

Message #13

II Corinthians 4:13-18

If we spend the final 10-20 years of our life totally and only focused on enhancing our earthly health, wealth and welfare, we will be making a fatal mistake. When we think in ways that are biblically right, the final days of our life ought to be focused more and more on the eternal, and less and less on the temporal. This reality was literally lived out in the life of the Apostle Paul.

The Apostle Paul was taking the treasure of the grace Gospel to the world. He was constantly attacked and under the threat of death. His grace message of believe and trust totally and only in Jesus Christ to save you was a message that was shaking up the religious world and leaving Paul in difficult circumstances. But the threats and intimidations did not stop Paul. It did not prevent him from staying focused and in this text we learn why. Paul was totally focused on that which was eternal because he knew that it wouldn't be long and he would say goodbye to that which is temporal.

If ever there is a Grace Age text designed to communicate that point, it is this one right here.

IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT WE ARE TEMPORAL PEOPLE, GRACE AGE BELIEVERS OUGHT TO KEEP THEIR FOCUS AND COMMUNICATION ON THE GRACE OF GOD AND FUTURE ETERNITY AND NOT ON THEIR TEMPORAL PROBLEMS OR PRESSURES.

As one writer said, the real question for Grace Age believers is not whether we are saving for retirement; it is whether we are living for retirement. We are headed to be with the Lord. We are heading to eternity. We are heading to heaven. The older we get, the more we ought to be thinking about that and living in a way that reflects that reality.

No matter what Paul faced, he stayed focused on the eternal. Death did not threaten Paul. He did not consider death to be the end of life, but the beginning of life in eternity. As a result, he kept at his ministry and he didn't back down and didn't quit.

In this text there are primarily two reasons why:

REASON #1 – He believed in a future resurrection because of Christ's resurrection.
4:13-15

It is crystal clear from verse 13 that Paul spoke something because he believed something. Most people say things because they believe things. Many people speak something because they believe something but that does not mean it is true. People believe all kinds of things that are false and speak all kinds of things that are false.

However, as verse 14 says, Paul based his faith on knowing something. Paul's faith was not some leap into the unknown.

What he specifically knew was that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead. That is the fact of faith and the whole basis for grace. He had literally seen Jesus Christ who had been raised from the dead. In fact, in **II Corinthians 4:13**, Paul quotes Psalm 116:10. That verse in Psalms sits in a context that deals with the subject of death and the grave (116:3, 8, 15). David had been critically ill but God had delivered him from death and he spoke of that reality (116:13, 17).

One of the things that obviously kept Paul going and kept him ministering and kept him speaking was the thought of death and the grave. He has seen God deliver him from spiritual death and several times he had seen God deliver him from physical death. That reality became a key motivator for his grace ministry and kept him preaching Jesus Christ.

Verse 13 begins by saying we have “the same spirit of faith.” Every believer has the same spirit of faith in this Grace Age that any believer had in any age. Every believer has been delivered from spiritual death and eternal death. No matter who you are or when or where you live, if you believe in Jesus Christ you have the same kind of death-delivering faith in the Lord that David had.

Our faith is a fact-based faith. It is faith alone in the living Christ, who was raised from the dead. It is faith alone in the Lord that saves and that is the common denominator of every Grace Age believer.

Paul believed he had just as much right to speak as every other believer, including the O.T. Psalmist. He was a N.T. Grace Age believer and even though he was being criticized, he says I do have a right to speak. His faith and his speech were not dictated by his circumstances or threats made against him.

The one doctrine that is critical to the grace of God found in Jesus Christ is the resurrection. Paul’s gospel that he preached to these Corinthians was focused on the resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:3-4).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that He is the only Savior who can save from sin. The resurrection proves that Jesus Christ is God; He is the Savior and He is the Messiah. The resurrection establishes grace and proves that when you believe you are justified forever (Rom. 4:25).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is something we need to believe and herald, because it is this resurrection that guarantees that salvation is only found in Jesus Christ.

Every believer has the right and responsibility to speak about the grace of God. Every believer has the right and responsibility to tell others that they may believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. Every believer has the right and responsibility to defend the resurrection.

We have just as much right to speak as the O.T. prophets. They looked forward in time to One who would be raised from the dead and we look back in time to the One who was raised from the dead and we all speak about that.

There are two motives for speaking:

Motive #1 - The motive of the presentation of God that will occur at the resurrection. **4:14**

When you read I Corinthians 15, it is clear that the Corinthians struggled with the doctrine of the resurrection. But the resurrection of Jesus Christ is critical to our life, our hope, our future.

Probably the thing that scares people the most is the thought of death. When Paul thought of death, he did not view it as the end; he thought in terms of a resurrection of God and the presentation by God. He thought in terms of giving an account to God.

Now it is obvious that **verse 14** stresses the future fact of the resurrection and a future presentation. **There is a reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is a resurrection of every believer and there is a presentation after the resurrection.** The way one gets to the resurrection is via death.

In view of the context that we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10), one of the things that motivated Paul to keep presenting the grace Gospel and speaking up and out for Jesus Christ was the fact that time was ticking away in his life and he knew that he would give an account to God. He would die and would be raised and presented. He did not want to be presented as one who had failed God, but as one who defended and lived grace.

Paul kept ministering and witnessing because he realized a day of his own death, resurrection and presentation was coming.

Motive #2 - The motive of the glory of God which spreads through the grace Gospel. **4:15**

The Gospel of grace and the dispensation of grace is a glorious treasure that was spreading through Paul. That kept him moving forward. It kept him writing and preaching.

Paul kept preaching the grace Gospel because he longed for people to believe in Jesus Christ and abound in thanks to God, which in fact brings glory to God. When the Psalmist had been delivered from death, he said "To Thee I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving" (Ps. 116:17). Grace deliverance should cause us to praise God and thank God because this brings glory to God.

The fact is, most people, including many believers, do not glorify God and do not give thanks to God because most people do not grasp grace. Most people want to thank themselves and not God's grace.

Most people want to glory in their works or religion or their denomination or their accomplishments. Paul thanked God for His grace and that brought glory to God.

We need to get this point—when you grasp grace and communicate grace and when you thank God for grace, you give glory to God. When grace is understood properly it will cause us to give thanks to God and that will bring abounding glory to God.

In fact the word “abound” (περισσευω) means to bring glory to God at a way over and above level (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 857). The aorist tense means every time or moment that you and I thank God for grace, we glorify God at an over and above level.

Grasping grace, believing grace, communicating grace is critical to bringing great glory to God.

REASON #2 – He believed in an eternal transformation. **4:16-18**

Paul did not back away or quit taking the grace Gospel to the world, no matter how bad things got for him. He did not lose heart. He didn't shy away because he was afraid. He did not back down.

There are three motives that express why he did not back down:

Motive #1 - We do not lose heart because even though the outer man is decaying, the inner man is being renewed day by day. **4:16**

That word “decay” (διαφθειρω) is a rare word and it means that our outer man is in the process of being disabled and destroyed (*Ibid.*, p. 113). In fact, in Revelation 8:9, the word is used in a context of death. No one here can deny that the outer man is decaying and that we are dying. Our outer man is wasting away. We are getting older and as we age we don't get stronger, we get weaker. We are not moving toward a maternity ward, we are moving toward the grave.

J. Vernon McGee said in his twilight years that he wished he were 35 years old and knew what he knew now. Wouldn't that be something? But the fact is, we are aging and this old body is in the process of dying.

When we were on vacation we tried to get plenty of exercise. We did some swimming, running and walking. Since my hip replacement, it is hard for me to run and at times even walk on hard surfaces. But, I actually was able, on the sand, to jog three miles without any pain. In fact, one day I swam one mile in a pool, jogged three miles on the beach and walked with Mary four miles on the beach for a total of eight miles in one day. Now that may seem impressive; that is until you learn that when I was in my 30's and 40's I ran marathons, which are 26.2 miles. Running three miles is nothing compared to running 26.2 miles. But I am getting older and the muscles and bones aren't getting stronger. It is just as Paul says, our outer man is decaying.

However, for the grace believer, our strength is not found in what is happening to us physically or externally, but what is developing spiritually and internally. Because even though our outer man is decaying, our inner person is being renewed. Our inner person is being renewed day by day. Every day we need spiritual renewal.

Let me ask each of us some questions. As you are getting older, do you feel closer to the Lord? Do you feel stronger? Do you feel drawn more to the Word of God? Do you sense the need more to understand and apply the Scriptures? Are you having more victory in life? Those are good questions for each of us to ask.

Motive #2 - We do not lose heart because momentary and light affliction does not even begin to compare to the weight of eternal glory. **4:17**

There is no question that our lives have some trouble in them. We all experience difficult and hard things. Paul would not stop, give up or quit, no matter what he was suffering or how he was hurting because he kept his sights fixed on his eternal glory. He did not think that anything could begin to compare to the glory that would be his in eternity.

In fact, Paul calls any affliction as “light affliction” and “momentary affliction” compared to the far surpassing glory of eternity. The words “far beyond all comparison” mean just that. Nothing in this life can begin to compare to eternity.

When we are thinking properly, the temporal is surpassed by the eternal. Just think for a moment about eternity. This means existence forever in a state that never ends. It is true that sometimes the road seems long, but compared to eternity it isn't that long.

Good athletes keep focused on the finish line and good soldiers for Jesus Christ do the same thing.

Motive #3 - We do not lose heart because we do not keep our focus on things temporal which we can see, but on things eternal which we cannot see. **4:18**

The things we can see refer to the things that are temporal that are in existence at this present age. We can see and experience disappointments and suffering and hurts and hardships. The things we cannot see are the things pertaining to eternity.

When we were on Tybee Island, one thought that continually went through my mind is that during the Tribulation all the islands will be destroyed. First, they will be moved to different places (Rev. 6:14) and then destroyed (Rev. 16:20). Now what you can actually, temporarily see right now are condos and motels and restaurants that are on the island that overlook the ocean. This is what you tangibly see. But if you look at the islands through the eyes of the eternal Word of God, you can see the day when the islands will all be gone.

Now the one critical thing that we can tangibly see that enables us to believe the things we cannot see, is the empty tomb of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was literally and physically here on this earth; that is a historical fact. Jesus Christ literally and physically died on the cross and that was a historical fact. Jesus Christ was literally and physically raised from the dead and that is a historical fact that is the testimony of eye-witnesses, Scripture and the testimony of historians.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact of history. We can look at that moment, that event with certainty and that event guarantees that the things we cannot see are based on reality.