

In her late twenties, Mabel Francis wrote to A.B. Simpson, founder of The Alliance, asking to be sent overseas. She was convinced God was calling her to Japan. But there was a problem: In the early 1900s, The Alliance didn't allow single women to travel internationally.

But Mabel persevered. In 1909, at 29, she sailed for Japan. Her brother joined her in 1913, and her sister Anne in 1924. Out of love for Japan and the gospel, they planted more than 20 churches.

By 1931, the Japanese church was self-sustaining, and in 1936 The Alliance pulled its workers. But Mabel and Anne stayed. When WWII broke out, both governments urged them to return to America. Their lives were at risk, but they believed God was keeping doors open in Japan—and they remained.

They endured house arrest, bombings, and three years in an internment camp. Even so, they shared Christ, led many to faith, and after the war helped launch a Bible school, orphanages, medical clinics, and six more churches.

Still, the sisters knew more workers were needed. They wrote to the Alliance president, urging him to send reinforcements.

In 1962—53 years after Mabel first arrived—the Japanese emperor awarded her the Order of the Sacred Treasure, the nation's highest honor for a foreigner, recognizing her long and meritorious service to the people of Japan.

And the fruit continues. In 2017, Alliance missionaries celebrated the 100th anniversary of the church Mabel started in Fukuyama. Across western Japan, believers still say, *"Mabel Francis led me to the Lord."*¹

Friends, that's what it means to live with the end in view, to focus on the unseen and not be distracted by current circumstances.

Our friends, Blong & KZ are serving in Japan right now. They're an extension of Mabel's ministry.

Today, we're going to be looking at 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10 and you'll quickly notice that Paul is also living with the end in view. Like Brian talked about last week, we suffer in many ways and our weaknesses are constantly being exposed. But those weaknesses magnify Christ's strength in us. We continue to move forward because the Spirit of Christ empowers and enables us to. Paul's struggles and adversity were the stage upon which God showcased His divine power in Paul's life. So look at verses 16-18 in chapter 4 with me. [READ 4:16-18]

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Where's your focus? (4:16-18)

He starts with a callback to 4:1, 'we don't lose heart.' Because of the mercy and grace of God, we have this ministry, though we're fragile and weak in many ways. Even as we struggle and endure all kinds of hardship, God sustains us by His Spirit. We minister with integrity in spite of our suffering. We don't lose heart.

Outward/Inward (v 16)

In verse 16, 'not losing heart' points in a different direction. He uses outward/inward language. Outwardly, he's falling apart. It's the reality he,

¹ "The Fruit of the Harvest" Alliance Life Magazine (online). <https://cmalliance.org/the-fruit-of-the-harvest/>

and all of us, face because we still live in this fallen world. It's full of hardship and struggle and sin. It's all part of this earthly life. Yet, even as we're outwardly coming undone, *inwardly*, as new creations in Christ Jesus, we are being transformed to look more and more like the person God designed us to be for His glory. Instead of destroying us, our sufferings 'outwardly' are the tools God uses to show His glory and power in our lives 'inwardly.' This is more of what Brian talked about last week.

The world takes its toll. Our bodies age, we experience heartache and pain, we suffer, we're injured or sick, and we experience the effects of sin. We may be saved, but we're not immune to these things. We still live here as Christ's ambassadors. That's Paul's point. Outwardly, we're fading; wasting away. But even as that happens, as new creations in Christ, the Holy Spirit is renewing us inwardly each day. The Spirit supports and sustains us. The Spirit gives us strength when we don't think we have it. The Spirit uses us in our earthly weakness to showcase His strength. It's everything Brian was talking about last week!

Sometimes, the pains can be overwhelming: grief, sadness, another day of struggle, conflicts with loved ones, financial worries, health concerns, and the list goes on. The weight of these things can seem unbearable. In chapter 1, Paul wrote about how they were under so much pressure that they thought they were going to die! Ever felt that way? Like the pain, the pressure, the weight of it all was going to crush you? Been there! And Paul says, 'compared to the weight of glory that awaits you when you're face to face with Jesus, these troubles are miniscule and momentary.' And every single struggle is an opportunity to trust the Spirit to continue growing and shaping you. And when you step into eternity and see Jesus, the struggle won't matter. How you *handled* the struggle will matter—we'll talk more about that in a few minutes—but you'll be so overwhelmed by the glory of God that your painful history won't be on your mind.

Seen/Unseen (v 18)

We have so much to look forward to. Like Christ's return, resurrected/ glorified bodies, a new heaven and new earth, eternity in the presence of God, and so much more. Paul says we need to focus on those eternal, currently unseen things. The things we see right now, the earthly issues; pain, sin, suffering,—those are going to go away—they're temporary. They may seem like that's all there is, because they're constantly in your face. The temporary things are constantly grabbing your attention. So we've got to be intentional about where we place our focus.

If you're being renewed each day by the Holy Spirit, you *know* that there's more than what you're experiencing right now. His very presence in your life confirms that. Yes, today might be tough. You may have gone through seasons or years of struggle and I'm so sorry about that. But, if you're a Christian, that's not where it ends for you. You have an unseen, glorious eternity awaiting you. And as you go through your days, keep clinging to Jesus, allowing His Spirit to shape and grow you inwardly and to use you for His glory to point people to Jesus, even as the world tries to chip away at you outwardly. That's why you're still here! God wants to work in you to use your life, your story, your situation, to reach others with the Good News of Jesus. And that brings Him glory.

Be honest. Do you focus on the temporary or the eternal? Is all your attention devoted to this life, here and now? Or do you have the end in view? It's only with the end in view that this life makes any sense. That's what Paul's talking about in all of chapter 4.

Take a look now at chapter 5, verses 1-5. It's a continuation of verse 18...
[READ 5:1-5]

"¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

5 ¹For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.

⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

Confidence (5:1-5)

This whole section emphasizes Paul's certainty of the resurrection and the life to come. As Christ followers, when these tents wear out, when these bodies die, we have resurrected, glorified bodies to look forward to. And we can't wait for that. I know some of you are young and the thought of dying is overwhelming, especially since your bodies still function properly. But for the older folks listening, a resurrected, glorified body sounds amazing! And they will be.

You may remember what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality."

When the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with resurrected bodies. And, if we're still alive at the time, then our bodies will be miraculously changed—being given imperishable, eternal, glorified bodies—in an instant. Just so you know, "The glorified body is not a different body, but a different form of the same body."² We know that Jesus, "...will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). So Jesus' resurrected body is the model for ours. We know that our resurrected/glorified bodies will never die—they are imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:42). Our bodies will be capable of reflecting the glory of God (1 Corinthians 15:43). We will walk and talk. Eating is definitely

² Oden, Thomas, *Life in the Spirit: Systematic Theology, Vol 3*. (Prince Press, Peabody, 1998), 402.

an option (the resurrected Jesus ate! (Luke 24)). Our memories will be intact. There will be continuity between the old you and the new you.

What will our resurrected/glorified bodies be like?

We know our resurrected/glorified bodies will be like Christ's and that they'll no longer be subject to sin or its curse, but what will they be like? Well, if you are wearing glasses or contacts today, you won't need them. If you need help with your hearing, you won't need that. Are you uncomfortable just sitting today? Never again! No more pain for you. Resurrected bodies won't suffer from Muscular Dystrophy, Cystic Fibrosis or Multiple Sclerosis. There will be no cancer or chronic issues. No canes or wheelchairs will be needed. No orthopedic shoes or inserts. No backaches or arthritis. No Parkinson's or Alzheimer's. No longer will you suffer from heartburn, poor circulation or high blood pressure. Whatever afflicts you now, won't be an issue in your resurrected body. You will hear, see, think, move, smell, taste, and breathe flawlessly. You will be, in every sense of the word, glorified. As a Christian, that's what you have to look forward to. When your tent wears out, you have a heavenly dwelling to look forward to.

Paul says we long, we ache, we yearn to have our new bodies and the new life that goes with it. Until then, we ache for other, outward, wasting away, reasons. He talks about not being naked or unclothed. Most scholars believe that Paul is talking about the status of our spirit or soul after it's left our body but before we get our resurrected body. They call it the intermediate state [: the time between death and resurrection]. If this sounds new to you, don't freak out! It's not something we talk about very often.

For the Christ follower, when your body dies, your spirit goes to be with the Lord. We'll talk more about that in verses 6-8. Until Christ returns and the trumpet sounds, resurrection of the believer hasn't happened. So, your original body has died, you don't yet have your resurrected body, and Paul calls that being naked or unclothed. Some scholars believe that our spirit remains 'unclothed' until the resurrection. Others believe that, in

some way, God gives us some sort of physical form while we wait for our resurrection bodies. The truth is: we don't know. But we don't have to worry about it because we can trust God to take good care of us.³

Paul prefers to avoid being unclothed and go straight to his new, heavenly dwelling. I think he was hoping to be alive when Christ returned so he could be glorified and skip the death piece altogether.

And all this longing, this yearning for the resurrection was brought about by God since He's the one "who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." It is because of the presence of the Spirit in our lives, loving, freeing, working, growing, and empowering us that causes us to [that we] long for what is to come. We have been given small samples of the glory that awaits us and we're longing for more. That's how they get you at Costco: they give you a sample and you can't wait to have more! "God prepares his people for the future by giving them a longing for it. And he does this by granting them his Spirit as a downpayment of his presence."⁴ Think about those sweet moments you have with the Lord, when you sense His presence deeply, you can hear Him clearly (even if it's not audible), you're convinced of His love and your heart longs to honor Him in every way. That's just a sample of the good stuff that's still to come. It's just a nibble. It's just a little, tiny taste. And God guarantees that the rest is still to come.

One goal (5:6-10)

In light of all this, Paul reminds the Corinthians that just because life in this world is all you can see, doesn't mean that *this* life is all there is. Take a look at verses 6-10 with me. [READ 5:6-10]

"Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body

³ If you'd like to read more about resurrected bodies and Heaven, check out Randy Alcorn's book by the same name, *Heaven*.

⁴ Hafemann, Scott J. *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Corinthians* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2000), 214

and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

Paul lived confidently knowing that even as he lived in his earthly tent, at home in the body, outwardly wasting away, it was all temporary. That's what kept him going. He knew that believers in Christ were in one of two places: heaven or earth. At home in the body meant he was on earth. At home with the Lord meant he was in heaven. Because of this confidence, suffering, trials or danger didn't throw him. He wasn't irresponsible with his life, but he was absolutely willing to lay it down for Christ and the Gospel because he longed for what awaited him. Paul kept the end in view, focusing "not on present but on future conditions, not on the seen but the unseen."⁵ Living by faith and not by sight isn't about believing the unbelievable. It's about living your whole life [means] trusting in God's promises for the future, even when you can't yet see them.

Given the choice, Paul favored being with the Lord because it's indescribably better than being here. But, until it was his time to depart the body and be present with the Lord, Paul was going to do all that Christ had called him to. He was going to be obedient, day by day, to the leading of the Spirit right up to when the Lord called him home. Paul's goal was to please God—whether on earth or in heaven. Stop right there. Is your goal to please God and walk in obedience with Him? If I'm honest, sometimes I can say 'yes,' to that. But, other times, my focus is off—I'm too busy looking at the here and now and not living with the end in view. It's easy to be distracted, friends. There's so many things in our lives that can draw our attention away. Good things, too! Like your spouse, kids/ grandkids, job, education, friends, hobbies. There's nothing wrong with any of them. They're wonderful gifts and we should enjoy them. But when we become preoccupied with them and our focus shifts from the unseen

⁵ Lowery, D. K. (1985). [2 Corinthians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 566). Victor Books.

to the seen, from having the end in view to the here and now, that becomes a problem.

It might be even easier to be distracted when things in this world beat against us, wounding us and making us weary. When health fails, or relationships are on the rocks. When finances are a constant struggle. When loved ones die and in your grief all you can think about is your heartache. There are so many things in this world that will draw your eyes away from the unseen. Paul knows the struggle.

“Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.”

—2 Corinthians 11:25-27

Paul gets it. But even as he endured those sufferings, he did so with the end in view. This world isn't all there is, and he knew it. And, if trials and hardships are what God wanted to use to demonstrate His power in Paul so he could preach the Gospel, Paul was good with that. He [Paul] was more concerned about being obedient to and glorifying God than securing his own comfort because he knew that one day, the weight of the burdens he was carrying would feel like feathers compared to the weight of the glory awaiting him when he saw Jesus face to face.

Paul also understood that he, along with every other Christian, would stand before Jesus to account for how he lived while on the earth/in the body. He wanted to make sure when he stood before the judgment seat of Christ that his life brought nothing but honor and glory to Jesus. Even while he suffered, he had the end in view. Yes, this world beat him but

Jesus was going to embrace him. Yes, he experienced countless dangers, but he was safe in Jesus' presence. Sure, he faced hunger and thirst, but in the presence of Jesus every need would be met. It's so easy to think that this is all there is, especially when the whole world wants you to focus on this life. But there's so much more awaiting you! Are you ready for it? Are you, actively, intentionally, preparing for it? Are you ready to stand before Jesus and be judged? Most Christians rarely, if ever, think about that—let alone plan for it! It seems "[t]he only long-term future our culture conceives to be important enough to plan for consistently is retirement."⁶ That's a perfect example of thinking that *this* is all there is. *All my planning, everything I'm looking forward to, is aimed at my retirement.* There's nothing wrong with a retirement plan, but if that's where it ends, talk about shortsighted! You've got eternity in front of you! What's your plan?

Paul makes it clear in verse 10 that we're all going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and receive what we have coming for the things we've done while we were here. How's that feel? [Pause] Maybe this will help you breathe a little more freely.

Judgment Time

At some point *after* our resurrection we will stand before God to account for how we have lived, loved and served while on the Earth. This is called the Bema Seat Judgment or the Judgment Seat of Christ. The *bema seat* "...was the platform in Greek towns where orations were made or decisions handed down by rulers (see Matt. 27:19; Acts 12:21; 18:12). It was also the place where the awards were given out to the winners in the annual Olympic Games. This 'judgment seat' must not be confused with the Great White Throne from which Christ will judge the wicked (Rev. 20:11-15). Because of the gracious work of Christ on the cross, believers will not face their sins (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1); but we will have to give an account of our works and service for the Lord."⁷ That's what Paul is talking about. So, this

⁶ Hafemann, 198.

⁷ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 646–647). Victor Books.

judgment isn't to determine your salvation, but [is] to reward you for how you lived for Christ while on Earth (5:10).

It looks like some Christians won't receive any rewards at this judgment at all...though they will still inherit the Kingdom and spend eternity with Christ.

Check out 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 "...their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames."

They will be saved because of their faith in Jesus, but they will suffer loss because the things they did in life were done for more their own glory instead of God's. The things they did in life were done with the wrong motive or they were done in their own strength rather than in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

In other words, God will reward us based more on the unseen than the seen. That makes sense because the Bible says that man judges things based on outward appearance but God judges based on the genuineness of heart. God cares about the inward motivation. Jesus was constantly coming after the Pharisees because they looked good on the outside, but they were corrupt on the inside. When Jesus commended someone giving money at the temple, he praised them not on the outward amount, but on motive of heart. "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Friends, when it comes to pleasing God, it's all about the heart. It's not about looking good on the outside; it's about the heart. You can go through all the right *motions* and do all the right *things*, but if, deep down in your heart you are disconnected from Jesus, all the STUFF you do means nothing. You'll be saved...but you will suffer loss because of missed opportunities.

I know we don't serve Jesus for rewards in Heaven, but out of gratitude for all He is and all He's done. It would be more than enough for us to just be in His presence for eternity—but Jesus doesn't stop there. He rewards us for our faithfulness.⁸ That ought to make us stop and think about how we live each day.

Wrap

The goal of this life isn't about gathering toys, getting money, or staying comfortable; it's about pleasing God. Each day is a new opportunity to lean into the Spirit and invite Him to fill & empower you as you seek to be faithful as His ambassador to this world. Yes, you'll encounter hardship. Yes, your body is slowly fading. Yes, you'll struggle. And every time God shows up to meet you in your weakness, you'll experience a little taste of what is yet to come. *This* is not all there is. This can be good. But what's coming will blow your mind! So plan accordingly. Invest your time, talent and treasure wisely because, one day you're going to stand before Jesus and you're going to be rewarded for how you've let Him work in you while you were here. Keep leaning into Him. Keep trusting Him moment by moment. And keep the end in view.

⁸ For more on the rewards given to the faithful, see: Matthew 6:19-21; 19:21; Luke 12:33; 19:17, 19; 1 Timothy 6:19; Revelation 2:26-28