

Preparing for Perseverance

2 Corinthians 4: 16-18

As we close out another year and stand on the verge of the New Year, no doubt this has been a memorable year for each of us. We have all faced difficulties and adversity, heartache and pain; and yet these struggles were tempered with grace and joy, peace and happiness.

It is evident that our culture is rapidly changing. The struggles we currently face are much different than the difficulties of our past. Committed believers are no longer a majority; our world is consumed with depravity that seeks to feed the flesh; we face more distractions and hindrances than before. Even here at Fellowship, we notice the decline in passion for the Lord and attendance in the services. So, in the midst of a rapidly changing culture, that presents new challenges, how are we to overcome and remain vibrant? Paul reveals the answer to this pressing question in our text. If we are to overcome and experience spiritual victory and vitality, we must make necessary preparation. Regardless of what we face, we must view our lives and service in light of Christ and His leading. As He leads, He always provides.

As we consider these verses, I want to examine the [elements](#) revealed in: [Preparing for Perseverance](#).

I. Our Spiritual Strength (16) – [For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.](#) In order to properly prepare, we must understand the strength we have in Christ. This involves:

A. Our Resolve (16a) – [For which cause we faint not.](#) This is spoken in light of what Paul had taught in preceding verses. Although we face trouble, perplexity, and persecution, we are enabled in Christ. He should be the center of our lives and work. We have great confidence in Him. There has never been a time or situation where He has failed. Life is difficult, and I am sure we've all been tempted to abandon the work, but our strength is renewed in Christ.

- In the midst of great adversity, when many had abandoned the faith, Paul and those who were committed remained strong in Christ. They did not faint in the face of difficulty. We do not stand in our own strength, but we must possess the resolve to press on even when it's hard.

B. Our Restraint (16b) – [but though our outward man perish.](#) Paul was well aware of the limitations of the human body. They are prone to sickness, ailments, exhaustion, fatigue, decay, and even death. He lived in a physical body that would not last forever. His earthly tabernacle grew older

each day; and with the aging process, he faced new challenges. He was forced to deal with the physical persecution that many brought against him. His body was often racked with pain and Paul well understood the mortality of human flesh.

- Many do well serving the Lord when the sun is shining and the seas are calm. It is during the storms and trials of life that many question the Lord's faithfulness and abandon the work. Paul refused to use this as an excuse. He was not seeking early retirement. Even though ministry was more difficult physically, he remained committed. We too must resist the urge to abandon the work of ministry when trials and adversity come against us. As long as there is breath in our bodies, we must serve the Lord.

C. Our Renewal (16c) – *yet the inward man is renewed day by day*. Life was hard for Paul, and yet he found renewed strength and passion each day. His physical body may have suffered, but the inward man, his spirit, was renewed each day in the Lord. Each day he woke and discovered his passion for the Lord remained. In fact, it not only remained, it grew! Paul may have been limited physically, but spiritually he was stronger than ever. Regardless of what he faced, his passion for the Lord provided the necessary strength to press on in the ministry.

- The inner man is the real source of our strength. We can be young and strong physically, but if we lack inner strength, we will accomplish little for Christ. The Lord is not seeking those who possess their own abilities; He seeks those who realize their inability and depend on Him for inner strength. Regardless of what we face in life, we can grow spiritually, strengthened in Christ.

Lam.3:21-24 – This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. ^[22] *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.* ^[23] *They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.* ^[24] *The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.*

II. A Beneficial Struggle (17) – *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. Here Paul discusses the struggles we face. Consider:

A. The Affliction (17a) – *For our light affliction...* Paul speaks of the light affliction he and others faced. Many might question his choice of words, but we must remember he is dealing with our perspective. There is no doubt that Paul suffered much for the cause of Christ. Most would likely have abandoned the ministry, and yet Paul remains positive. I am convinced he strove to view his suffering in light of the sufferings of Christ. He viewed his suffering in light of the greater scope of the Gospel. He saw his difficulties as minor when he compared them to the greater cause of the kingdom. As we will discuss in a moment, he understood this would not last and something far greater waited him.

- As servants of the living Christ, seeking to share the Gospel and reach those who are yet unsaved, we must maintain a proper perspective. In comparison to the trials of many, we would have to agree that our afflictions have been light. We have been called to suffer little for the Lord. It amazes me how little it takes to derail many within the American church though. Many times their complaints revolve around matters of opinion or preference. Most who abandon the work of the Lord do so for petty reasons. I pray this will challenge us to remain committed to the Lord.

B. The Assessment (17b) – *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment...* Paul knew the struggles he faced at any given moment would eventually pass. He also understood that life on earth was but a fleeting moment. Soon enough, the Lord would call for him and he would be delivered from the struggles of life as he entered the Lord's eternal presence.

- Our struggles will be much easier to bear when we maintain a proper perspective. The storm you may be facing today will eventually pass. The sun will shine again. Our lives here are but a fleeting vapor. This life and the trouble it brings will one day end and the saved by grace will find themselves in the presence of our Lord. Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning!

C. The Appreciation (17c) – *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Paul had not only learned to endure his trials; he also learned to appreciate them. While they may not have been enjoyable at the moment, he knew they would result in eternal glory. As he patiently endured, he became more like Christ. His faithfulness resulted in the salvation of lost sinners. He endured patiently and allowed the Lord to work in his life for the advancement of the kingdom. He would one day hear, "Well done" from the Lord he loved and served.

- The weight of glory pictures a scale where the struggles are measured against the joys and blessings. There would be no comparison when he stood before the Lord. Keeping that perspective will help guide and strengthen us, allowing us to appreciate the struggles we face.

III. An Influential Sight (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.* Here he emphasizes the spiritual perspective and focus. Consider:

A. Our Discernment (18a) – *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.* He reminds us that we must maintain a spiritual perspective. We must not dwell on

the things we see, the discouragements of life, but on the eternal things that the natural eye cannot see. Paul had learned to look through eyes of faith, beyond his present circumstance.

- If we only see that which is about us, the difficulties, sin, and despair, we will quickly grow discouraged. We must learn to look through eyes of faith. While we cannot ignore the struggles and needs of this life, we must keep eternity in mind as well. This life is but a season of preparation for the life to come. Don't dwell on what you see; focus on what you cannot see!

B. Our Determination (18b) – *for the things which are seen are temporal*. We cannot allow the trials and hardships of life to dictate our purpose and existence. As difficult as it is, we must find the strength and endurance available in Christ to press on for Him. The struggles and opposition here will not last. All that we experience in this life is temporal; it will eventually fade away. We cannot allow that which is temporal to divert our attention from that which is eternal.

C. Our Direction (18c) – *but the things which are not seen are eternal*. The unseen motivated Paul much more than that which he saw and experienced on a daily basis. His focus was on eternity, not the temporal trials of life. He was committed to using as much of his effort and energy to bring about eternal change in the lives of others. He refused to dwell on the pain and difficulty of the present moment. He knew eternity waited all men, and he wanted to ensure he presented a Gospel witness to those who needed Christ. He wanted to do all he could in the present life, to honor and glorify Christ for the life to come. While it was hidden to the natural eye, Paul was looking toward eternity. That kept him focused in life and ministry. We must seek that same spiritual direction!

Conclusion: How we approach daily life and ministry for Christ will be affected by our perspective. What are you focused on today? Are you dwelling on the difficulties you currently face or do you view them in light of eternity? Are you committed to serving the Lord or are you determined to make things more comfortable physically? How we perceive our lives within their context will affect the way we prepare for future endeavors.

Have you received Christ as your Lord and Savior? If so, are you surrendered to His will for your life? If there are needs, come to the Lord and find the solution!