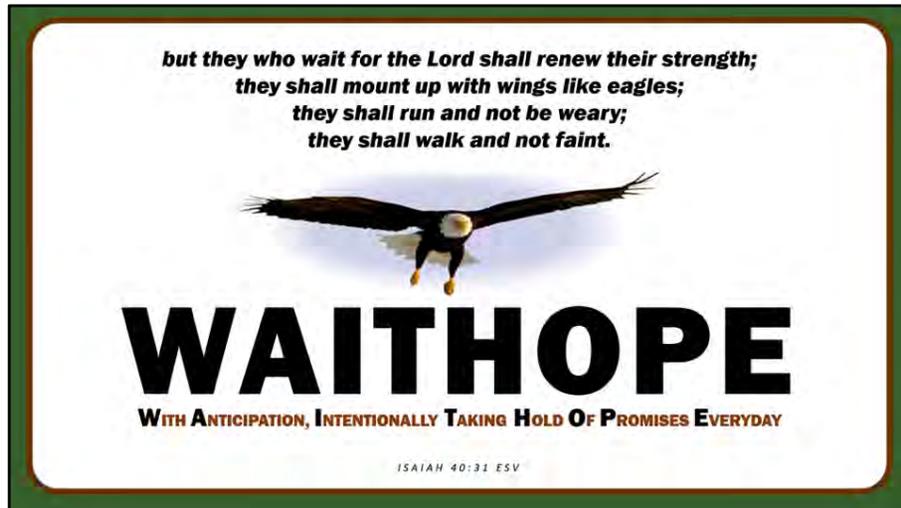




(Theme Slide)



I came up with a new word this week . . . **WAITHOPE.**

-- As I pondered how we could remember that waiting on the Lord is not just about being patient, but about anticipation . . .

-- . . . I came up with this acrostic.

-- It was inspired when Pastor Trevor told me the NIV translates it **HOPE**. I then checked some other versions and found **TRUST**.

-- The closest to the original is probably **WAIT**, but at least I need help to **NOT** see that as just drumming my fingers or swiping my phone's screen.

-- **WAITHOPE** is . . . **With Anticipation, Intentionally Taking Hold of Promises Everyday.**

-- If we do the Lord will renew our strength.

TR: Our study for the month is about powerful passages for people in pain.



I cannot imagine the pain and afflictions that faced the people shoved into concentration camps.

-- I know my uncle who was sent to one was never the same, or so my dad told me.

-- I've wondered why some survived and others did not.

-- This is not a question of being sent to the gas chambers, but losing the heart to live.

-- I've sat in the hospital and by the bedsides of folks facing such afflictions that they despair of life. What do we say to them? It may not be a concentration camp, but . . .

TR: I remember sitting with Carol Carlson, along with her daughter and Kathy. I read this passage to her and she said she found great comfort in it. You see, the cancer had come back.

She have fought it into remission several times . . . not telling many others of the battle . . . though she allowed me to find a woman of God to be her confidant. This time, there would be no so-called “winning.”

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

ESV

Imagine your body and strength are wasting away, and a pastor or elder or perhaps your small group leader is sitting by you and they ask if they can read from God's Word.

-- READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 18

2 Corinthians 4:18 p.1068

as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

ESV

5

READ SLIDE

TR: Chapter 5

2 Corinthians 5:1-3

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.

*ESV***READ SLIDE****TR: Verse 4**

2 Corinthians 5:4-5

For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.
⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

ESV

READ SLIDE**TR: Verse 6**

2 Corinthians 5:6-8

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 9

2 Corinthians 5:9-10

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- This is the passage I used at Dean Garrison's funeral.

TR: Why is this such a powerful passage for a person in pain? Like Carol? What does it teach us about afflictions that helps us to not lose heart?

AFFLICTIONS

God allows them

The first thing we cannot miss is that God allows afflictions, even for Christians, even for faithful, sacrificial apostles.

TR: We just read in God's Word, honest statements that capture the sufferings we may face, especially at the end of life.

God allows afflictions

11

- *Our outer self wastes away (4:16)*

Paul wasn't at the end of his life, but he certainly understood that . . . READ SLIDE

-- In a sense, we all have chronic wasting disease . . . we marvel when there are athletes who extend their careers, because there are so few of them.

TR: As Paul thought about his outer self, he likened it to a tent.

 God allows afflictions

- *Our outer self wastes away (4:16)*
- *In this tent we groan, longing . . . (5:2)*

This tent-maker said . . . READ SLIDE

TR: And then in verse 3, he uses another word to describe our afflictions.

 **God allows afflictions**

- *Our outer self wastes away (4:16)*
- *In this tent we groan, longing . . . (5:2)*
- *We groan, being burdened (5:3)*

READ SLIDE

TR: Afflictions are real. And the harsh reality is that God allows them.

God allows afflictions

- *Our outer self wastes away (4:16)*
- *In this tent we groan, longing . . . (5:2)*
- *We groan, being burdened (5:3)*

They devastate our bodies . . . wasting, groaning, longing, being burdened.

TR: Paul helps us as believers be honest with our pain, when a few chapters earlier he wrote . . .

2 Corinthians 1:8-9

For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. **For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.** ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Perhaps your pain or the pain of someone you love isn't physical or even terminal, but they honestly feel "utterly burdened beyond their strength."

-- I think Paul understood the temptation to just want to end his life . . . he "despaired of life itself."

-- As Christians, we must have a faith that is strong enough to face even afflictions . . . when we are "burdened beyond."

-- The always happy Christian isn't the model for us.

TR: God allows afflictions and that feels so heavy at times. But, hope is strengthened by the promise that our Lord . . .

AFFLICTIONS

- God allows them
- **God doesn't waste them**
-
-

... doesn't waste them.

TR: The afflictions we face are not ...



. . . merely the busywork of digging a hole to fill a hole.

TR: From ditch-diggers to medical doctors, we all know the frustration of doing stuff that doesn't matter . . . or at least feels like it doesn't.



Steven Artley's cartoon may resonant with some in the medical fields:

-- "Doctor! You've been at it for hours on end without a break! You can't go on like this!!"

-- "Almost finished . . . OKAY . . . now with the insurance forms and government paperwork completed, I can attend to the patient."

-- For many of us, the afflictions feel like something we just want to skip.

-- They are burdens without blessing.

-- They feel like forms that we keep having to fill out, even if we just filled them out.

TR: But this powerful passage for those in pain makes clear

that God doesn't waste afflictions. Rather . . .

 **God doesn't waste afflictions**

- *They are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory (4:17)*

... READ SLIDE

- People sometimes say that they could do a better job than God at being God.
- They imagine that the best scenario would be to make humans who could not sin, who had no choice.
- That way the effects of sin, including sickness and death, would be avoided.
- In a sense, we would be born in heaven.

TR: But, our all-wise God, Who doesn't waste afflictions, has deemed that something else is BEST. He only does what is BEST. As I've repeated again and again . . .

This is
the best world
to get us ready for
THE BEST WORLD.

READ SLIDE

-- As we just read from 2 Cor 1: "But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead."

-- Without choice, we would be robots. Without afflictions, we would rely on ourselves or trust our idols for comfort.

TR: There's a hidden gem in this text, at least one I hadn't noticed before. Not only do afflictions prepared us . . . it is . . .

 God doesn't waste afflictions

- *They are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory (4:17)*
- *God Himself prepares us (5:5)*

... READ SLIDE

TR: Let's just look again at this text ...

2 Corinthians 5:5

He who has prepared us for this very thing **is God**, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Contra the Pointed-hair Boss in Dilbert, who is usually clueless and unconcerned about his employees . . .
- . . . God doesn't just submit us to a cold, mechanistic experience of afflictions . . . He HIMSELF prepares us.
- For the believer, we know God has given us the Spirit . . . so we have **THE RESOURCE** to become prepared and not perturbed.

TR: Afflictions . . . God allows them, He doesn't waste them, and . . .

AFFLICTIONS

- God allows them
- God doesn't waste them
- God promises "far better" than them
-

... READ SLIDE

-- The afflictions are not the end. They are not the destiny. They are not the terminal point.

TR: I describe the promises as "far better" borrowing from another of Paul's letters . . . one I used at Harry Brennan's funeral.

Philippians 1:22-23

If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is **far better**.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: The promises of God are FAR BETTER . . . MUCH BETTER . . . EXCEEDINGLY BETTER . . . because they are about being with Christ face to face.

God promises “far better”
than afflictions

- *Inner self is renewed day by day*
(4:16)

In 2 Corinthians 4-5 we read that . . . READ SLIDE
-- the outer self may be wasting away, but there is nothing that can prevent the inner self from being renewed.
-- His promises are not just for THEN, but also for NOW . . . in the midst of the afflictions.

TR: But His promises of THEN do impact how we look at our NOWS. What does God promise?

 God promises “far better”
than afflictions

- *Inner self is renewed day by day (4:16)*
- *An eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison versus “light momentary affliction” (4:17)*

He promises the very weight . . . READ SLIDE

-- Paul is not minimizing the afflictions . . . remember, in chapter 1 he despaired of life itself.

-- He is saying . . . compared to what is coming in glory . . . they are light and momentary.

-- They may feel heavy, causing us to groan under the burden . . .

**.
-- They may feel like they will never let up, that the darkness will never lift, that relief will never come.**

-- But, when compare with the glory . . . the eternal, not momentary glory . . . the weight of glory . . . then they are as almost nothing.

TR: God’s ultimate promises are not about what we see now but about . . .

↳ God promises “far better”
than afflictions

- *Inner self is renewed day by day (4:16)*
- *An eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison versus “light momentary affliction” (4:17)*
- *Unseen things that are eternal (4:18)*

... READ SLIDE

-- What we see is transient. But, what we can NOW only behold by the eyes of faith, are those things that are eternal.

TR: Far better includes ...

 God promises “far better”
than afflictions CONTINUED

- *We will have an eternal “house,” our resurrection bodies (5:1)*

... our ... **READ SLIDE**

-- Instead of the “tent” of this current body, we will have something that will last forever.

-- Tents are temporary structures. EX: pulling out a tent a few years ago and finding it “rotted” by the sunshine.

-- Our resurrection body will never waste away.

TR: From this powerful passage we realize that ...

 God promises “far better”
than afflictions CONTINUED

- *We will have an eternal “house,” our resurrection bodies (5:1)*
- *What is mortal will be swallowed up by life (5:4)*

. . . READ SLIDE

TR: And God, Who Himself is preparing us for this experience of eternal life with Him, has ministered to our frailty by . . .

God promises “far better”
than afflictions CONTINUED

- *God has given us the Spirit as a guarantee of His promises (5:5)*

... READ SLIDE

-- I cannot imagine living under the Old Covenant, when the Spirit only ministered to a select few.

-- How amazing that we live in the era of the Spirit, each one of us who have come to Christ have been baptized in the Spirit, as 1 Corinthians 12 tells us.

-- God’s presence with us, in the person of the Holy Spirit, is the down payment, the security deposit, the guarantee of all that is yet to come.

-- His future promises, as well as the ones for today, are what we take hold of.

TR: But, as great as the Spirit’s presence with us is, there is more ... far more ... far better ...

↳ God promises “far better”
than afflictions CONTINUED

- *God has given us the Spirit as a guarantee of His promises (5:5)*
- *We have the presence of the Spirit now, but then we will be “at home,” PRESENT with the Lord (5:6-8)*

. . . because THEN we will be AT HOME . . . PRESENT with the Lord in a way that makes what we have now feel like a passing introduction made in the hallway.

-- I’m not minimizing the power of the Spirit at work in our lives now . . . just comparing it to the full inheritance that we will someday receive.

TR: Too few of us have pondered heaven enough, the eternal state, because we can’t say with Paul . . .

➤ God promises “far better”
than afflictions CONTINUED

- *God has given us the Spirit as a guarantee of His promises (5:5)*
- *We have the presence of the Spirit now, but then we will be “at home,” PRESENT with the Lord (5:6-8)*
- *We would rather be “at home” (5:8)*

... that ... **READ SLIDE**

-- For the believer, everything good we have experienced here is only a foretaste, an appetizer, preparing us for the full meal of God’s richest blessings.

TR: Afflictions: God allows them, but He doesn’t waste them. And in the midst of them He provides His great and precious promises. But, for Carol, and for others who face these afflictions today, there is an important action step that God calls them to through the apostle.

AFFLICTIONS

- God allows them
- God doesn't waste them
- God promises "far better" than them
- **God expects faith and faithfulness through them**

Even in the midst of overwhelming afflictions . . . READ SLIDE
-- Sometimes we imagine that the only thing a believer needs to hear at the end of their lives are the promises of God.
-- BUT, in reality they need to be challenged to INTENTIONALLY TAKE HOLD OF the PROMISES EVERYDAY.
-- They need to be reminded that they must keep running the race. They must finish their course with faith and faithfulness.

TR: Because of the promises, and because we know God is using the afflictions to prepare us for glory, we must receive this challenge by faith and so . . .

 God expects faith and
faithfulness through afflictions

- *So we do not lose heart. (4:16)*

... READ SLIDE

**TR: If we are to live like those who are more than conquerors,
we must ...**

↳ God expects faith and
faithfulness through afflictions

- *So we do not lose heart. (4:16)*
- *We look not to the transient things
seen, but to the eternal unseen.
(4:18)*

. . . READ SLIDE

-- We've been told that there are eternal unseen things, that the mortal will be swallowed up by life . . .
-- BUT, we also need to **ACTIVELY** choose to **LOOK** in the right places at the right things.

TR: This challenge, to be people of faith, is to be seen in our longings . . .

God expects faith and
faithfulness through afflictions
CONTINUED

- *We long for our eternal dwelling,
not just the intermediate state (5:2-4)*

READ SLIDE

- A person of faith **CHOOSES** to **LONG** for what is coming when Jesus comes again.
- God expects us to focus on His promises and not our pain.

- But our longing is not just for the intermediate state, as theologians call it.
- TR: Verse 3 speaks of this as being “naked.” Verse 4 says . . .

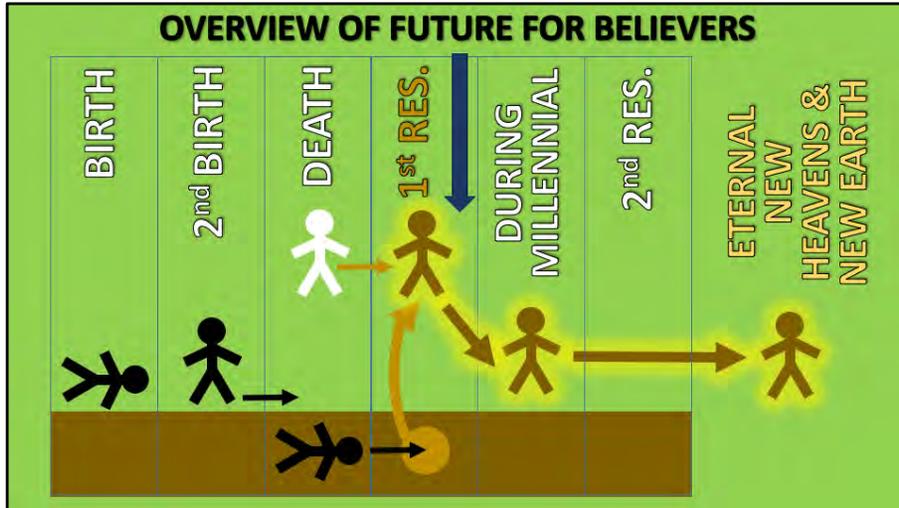
2 Corinthians 5:4

For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be **unclothed**, but that we would be **further clothed**, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

ESV

READ SLIDE

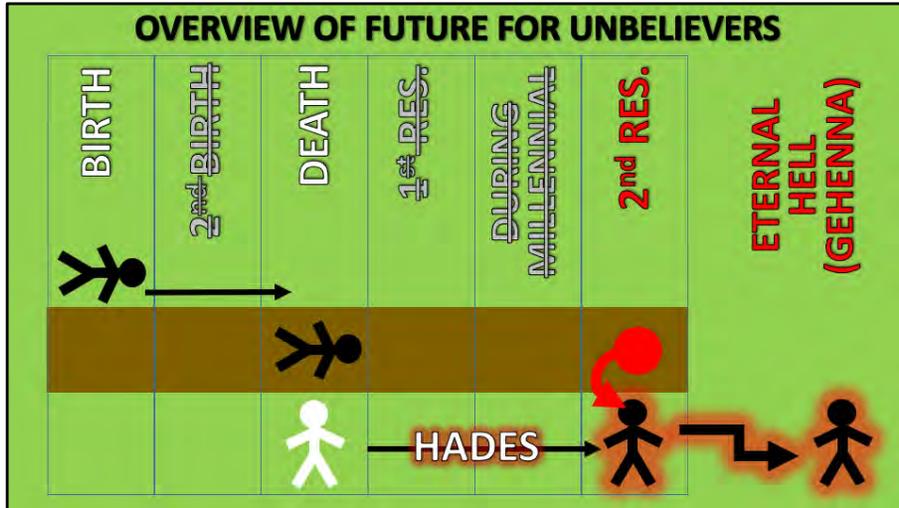
TR: Maybe a picture would help.



While not all the details are included in this graphic I made, it does capture some important truths.

-- REVIEW SLIDE

TR: There is another picture that is not hopeful at all.



REVIEW SLIDE

- Note Insert in FF: Questions at a Funeral of a Believer
- At the moment a believer dies they are away from the body and at home with the Lord.
- BUT, that doesn't mean we won't still be taking hold of God's promises then . . . the promise of not being naked, unclothed . . . the promise of a forever resurrection body.

TR: So we are to not lose heart, to look to the eternal things, we are to long for our eternal dwelling . . . and we are to be . . .

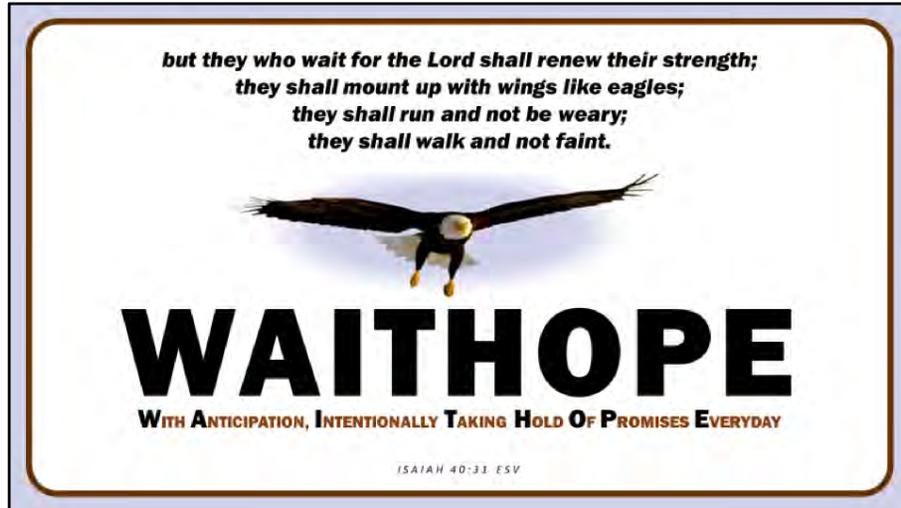
 God expects faith and
faithfulness through afflictions
CONTINUED

- *We long for our eternal dwelling,
not just the intermediate state (5:2-4)*
- *So we are always of good courage
(5:6)*

... OF GOOD COURAGE

- God expects faith: not lose heart, look to eternal things, long for eternal dwelling, to have good courage.
- He clearly expects us to exercise faith, that is TRUST.

TR: But He also expects faithfulness.



**Because when we WAITHOPE . . . with anticipation,
intentionally taking hold of promises everyday . . .**

TR: . . . we . . .

 God expects faith and
faithfulness through afflictions
CONTINUED

- *We always make it our aim to please the Lord (5:9)*

. . . please the Lord.

-- We do NOT decide that we are God, and therefore we are the Lord of our own destiny. Our life does not belong to us.

-- We may reach the point when we despair of life itself, as Paul said in chapter 1, but we still are called to make it our aim to please the Lord.

TR: We make it our aim to please the Lord . . .

 God expects faith and
faithfulness through afflictions
CONTINUED

- *We always make it our aim to please the Lord (5:9)*
- *. . . knowing we must all appear before the judgment seat (5:10)*

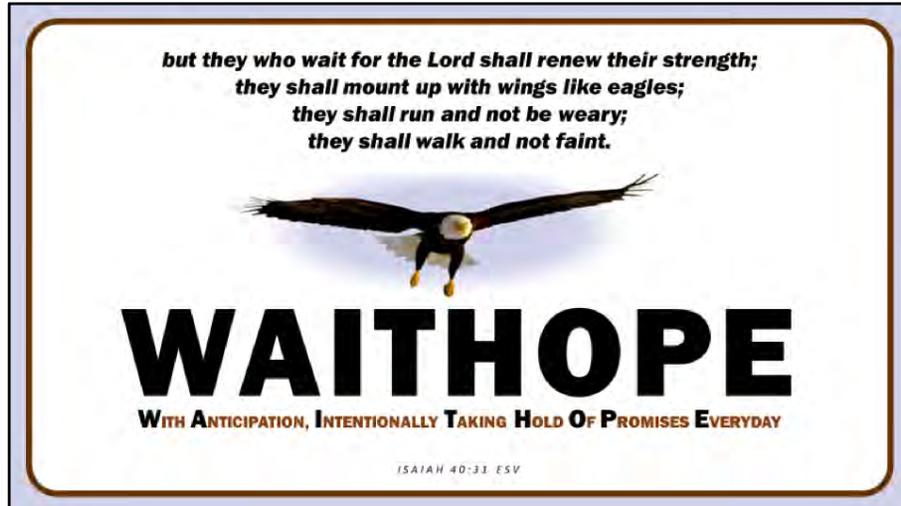
READ SLIDE

- Even Christians will appear before the judgment seat of God.
- Not for our sins, they are covered by Christ's blood.
- Not in order to establish our own righteousness, we are clothed in Christ's righteousness.
- But, to receive reward for what we did and did not do that pleased the Lord.

- Some think it callous to talk to a dying person about facing the judgment seat, especially if they have already trusted Christ.
- But, we all need to be reminded not just of the promises but of our responsibility to take hold of them everyday . . .
- . . . to trust them by faith and then live in light of them in faithfulness.

TR: Afflictions may feel like heavy weights that hold us down, but by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we can

...



... WAITHOPE.

TR: There is a great cloud of witnesses who surround us even now. In the midst of our afflictions, whether the trauma of old age or the often repeated hurtfulness of middle school, God want to remind us . . .

AFFLICTIONS

- God allows them
- God doesn't waste them
- God promises "far better" than them
- God expects faith and faithfulness through them

It is His sovereign hand that allow afflictions . . . and He will not allow you to be tried beyond what you are able to bear.

-- It is His gracious hand that makes sure that none of our afflictions are busy work. He HIMSELF uses them to prepare us for a weight of glory.

-- It is His generous hand that gives us great and precious promises, for now and for then.

-- It is His clapping hand of encouragement that calls us to make it home full of faith and faithfulness.

TR: It may not be a concentration camp, but how we face our days filled with affliction, depends on what we put on . . .



. . . our scales.

-- If we only put our afflictions on the one side, we will be weighted down with despair.

-- But, if we put the eternal weight of glory, the full weight of God's substantial promises, for NOW and THEN, on the other side . . . then we will not lose heart, we will be of good courage. We will finish the race. We will please our Lord and Savior.