

Jesus is Risen: So Do Not Lose Heart
2Cor. 4:16-18

Folks we are gathered together to celebrate this amazing truth that changes everything in our lives and in our eternity, and it around the central fact Jesus is risen. Death could not hold him. And as we began to look at 2Corinthians 4 this morning, it is an incredible chapter that begins with the sovereign work of God in taking his Word, that gospel and shining it effectively in our hearts so much so that we believe in Jesus. Then he talks about the outcome of that new life. He says, **“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. (4:7-9).”** Do you ever feel that? You are afflicted in so many different ways, others and circumstances may try to crush you, you think we would be in despair, we are even struck and persecuted by those who hate Jesus. But we are here this morning, and we have never been forsaken by the Lord, nor ever will be. Our Lord lives. This is what separates us from all other world religions. Our Lord came, and lived, and died, and lives again.

And if this is all that there was and is, there would be every reason to despair and even give up. But he gives us our ultimate hope as believers in verse 14 that changes us in all our afflictions, **“knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.”** We have this knowledge of our God who raised up Jesus, which validates all the works that Jesus has accomplished. It validates that all our sins forevermore have been forgiven. It validates that nothing ever will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, whether enemies, health, relationships, death, persecution, the sword or whatever! It validates that wherever we are and whatever we are doing our Jesus is with us. It validates whatever he has called us to go through he will give us the necessary grace. It validates that he is forever making intercession for us. It validates that we are forever secure in him. Our Jesus is risen and that changes everything in the here and now.

But the promise Paul highlights is in the future but effects how we live in the here and now, and that is our resurrection. Because if Jesus is risen, then we who are united to him must rise also. And we live in this time frame known as the already and not yet. We are saved and secure in Christ. We have eternal life in us and we are living that life with Christ now, but it is also the not yet. We are not with Jesus, and we still have not had sin totally eradicated in us, and we still suffer. And we still die. Yet our hope and longing is to be with our Jesus, and not just in spirit but in body. And the more we dwell on just life in the here and now, and not on what is to come, the more our hearts are discouraged.

Now think of it, why are you discouraged? Why are you losing heart this morning? And it is not difficult for a person to describe why they are discouraged or angry or frustrated with life. It might be a trying marriage (all marriages become difficult, its a sinner living with a sinner), it might be children who have or are wandering away from Christ, or it might be this body that is wasting away. Every day is the same pain only a little worse, and there is no escape the physical torment. There is no saying

tomorrow will be better. But here is my point, it is easy to describe why you are discouraged. But look at the beginning of verse 16, **“So we do not lose heart.”** So is a verse that looks back at the theology just talked about. The glorious truth that Jesus is risen and we will rise also. Death cannot hold him and it cannot hold us because of the glorious truth we have discussed this morning. And therefore, on knowing what is to come, we do not lose heart. Because Jesus is risen the glorious best lies ahead.

And let me ask you this morning — are you losing heart? Are you discouraged and overwhelmed by all the things you never thoroughly you would face in life? And then ask yourself, how much am I thinking about the reality of the here and now, and how much am I thinking about the certainty to come? Folks, we are going to be with our resurrected and living Jesus! We will see him as he is and we will be like him. Just those few words should bring joy and encouragement to your weary soul, and the reason why is **Your guaranteed future invades your present living!**

And so I want to preach on that future this morning. Because we are not only celebrating the resurrection of Christ — death could not hold him — but if all our sin has been paid for, which it has, then death cannot hold us. Don't lose heart. Encourage your heart with these three truths that are yours because of the resurrection of Christ.

1. Because of Christ's resurrection we are becoming stronger every day. V.16.

Now the moment I said that we become stronger every day, is the moment I lost many of you. You feel the weakness of your body waking up for a sunrise service. Or others might say my body is just full of aches. Or others of you might say my inner person is just so full of pain it is hard to continue. As I was writing this sermon, I was on board a big ship somewhere in the Atlantic, southern Atlantic, watching the sunrise. The vastness of the ocean, the bigness of the sky with all of its hues, the power of wind and wave were so glorious, I had to ask this question found in Psalm 8:3-4, **“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”** God is so big and his creation is so big, and yet he is so mindful of you. He is not only mindful of you but chose to love you, and come and live and die for you, and wants you to forever live with him. That is the truth humbles us when we consider who we are, and at the same time strengthens our hearts in Christ.

So with that in mind look with new eyes at verse 16 once again, **“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”** I love how honest the Word of God and the God of this word is about life. There is no pie and the sky thinking here that if you trust God your life will be a bed of roses. The first reality we can't escape is about our physical condition, “though our outer self is wasting away.” It doesn't say your outer self might waste away but it will. Some times it happens quickly. There are many terrible diseases that ravage the mind and body quickly. Sometimes it is more methodical. One of the things I love to do is run. But as I get older the distance and the speed have incrementally decreased with my age, along with the pain of arthritis and fatigue. I also find that my thought life and thinking are receding, I suffer from brain fog, and this is or will be a reality that we all face. You cannot escape the wasting of the body.

And in a day and age that honours youth and agility, this is such a scary proposition and truth. But for the believer it is something quite different. Some of the strongest people I have ever met have been senior believers. I have been at their bedside before they have departed from this world. I love being old, and getting old. There is a beauty about age that so many never see or realize. And part of that beauty is right here, **“our inner self is being renewed day by day.”** Age strips away all the things that you trust — your physical strength, your ability to comprehend, even many of your relationships change, the veneer of self-sufficiency. Some that you loved so much there is that good bye. What a loss that would be if Christ is not risen. Old age would be a curse, but old age causes us more than ever to think of the finish line. It causes us to realize more than ever that we were not meant for this world, nor meant to live in this body. Old age for the believer with all of its pains and trials is meant to awaken a greater hope and reliance on Christ. Listen to Romans 5:3-4, **“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.”** Notice the last thing that suffering produces. It produces hope. That is the strengthening and certain hope that we are celebrating today. How could we ever be discouraged when Jesus is alive? How could we ever be discouraged when we are almost home? Death doesn't have the victory. We shall be changed. The hymn, We're Almost Home goes, **“This journey ours together, We're almost home Unto that great forever, We're almost home What song anew we'll sing 'round that happy throne Come faint of heart, We're almost home Almost home We're almost home So press on toward that blessed shore O praise the Lord We're almost home.”** I love hearing God's people sing that hope. Christ has purchased and guaranteed us a home. There is strength.

And this verse and hope and renewal is not just for those who are older. It is for all of us. We all live in the crushing reality of this life. It is easy to set all our minds and thoughts just on this life. When we do, there is no renewal. If you feel discouraged, or hopeless, or even lost in your Christian life, let me ask you what are you truly thinking about and meditating on? What are you filling your hearts with? We take our discouragement and we add onto it just by the thinking of the wasting away of our bodies, dreams or regrets of life. Be strengthened, do not grow weary, do not lose heart. And here is why — Christ is risen. That changes everything in your life in the here and now and everything in your life to come. We are almost home!

2. Because of the resurrection of Christ there is weighty glory coming. V.17.

We said this morning that the death of the Christian is the funeral of all affliction and suffering. It is the termination. And that is the incredible thing. There is not only a termination date of our physical lives in the here and now, but a termination of every trial, adversity, heartache, and sorrow you are facing today. But one of the frustration of this present life is not realizing why we face all these things. Often a pastor is asked the question “why?” Why is life, the teen years, singleness, marriage, old age so difficult? Why the traffic jam today when I had to get across town? Why this or that? If God is sovereign, in control of every aspect of my life, and if he loves me why all these hassles? Why can't I have the full expression of my salvation today?

And we do not see these are tools in the Master's hand to prepare us for our ultimate joy and satisfaction before Jesus. The whole goal of these trials is not against our good, but for our good, it is our sanctification. It is holiness not just in action but in heart. And God will send us through things we would never want to go through to give us greater gain we would never have if we didn't go through those trials. And that greater gain might not come in this life but the one to come, but this life is all about, here it is if you want to understand your life as a believer — it is all about preparation.

Now with all that in mind, think through what is being communicated here, Jesus rose and guaranteed our salvation and future, so this is what he is doing, **“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”** Now think of it because this verse contrasts this life with the life to come. And there are three key words with each side. The three words that describe this present life are light, momentary, and affliction. The three words about the life to come: eternal, weight, and glory — and the glory is beyond anything we could ever fathom.

But to key here is not that you have to endure and then you get the good stuff, but you have to through these in things in order to delight and glory in the eternal weight of glory. The key word in understand the contrast is the word “preparing.” This life is preparing us for the other. This momentary life is preparing us for eternity. This light life is preparing us for something weighty and substantial. This affliction is preparing us for glory beyond anything comparable to anything that happens to be here and now.

So let say a couple things about this. One is the meaning here is God, who loves you and desires what is highest and best never wastes your afflictions. Again, we want to ask the question why, and there is mystery in all our affliction, but we can know somethings about our afflictions. One is that our resurrected Christ is preparing us to be with him. And one of his many tools that he has chosen to use are afflictions. So think of it, your afflictions are never a sign that Jesus has forgotten you, or that he is angry at you, but you are loved. Sometimes these afflictions can seem like we are going through fire. 1 Peter 1:6-7, **“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”** Notice the purpose at the end is future, that after we have passed through these fires, when are before Jesus it might resound to his glory and honour, and look at what he has done with such a sinful and unpromising life. Your living Jesus will never waste your trials. They are truly preparing us for the next life.

The other thing that I want us to point out here is that this verse seems to many very insensitive. Think about someone who is going through profound loss of a loved one and is grieving, or someone who has just lost their job and house and everything, or someone who is harassed constantly by others for their faith. Chin up, this is nothing and it is light, even though it is the most weighty thing that individual has ever gone through. Paul you are being a bit insensitive. You haven't been in my shoes. But here is the thing, Paul has been through more suffering than any of us here. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, **“Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless**

beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

Paul knows what it is like to live in this fallen world. He knows the pain. His body would have never healed from all of the beatings. So how can he say that this is light and momentary afflictions when he knows how heavy they are? He compares it to the end. This is what we keep our minds and hearts on. The end that will meet us when we are with the resurrected Christ will be not momentary but eternal. Because it will be so glorious, being with Christ will be so beyond anything in this life that the worst life of any believer will seem like compared to this weighty and substantial glory. And to think, that God sent me through all of that to enjoy him throughout all of eternity, wow! Do you think Christ, who suffered more than any of us thought it was not worth it? His suffering was not worth it? What kept him going is he knew there was purpose to all his sufferings. Hebrews 12:2, **“looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”** Did you here that? There is joy set before him that caused him to endure the affliction. Praise God for his remarkable plan. Praise God for the resurrection hope we have in Christ, because that resurrection hope indicates there is purpose. Seek this Christ, encourage your heart. Don't lose heart. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. Jesus is truly preparing you for glory!

3. Because of the resurrection of Jesus we can constantly look over the horizon. V. 18.

There are a couple of things that make this life so difficult. One is we think it is suppose to be easier than it was ever meant to be. Whether it is marriage or family or life. Life, over and over throughout the Scriptures we are told is going to be difficult. The other as we've mentioned is we live as if this is the life we were destined for. This is supposed to be our heaven. This is all there is. Nothing will ever change. There are so many disgruntled and even angry Christian's — angry at God and the others in their lives because this is suppose to be their heaven. Even though they would never say it, they think it, God hasn't been faithful. Therefore in their joylessness and anger they keep looking to this life to provide what can only be provided and found in the next life.

Now think of the calling here because there is a sense where as believers we should be obsessed with death and the coming of the next life, because look at what all our concentration is on, and this is all guaranteed through Christ's resurrection. We dwell, fill our minds, and it needs to be constant and daily with the resurrection life with Christ, and listen to how assured it is to come, **“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.”** We are such visual creatures, and the call is to live by faith in what we haven't seen but is so sure to come, that Paul almost seems to command a contradiction. He says look at things you cannot see. Look to your Christ, who came and died and rose again. Look to his promise that if we die in

this moment we will be with Christ. Look and see because it is just over the horizon, and it is closer than it ever has been before that Christ is coming back. And remember the promise?

Listen to 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, **“For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”**

Now think of why we are looking at the things to come. He says the things that are present are transient, but the things that are unseen but one day will be seen are eternal. Your trials, suffering, the aching of your body and heart that you have this morning are all transient. They are not eternal. They are not substantial. They are not your destiny. Listen to these words because they are meant to change you every single day and meant to give you direction every single day — Jesus is risen. The debt is paid in full. And since he is risen you will rise also, and you will not bring any of the trials or suffering into your next life. All the former things will be dealt its death blow, and you will forever and ever be with the Lord. Now again, this takes effort to think this way. You have to take your mind and all your concentration that your mind and heart is on and place it on something that the Lord has commanded.

Think of how this changes us. If you knew the Lord was going to come back at the end of this very day, at 12 midnight, how would you treat your spouse, children, family members and others in your life? How would you handle the troubles of this day? With such anticipation of what is going to come at the end of the day, would you say to yourself — this is light and momentary. This will pass away. Would you say, I can live for Christ, I can be kind, compassionate, forgiving, gentle, and joyous? And think of why you could, because nothing has changed in your life, except this — you are looking and dwelling on the certainty of the coming of the resurrected Christ. But here is the thing we convince ourselves of — life will never change. But Jesus is risen. You are closer than ever of being with the One who purchased you and loved You. Don't lose heart. Don't live as if this is it. Oh Christian, let end with this, and encourage your heart, **“your guaranteed future invades your present living.”** Praise God, he is risen and that changes everything!