

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
2 Corinthians: God's Pattern For Victory Over Severe Ministry Opposition
Part VII: Focusing On God's Eternal Perspective For Current Productive Triumph
(2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10)

I. Introduction

- A. The believer's present trials can tempt him to "faint", to lose heart, to quit or to give up living for the Lord.
- B. A great antidote is to take the path Paul and his team used in 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10 (as follows):

II. Focusing On God's Eternal Perspective For Current Productive Triumph, 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10.

- A. Paul claimed that he with his ministry team did not "faint," or "lose heart" or "give up" in the face of the trials they faced, 2 Cor. 4:16a with 4:8-9; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 564.
- B. One *reason* for their **motivation** was noted in 2 Corinthians 4:14-15 with 2 Corinthians 4:16b-5:10:
 - 1. Paul had briefly mentioned in 2 Corinthians 4:14-15 that his ministry team's sufferings named in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 were used of God to bring glory to Himself.
 - 2. This caused Paul reason not to lose heart, faint or give up living for and serving the Lord, 2 Cor. 4:16a.
 - 3. Specifically, though the "outward man perish," or the humanity of Paul's team waned under trials, "the inward man was being renewed every day," or their spirits were being daily revitalized, 2 Cor. 4:16b.
 - 4. Building on this truth, Paul revealed God had arranged for their trials and tribulations that took such a toll on their temporal earthly bodies and natures to function to produce a far greater amount of eternal glory in their spirits, and this (implied) as they chose to respond to trials by trusting God, 2 Cor. 4:17.
 - 5. Thus, Paul and his team fixed their focus on this eternal, spiritual glory that was not yet seen instead of dwelling on the temporal, lesser sufferings they faced en route to a great eternal destiny, 2 Cor. 4:18.
 - 6. As for the temporal cost of this program, Paul told how God would meet it in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8:
 - a. Paul revealed that if the earthly body and nature fails in the most extreme case of trial, that of death, the believer has an eternal body, a "house" in heaven not made by human hands, 2 Corinthians 5:1.
 - b. Meanwhile, we actually "groan" in our current body and earthly nature of suffering under trial, longing to be clothed with our heavenly body of the coming resurrection, 2 Corinthians 5:2-4.
 - c. To motivate us to hope for that wonderful, eternal state, God has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit Who acts as an "earnest," a real-life foretaste of this eternal state of blessing to come, 2 Cor. 5:5.
 - d. For this reason, Paul's team was always confident, as should every believer be, that as long as we are at home in this earthly body, we are absent from the Lord, 2 Corinthians 5:6.
 - e. This confidence is built on the premise that we live by faith in the unseen, not by seeing the future state that we will inherit by God's grace, 2 Corinthians 5:7.
 - f. However, we are also confident that we should prefer to be away from this earthly body of suffering and at home, or present with the Lord beyond this life, 2 Cor. 5:8. [Incidentally, this is a wonderful verse in support of the truth that the believer does not go to purgatory at death before entering heaven, for absence from the body means presence with the Lord in heaven, not anywhere else!]
- C. However, addressing the believer's arrival in heaven led to Paul's referring to **another reason** for being **motivated** to live by faith in the midst of draining temporal trials (as follows), 2 Corinthians 5:9-10:
 - 1. Paul noted that, in view of their focus on reaching heaven in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, his ministry team labored to be accepted of the Lord once they arrived there beyond the reach of all trials, 2 Cor. 5:9!
 - 2. His reason was quite profound: every believer must stand before the "bema" seat of Christ where he will either receive reward or lose reward for life and service to God, 2 Cor. 5:10 with 1 Cor. 3:10-15! [This judgment deals with rewards for Christian life and service, not with the eternal condemnation of the unsaved as is the case in the Revelation 20:11-15 Great White Throne judgment!]

Lesson: Paul and his team triumphed over their earthly trials by focusing on the eternal perspective: (1) they focused on what God was eternally doing in their spirits for His glory were they to trust God in their trials. (2) That focus in turn led them to recall their coming accountability to trust in God, for after they entered heaven, they would be judged on how well they lived by faith in Him for His rewards!

Application: May we like Paul focus on the spiritual, eternal dimension of our existence to be motivated to keep living by faith in God to handle the trials we face in this earthly life!