

Focus on the Eternal

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

East Berlin Community Church

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September 1, 2024

Introduction

- Florence Chadwick and the Catalina Island attempt
- Jesus never promised us a problem-free life.
 - John 16:33a-- *"In this world you will have tribulations..."*
- Paul faced pressures and problems, but he finished the course.
 - 2 Corinthians 4:8-9-- *"hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we were perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."*
 - 2 Timothy 4:6-7-- *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*
- **The Keys to Paul maintaining his passion throughout life:**
 - 1) **He had a realistic view of life and ministry.**
 - 2) **He died daily to himself.**
 - Acts 20:24-- *"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."*
 - 3) **He operated on the basis of faith, not feelings.**
 - 4) **He lived and served for the benefit of others and for God's glory.**
 - 5) **He made time daily for personal, spiritual renewal.**
 - 2 Corinthians 4:16-- *"Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."*

Focus on the Eternal

6) Paul focused on that which is Eternal and Permanent

- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18-- *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 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."*
1. **The importance of focus in professional sports-- keeping their eyes on the prize.**
 2. **Paul did not ignore his challenges, but acknowledged them**
 - 2 Corinthians 11:23-29-- *"Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me*

daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?"

3. **Why didn't the problems Paul faced consume him?**

a. Paul chose not to obsess over them!

b. **Paul saw that God was achieving in him something greater through his problems.**

1) **God "works all things together for good"**

- Romans 8:28-- *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose."*

a) Not a promise that everything is going to turn out great to our liking.

b) But is working all things for our "good", that is, the we might be *"conformed to the image of His Son."*

2) **God uses trials as a form of discipline so that we may share in His Holiness.**

- Hebrews 12:7-- *"Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as sons."*
- Hebrews 12:10-11-- *"For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."*

a) God is not concerned primarily with our Happiness.

b) God's primary concern is for our Holiness!

3) **God uses trials to achieve within us "an eternal glory"**

a) Connection between suffering now and glory later

- Romans 8:17-- *"If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."*
- 1 Peter 1:6-7-- *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*
- Philippians 2:8-9-- *"He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross... God highly exalted him and gave him that the Name that is above every name"*

b) But suffering for the sake of Christ or that which honors Him achieves for us "eternal glory"

- 1 Peter 2:20-- *"For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God."*

c. **When his "light and momentary" troubles are compared with the "eternal glory", he saw that THERE IS NO COMPARISON!**

1) "Hyperbole on top of hyperbole"

2) Heaven is beyond our imagination

- 1 Corinthians 2:9-- *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

d. **He consciously focused on what is eternal and permanent rather than on what is time-bound and passing.**

- 2 Corinthians 4:18-- *"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."*

- Colossians 3:1-4-- *“Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life appears, then we also will appear with Him in glory.”*
- 1) Is there a danger in being “Too Heavenly Minded”?
 - 2) The Old Testament saints endured hardships and trials by focusing on that which is eternal and permanent.
 - Hebrews 11:35-38-- *“were tortured, not accepting deliverance... Still others had trials of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented... They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.”*
 - Hebrews 11:13-16-- *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”*
 - 3) Jesus Christ endured the suffering on the cross by focusing on *“the joy that was set before Him.”*
 - Hebrews 12:3-- *“Consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”*
 - 4) The only way for us to finish well is to gain an eternal perspective on life and ministry.