every day must have a great deal of discipline. Our body becomes hot and sweaty, and we must work very hard. This is the price we pay for seeing the scales go down and our body looking better. We are willing to pay a price if we gain something we believe is worthwhile. Paul tells us that our daily afflictions in the body are a part of the process by which we are being inwardly strengthened and renewed. We

gain a present reward for suffering for Christ's sake in a hostile world, and that reward is spiritual renewal and strengthening.

Realizing that God is spiritually strengthening us *in spite of* our afflictions for Christ's sake is one thing, but realizing that God is strengthening us *by means of* our afflictions for Christ's sake is quite different. God blesses us by strengthening our spirit as we undergo our bodily afflictions.

3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:3-5).

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).

There is also a future reward for bodily afflictions which are for the sake of the gospel. For the moment, Paul is vague about what constitutes this future reward. He simply refers to it as an **“eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison”** (4:17). When we compare our earthly afflictions for Christ's sake with the future glory God has for us, there is no comparison. Our earthly and bodily afflictions are light; our future glory is heavy.²⁶ Our present suffering is temporary, short in duration; our heavenly reward of glory is eternal. When the price tag of discipleship is compared with the present and eternal benefits of discipleship, the price is minimal. No wonder Paul does not lose hope.

This brings to mind an important observation regarding heavenly rewards. If I understand the Scriptures correctly, our heavenly rewards are certainly related to our earthly faithfulness. But rewards are not mere compensation for our works. Like every other blessing of God, rewards are based upon grace, not works. We are not able to do anything worthy of God's approval or rewards. He accomplishes in and through us that which He rewards. And the blessings are not commensurate with our faithfulness. How insignificant our earthly deeds will seem in heaven compared to the magnitude of God's blessings. Paul's words indicate that whatever price we pay will in no way be equivalent to the rewards we receive. Like every other blessing of God, rewards are by grace, and they far exceed what we deserve, for in reality we deserve nothing.

The ability to view our present bodily suffering for Christ's sake as a **“light”** and **“momentary”** affliction is based upon a Christian perspective possible only for those who operate by faith, rather than by sight. “Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Paul says precisely this in verse 18 of chapter 4: “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

The only way a person can be joyful and confident in the midst of incredible bodily suffering is to “see” by faith the certainty of the heavenly blessings which await us, due to the work of our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary. Faith enables us to see heaven as clearly as earth, to look forward to our future hope of glory while in the midst of great earthly tribulations. For the Christian, those things which are eternal are unseen; yet we know they are certain because our Lord has promised them to us. Our earthly afflictions pale in light of these certain, but unseen, eternal blessings.

Our Dying: The Means by Which We Exchange Inferior Bodies for Superior Ones (5:1-5)

1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

In chapter 4, Paul likens our physical bodies to earthen pots and the gospel of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ as the treasure contained within. Now Paul changes the imagery to a different kind of “container.” Our earthly bodies are likened to tents which we inhabit for a time. Our heavenly bodies are likened to a **“house”**—let's call it a mansion—which we inhabit forever once we leave these earthly bodies behind. Paul is not distressed by the “wear and tear” his body receives, because his earthly body is “disposable” and will be replaced by one that is far better.

These first five verses explain in greater detail the principle Paul sets down in 4:16-18. Paul and his colleagues have not lost heart in the midst of their earthly suffering because the inner man is being built up as the outer

man is being destroyed. The apostles view the earthly afflictions they face as insignificant in the light of the glory which they know they will enjoy for all eternity. It is not the things we see which are eternal, but the unseen things. These “unseen things” have far greater value and influence than earthly things.

Now with respect to our own physical bodies, Paul explains that the bodies in which we presently dwell are really disposable and are to be set aside at the time of our physical death so that we can indwell glorious eternal bodies. These earthly bodies, these “tents” in which we presently dwell, are to be “torn down” at the time of our death, and it is then that we will be given new bodies—new houses—in which to dwell. These are not man-made, but dwellings made without hands by God. These houses are not earthly but heavenly, and they are not temporary quarters but permanent dwellings.

Is there groaning in this life? Yes, indeed. This groaning is not inconsistent with our faith but is an expression of our faith. Groaning is a necessary and realistic response to living in a fallen world:

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it (Romans 8:18-25).

There is something wrong with the world in which we live. There is something temporary and incomplete about these bodies in which we dwell. Our earthly groaning reminds us that we live in a fallen world, and that these bodies and this earth are to be replaced by something far better. Do we groan? We should. This groaning will be replaced by constant rejoicing, as we inhabit our new bodies in the eternal presence of our God.

For this reason, destruction of the earthly body does not distress Paul. Our earthly body will be replaced by a vastly superior body. And we come to possess our new bodies by the death of our old ones. It is something like the old Opel Kadett I once owned. Since I had a replacement for it, literally the old one was headed for the metal rendering plant. After removing all the parts I wanted to keep, I let the kids go out in the driveway with hammers and pound on it. They loved that, and I enjoyed watching them destroy it. Why should I care, when I had something better to take its place? And so Paul is not hesitant to boldly preach Christ, even though men will persecute him, and his lifestyle in ministry will take a heavy toll on his body. This only hastens the day when his better body will be given to him.

How are we certain of such things? Because we “see” them by faith (4:18) as we daily turn to the Word of God for perspective and instruction. In addition, we have an internal witness, the Holy Spirit of God, who indwells every true believer in Jesus Christ. The very same God who prepared us to possess our heavenly blessings, including our new and more beautiful bodies, is the God who also gave us His Spirit as a pledge or, as the marginal note of the NASB indicates, as a down payment. The Holy Spirit’s dwelling within us is a pledge of the certainty of our future blessings, which God has promised in His Word.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/5-death-no-longer-foe-friend-2-cor-416-55>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Paul’s world was not a safe place. Cities could be impersonal and nasty. Villages could be hostile and dangerous for outsiders. Roadways always harbored the threat of bandits. Ships could be swamped by storms or attacked by pirates. Even in a case of assault or robbery, justice in court was often unavailable or corrupt. People needed to be ever wary and alert for danger. It seemed prudent to live just day by day in a self-protecting manner. Even today we hear of incidents that scare us: “Widow bilked out of life savings by online dating.” “Ten-year-old girl in a crosswalk struck and killed by texting driver.” “Super-infection detected that resists any known treatment.” It is easy to despair. For many, life lurches from one crisis to another. To look beyond one’s present sufferings seems impossible. But that is what Paul calls us to do. We are not to fear death. We already enjoy the peace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Rather than our succumbing to despair, Paul challenges us to walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we must endure and manage life’s crises as they come. But we do so knowing that God is in control and our future is sure. Take a minute to evaluate. Do you walk primarily by faith or by sight?

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Those Temporary Trials - Paul encouraged the believers in Corinth, and thus all believers, not to get weary or fainthearted. Every day our bodies are getting weaker, wasting away. But the inner person, the Holy Spirit working inside Christians, is getting more durable and more powerful, with fresh grace each day. Trials, challenges, problems, and other issues are present for all of us, but from God's perspective, it's all temporary. The heaviness of our daily issues is outweighed by what God has planned in eternity for His children. Paul challenged the congregation at Corinth to see their present state through God's eyeglasses. This life is all temporary, soon to pass away. Then, we can get on with the real party that God has in store for His children in heaven.

Our New Body and Life - We will have new, heavenly bodies. One day when death takes place or Jesus returns, the old will be gone, and the new will come. We will be at home with Christ forever. Paul had no doubt about the reality of these things. The Christians who understand Paul's words long to leave the "tent" (2 Cor. 5:1) of this body and be in "our heavenly dwelling" (vs. 4). Believers walk around with confidence. They know when death visits, they go to their real home, in heaven, with the Lord. Paul said if he had a choice, he would choose heaven rather than staying around here on earth. But while we are here, we work to please God in everything we do. He has created us with a purpose, and we must fulfill that purpose as long as we are here.