

Monday, MAY 3, 2010

An Eternal Perspective.

As I type these words, I pause to consider what each of you will be thinking as you read them.

What is an eternal perspective and is it possible that having one could dramatically change each of our lives?

Paul says, **“Yes!”** in the passage we will look at together this week.

Could I ask that you please read 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10?

If you are like me, one of the first phrases to jump out is light and momentary troubles. Think about the troubles in your life. Do they seem light and momentary? This life is not easy. Many of you are in situations that do not seem all that light, and many of you are in situations that have been going on for years—could that really be momentary? The answer to that is yes, if you have an accurate perspective of life.

In this passage, Paul is writing to the church at Corinth. This is a major city that is a melting pot of people. Because of its location, Corinth attracted all different cultures and religious thoughts. There were many temples and many different types of worship. Corinth was also a place where you could “get ahead” in the world, and that is why a lot of the people went there. Success, fame, comfort, respect, pleasure, instant gratification, social status, and display of wealth were just a few of the things that identified the city.

As I read and study the history of Corinth and consider how it was formed and what it stood for, I cannot help but think of Walworth County. We live in an area where people come for pleasure. As those people have come for pleasure, they have brought their influence as well. It has affected our culture and our thought process.

Pleasure has become a god that we worship.

The problem is that pleasure is very fleeting and temporary. It has caused our focus to shift. It has negatively affected our perspective.

Could I ask you to spend some time today asking yourself how your pursuit of temporary pleasure has affected your eternal perspective? Paul calls that fixing your eyes on what is seen as opposed to what is unseen. It is not healthy.

Family Discussion Question: In what ways do temporary desires control my thought process?

Tuesday, MAY 4, 2010

Please read again 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10.

Paul is writing this part of the letter to explain to the church in Corinth what it is that motivates him to be so focused on his ministry. They cannot understand why he is not more flamboyant and why he does not demand to be compensated highly for what he does. He also does not appear to be special.

In the time when Paul was writing this letter, speakers and orators would travel and make their living by presenting eloquent speeches and arguments that would persuade people to believe a certain thing. They did this to make a living. The more impressive one of these people looked and acted, the more credibility they were given, and the more likely people were to follow the teaching—and donate to the cause. Status was given to those who knew these speakers.

For the Corinthians, Paul and his message presented quite a quandary. His message was more moving and persuasive than any they had ever heard, but the presenter was not impressive. If you read 1 Cor. 2:1-5, you will see how Paul presented this gospel to them—weakness and fear, with trembling. Does that sound like an impressive presentation? Yet, because the power of God is in the gospel message, the Corinthians believed. Then Paul needed to move on, and others came who made it sound like the message they had received from Paul could not be trusted. They did so with fine speech and all the expected frills. Paul explains the difference quite clearly in 2 Cor. 11:5-7.

Paul had a clear eternal perspective. That is what he is telling his readers about in this passage. He wants them to see how the message he has shared—and that they have believed - has changed his life. He also would like them to experience that change for themselves as well so they could stop being tossed around by the temporary.

Paul knew trouble more than most people and had every reason to be discouraged (2 Cor. 11:23-33). He wanted the Corinthians to see that an eternal perspective changes the focus. It moves us away from thinking about us and now to God and then. We begin to focus our vision on the things that are unseen. Those are the eternal things that allow us to properly process the temporary things that happen to us and see them as light and momentary.

Family Discussion Question: In what ways can I fix my eyes on what is unseen?

Wednesday, MAY 5, 2010

We will stay in our text of 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10 today.

There is a very unfortunate chapter break that occurs in this text. It is amazing how chapter breaks can cause us to lose our train of thought. In my Bible chapter 4 ends on one page and then I need to turn the page to get to chapter 5, but in the original letter that Paul wrote there was no break here. As a matter of fact Paul is explaining throughout this passage why we should not lose heart (verse 16).

This thought of our present body being a tent carries on the thought of seen and unseen. We are looking forward to an eternal glory (verse 17, see also Romans 8:18-25) that our earthly sufferings achieve for us. Part of that eternal glory is a heavenly dwelling that we cannot see for this eternal soul. We long for that. God has placed eternity in every heart (Ecc. 3:11) but not everyone is looking forward to a heavenly dwelling. Paul is writing to those who are Christ followers. At the end of the letter he challenges people to make sure they are (13:5). In the first part of Chapter 4, Paul speaks of how we carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed (verse 10). This only applies to those who belong to Christ. Later in 5:17, he makes it clear he is speaking to true followers of Christ.

Those who do not know Christ are not looking forward to a heavenly dwelling. They are looking forward to forever existing in eternal conscious torment (Isa. 66:24, Mark 9:42-48). This sobering and graphic description should cause us to be very sure we are sharing the gospel. It should also cause each of us to make very sure that we have indeed experienced salvation, because the mortality rate among humans is 100%.

We know that this shell that houses us is temporary and decaying. It becomes apparent as we walk by the mirror. We should care for these “tents”, but we should focus on the transitory nature of them so that our eternal perspective can be maintained. That will cause us to groan, longing for the dwelling we have been created to live in.

I cannot wait until the day that my mortal self is swallowed up by life! What a great way to phrase it. How about you? Are you ready? Are you sure you have an eternal dwelling waiting? If not, take care of that today! Do not put it off.

Family Discussion Question: Am I ready to be swallowed up by life?

Thursday, MAY 6, 2010

"Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose. . ."
2 Cor. 5:5

There is an incredible truth here for anyone who wants to gain a right eternal perspective. As one belonging to Christ, God has made you (prepared you) for the very purpose of being swallowed up by life. He has prepared you to be with Him forever in the eternal dwelling that He has crafted for your soul!

How has he prepared you? He has given you the Spirit as a deposit. This has changed your life. This is how you can know that you belong to Christ and that you have assurance of forever with Him (Rom. 8:9).

Do you ever fail to see the "unseen" force of the abiding Holy Spirit working in your life? He is forming the true believer for heaven by conforming him or her to the Savior. He is preparing us! It is He who is renewing us day by day inwardly (4:16). It is He who gives us the longing to be home—with Christ (5:4, Rom. 8:23). It is He who is given as a guarantee that it will happen (5:5, Eph 1:13-14). It is not our final transformation, but it is the preparation for that final transformation and it allows us to keep focused on the eternal.

You will live forever.

This life matters as a preparation for the next. We will see tomorrow that your decisions here have eternal consequences. You have not been saved here so that you can continue to live however you choose. You are saved here to prove that you do not belong here. You are an alien in this world and you are not to be undercover. You are to have a different perspective and the things you do and who you are should be flowing from that perspective. This is the only way to keep the troubles and trials of this world from overtaking you. You are not your own.

Heaven is not just a destination—it is a motivation. It is a motivation to live a new life empowered by the Spirit who has indwelled you for that very purpose. We do not have to wait for heaven to begin living the life of total trust in Christ. As a matter of fact, it shouldn't even be an option to wait if you are truly in touch with Christ. Let Him prepare you for heaven.

Family Discussion Question: How am I allowing myself to be prepared by God for my eternal dwelling?

Friday, MAY 7, 2010

Having looked pretty closely at this text this week, it causes us to look at 5:7 in a little different light.

We live by faith, not by sight. We fix our eyes on what is unseen and it changes our focus. We move away from the temporary needs of pleasure to the real pleasure of preparing for heaven. Our pleasure comes from reaching the goal of pleasing Him (5:9). We look forward to that day and give ourselves gladly to all that will assure His joy when He says, "Well done".

Verse 10 becomes a warning. But it is a warning that is designed to motivate. I believe there are many who have given their lives to Christ who do not realize that there will be an accounting of choices made while on this earth. You are an eternal being making decisions that have eternal consequences.

Many times we can be deceived into thinking that the choices we make to sin are not that big in the scheme of things. I need to be very firm here. That is a lie from the pit of hell. There is no sin that does not carry an eternal consequence. If nothing else it will be apparent in the scars on our Savior's hands for all eternity. But Paul indicates that we will receive what is due us as well. This is not the final White Throne judgment. This is a special time of accounting for each believer; a time for you and Jesus to review each and every one of your life choices together.

Have you ever thought that you could hide from some of your choices the way Adam did? You cannot (Heb. 4:13).

Paul understood all that he wrote here. It was the motivation of his life. It is why he had the focus he did. It was his eternal perspective that allowed him to consider everything rubbish except for knowing Christ (Phil. 3:7-10), and allowed him to be content in every situation (Phil. 4:12), and allowed him to run the race and finish his course with joy (Acts 20:24 KJV). He focused on the unseen, knowing he would give an account of every choice he had made.

How about you? Are you living as though the temporary is more real than the eternal? Stop! Get your eyes fixed on what is unseen, gain an eternal perspective. **Start living your eternal life and preparing for heaven!**

Family Discussion Question: How does it affect me to know that Jesus and I will review my life?



Pastor Chuck Cervenka

MAY 3 - 7, 2010



THE CALL

HIS PASSION FOR ALL

AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Life in this world can bring fear and confusion. How can confidence in your future existence affect your current situation? The assurance of life to come changes the focus in the life of a true Christ follower -- and allows that person to embrace the real purpose of life.



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