

## 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-18

### WHEN OVER THERE LOOKS BETTER THAN OVER HERE<sup>1</sup>

“We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So, death is at work in us, but life in you.

“Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, ‘I believed, and so I spoke,’ we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

“So, we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 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.”<sup>2</sup>

I committed myself to the ministry of the Word in October, 1970. Almost immediately, I began preaching—at first on street corners and in nursing homes, then in a prison farm and frequently addressing preachers at fellowship meetings where I had been invited to speak. Prior to a serious truck crash some years ago, I was speaking extemporaneously up to five times each week. I have found it necessary to reduce my speaking engagements in recent years due to some loss of physical stamina. Nevertheless, I have continued to preach, even speaking in churches in the States while visiting our families. I’ve been engaged in preaching ministries for almost five decades now. My children cannot remember a time when I was not preaching. I’ve preached in churches that had three people present. I’ve preached to congregations of over 5,000 people. And I’ve preached to multiple congregations between those two extremes.

I am no longer a young man; I know more people who have crossed over than those who remain. I’m walking more slowly than I did fifty years ago. I can see my sun sinking rather swiftly into the western sea. I think often of the fragility of life and the tenuous nature of our existence. I’ve spent considerable time thinking of the brevity of life and how vital it is to accomplish whatever will be done before this life ends.

Frequently, I weigh the words Paul wrote as he sought to instruct a self-centred assembly. These are the words that form the text for this day. This particular message is not intended to be a censure of any person; rather, I intend this message to be a distillation of personal ruminations, to be put into words my private thoughts concerning what lies beyond for us as Christians and to leave a legacy for God’s people, should my days in the flesh not be extended. I want to leave a message that will equip you for continued service until we are reunited before the Throne of the Father and in the presence of the Lamb of God.

---

<sup>1</sup> I am appreciative for the ministry of Rev. Terry K. Anderson. I appropriated the title for this sermon and the concept presented therein, from a sermon that Rev. Anderson preached. That sermon is available on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JA3gvO9z16k>, accessed 14 February 2018

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**WE HAVE THIS TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY** — “We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So, death is at work in us, but life in you” [2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-12].

Two great questions arise from these verses—What is the treasure we possess? And what gives with these “jars of clay?” The questions are natural, but the answers lay the groundwork for the supernatural. The first question that I posed was this: *What is the treasure we possess?* Even a cursory reading of the text makes it obvious that the Apostle is speaking of the Gospel message. God has entrusted to us who are called the message of life; and this message is to be shared with all people.

Think through the various statements of Christ’s charge to the faithful. Levi quotes Jesus as saying to His followers, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” [MATTHEW 28:19, 20].

Mark, writing no doubt at the behest of Peter, cites an instance when Jesus commanded, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” [MARK 16:15, 16].

Doctor Luke, perhaps learning from Mary’s remembrance of her Son’s words, writes, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” [LUKE 24:46-48].

John adds to our understanding of our great task by quoting the Master when He wrote, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” [JOHN 20:21].

Luke again quotes Jesus’ instruction as he opens the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Luke writes, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” [ACTS 1:8].

The Gospel, the message of life in Christ the Lord is the treasure that is entrusted to us as followers of the Son of God. An old story is told of a conversation that occurred after the Saviour returned to His Glory. An angel conversed with the Master after His return, and the angel asked, “Master, did you accomplish what you intended to accomplish?” Jesus replied, “Yes, I gave my life as a sacrifice for sinful man, and then I rose from the tomb.”

“Will people know of all that You have accomplished?” the angel asked. “Yes, I left twelve men in Jerusalem with a charge that they were to carry the message of life into all the world.”

The angel, knowing the frailty of these feeble creatures called humans, was somewhat taken aback. So, he asked the Master, “What if they fail? What plan do you have as a back-up?”

And the Master responded, “I have no back-up. They must succeed.”

We are justified in asking what is the Gospel that looms so large in our responsibility as we follow the Master? In answer to this vital question, the Apostle Paul has written in the Letter to the Church of God in Corinth, “I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared...” [1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-5a].

The Apostle to the Gentiles says that the Gospel, the Good News with which Christians are entrusted, consists of these truths—*Christ died for our sins*, and this was in accordance with the Scriptures; *Christ was buried*; *Christ was raised on the third day*, again in accordance with the Scriptures; *He appeared*. Underscore these truths in your mind. Though acknowledging these truths as the Gospel, it is a sad fact that many Christians are prone to add to what is stated. Unconsciously, well-intentioned followers of the Master conflate the Gospel with Christian living, creating new and novel concepts which are presented as the Gospel.

Don't misunderstand—we should live holy, godly lives. However, the call for us to live holy, godly lives is delivered *because* we are redeemed and not in order to be redeemed. Herein lies the grave danger of conflating the Gospel with Christian living. Many otherwise good people imagine that demanding that those to whom we speak must clean up their lives before they can be saved is the Gospel. Tragically, hell will be filled with nice people who lived what others called “good lives.” However, these lost people were never redeemed; they never believed the Good News of Christ crucified, buried and risen from the dead! Until we make the Risen Lord of Glory Master over our life, we are not saved no matter how nice we may be!

This, then, is the message entrusted to God's holy people, the faithful who serve Him. This Good News should be so thoroughly integrated into our lives that we live out the precepts of the Gospel. When the Great Commission is laid upon the Faithful, it is less a command than it is a reminder that we are to reveal the reality of the transformative power of this Good News. God's will is that His holy people will not only be saved to the praise of Christ' glory, but that these redeemed people will then tell others what God has done through sending His Son into the world to provide a sacrifice for sin. Christians are appointed to be a vocal people, declaring the praise of God to all mankind.

I have mentioned before, multiple studies that reveal the Great Commission is virtually unknown among the professed people of God. Less than half of self-identified evangelicals could identify the Great Commission.<sup>3</sup> For the benefit of all who hear this particular message, the Great Commission is the Lord's command delivered to each Christian. The fullest statement of The Great Commission is Jesus' command recorded in **MATTHEW 28:19, 20**: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Other statements presenting this charge to all who follow the Christ are to be found in **MARK 16:15, 16**; **LUKE 24:46-49**; **JOHN 20:21-23**; and **ACTS 1:8**.

This treasure is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and *we hold this treasure in “jars of clay.”* Looking back, I know that there was a time when I was a strong, vigorous man. These legs carried me through numerous swift rivers and often propelled me up steep mountain slopes. I eagerly traversed treacherous shale slides and walked sharp ridges in order to see the next valley. These arms have restrained heavy pipe allowing men on my fitting crew to avoid being crushed. Those days of great strength have receded into the distant past. I'm certainly no weakling, but I realise that I am not the strong man who has borne the name Stark, reflecting a family's strength.

---

<sup>3</sup> Bob Ditmer, “Ever Heard of the ‘Great Commission’? 51% of Churchgoers Say No,” March 29, 2018, [https://churchleaders.com/news/322375-ever-heard-great-commission-51-churchgoers-say-no.html?utm\\_source=cl-fridayweeklysends-nl&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=text-link&utm\\_campaign=cl-fridayweeklysends-nl20180406&maropost\\_id=742210145&mpweb=256-6480044-742210145](https://churchleaders.com/news/322375-ever-heard-great-commission-51-churchgoers-say-no.html?utm_source=cl-fridayweeklysends-nl&utm_medium=email&utm_content=text-link&utm_campaign=cl-fridayweeklysends-nl20180406&maropost_id=742210145&mpweb=256-6480044-742210145), accessed 6 April 2018

This body that is identified with me is simply *a clay jar*—a cheap, pedestrian jar of clay. How much is your body worth? One study originating at Indiana University suggested that the human body could be worth as much as \$45 million. Well, that value should make us feel good about ourselves! To achieve this figure the authors considered the value of all your bone marrow (\$23 million) and all your DNA (\$1.3 million per gram); you can see how quickly the overall value of the human body grows when worth is approached in this way.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, if the body is sold for the elements composing the body, you would earn one dollar! One dollar! If you sold your skin as hide for tanning, you could bump that value up to a whole five dollars!<sup>5</sup> That should help you feel better about yourself. You are never truly broke!

I have stated on other occasions, and what was said needs to be woven into the warp and woof of life, *we are not bodies that happen to possess a spirit, we are spirits who happen to possess a body*. This body is dying, passing away. The spirit is as vibrant as the day it was made alive in Christ the Lord. You may remember Caleb's bold statement, "I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said" [JOSHUA 14:11, 12]. Well, there are very real physical deficits in these later years, but there is strength I could never have known during an earlier day; and that is true for each of you today! As we grow in the Faith, we become stronger in Christ.

The Apostle has a realistic assessment of what is taking place for the child of God when he writes, "Even if our physical body is wearing away, our inner person is being renewed day by day" [2 CORINTHIANS 4:16 NET BIBLE]. Each follower of the Master should be able to say with confidence that though she may not be perfect, she is moving steadily toward becoming more Christlike in her demeanour and in her worldview. Each child of God should be able to see progress as he continues toward that day when each of us shall at last be perfected in Christ.

Listen, we will experience some difficulties because we are Christians. We are subject to problems because we share the human condition. Week-by-week, I look into the faces of people who know what it is to experience trials. The Apostle understood something about tough times. Paul wrote, "This priceless treasure we hold, so to speak, in a common earthenware jar—to show that the splendid power of it belongs to God and not to us. We are handicapped on all sides, but we are never frustrated; we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone: we may be knocked down, but we are never knocked out! Every day we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus, so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. Yes, we who are living are always being exposed to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be plainly seen in our mortal lives. We are always facing death, but this means that you know more and more of life. Our faith is like that mentioned in the scripture: 'I believed and therefore I spoke'" [2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-13 PHILLIPS].

It's the truth—"handicapped on all sides, but never frustrated;" "puzzled, but never in despair;" "persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone." And I really enjoy this statement—"knocked down, but never knocked out!" You have something to shout about—God has been with you and you have weathered every pressure. God stands with you! And He is in you!

<sup>4</sup> Miranda Marquit, "How Much Are Your Body Parts Really Worth?" BudgetLife, <http://www.budgetlife.com/blog/body-parts-worth/> accessed 11 April 2018

<sup>5</sup> Anne Marie Helmenstine, Ph.D., "How Much Are the Elements in Your Body Worth?" ThoughtCo., <https://www.thoughtco.com/worth-of-your-elements-3976054>, accessed 11 April 2018

I'm glad that I'm weak. I don't say that I enjoy my weakness—the aches, the pains, the loss of vigor, failing eyesight and the multiple deficits that are part of growing older, but I rejoice in the knowledge that because I recognise my weakness, my strong Deliverer supplies what I am lacking. The Apostle declared to these Corinthian Christians in an earlier letter, “I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” [1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5]. He didn't want their faith to rest in his ability; rather, he wanted their faith to be centred in God! And that is my desire for you!

The Apostle had what he called a “thorn in the flesh,” it was a “messenger of Satan.” Whatever that problem in his flesh may have been, it left him in a weakened state. Naturally, he pleaded with God for relief. We have to be humbled by the answer that Paul received. Christ said to His Apostle, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” [2 CORINTHIANS 12:9a]. How should a mature saint respond to such a gentle rebuke from the Lord Christ? This is Paul's response. “I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me” [2 CORINTHIANS 12:9b]. Let me have Christ's power, and I will accept the deficits, the weaknesses, the losses, if only He is glorified.

**WE BELIEVE, AND SO WE SPEAK** — “Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, ‘I believed, and so I spoke,’ we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God” [2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-15].

Believing causes transformation. Whenever someone claims to have believed, but has experienced no change in his lifestyle, you have every reason to question the reality of what took place. People who continue to live as though nothing has happened, people who say they are saved but have no love for God or for His people, should be viewed with serious caution by saints. I well remember a man when we ministered in the City on the Bay in California. His wife and two precious little girls attended the services of our church. I noticed that the wife was always dressed rather poorly, and the girls were clearly dressed in old clothes. Moreover, the girls, though precious and gracious, eagerly accepted a sandwich or some other food stuff following the services. They were hungry!

One day the wife asked if I would make a visit to her husband, telling him of the Saviour and inviting him to believe. Of course, I was happy to make that visit. So, I called another member and we went to the house one evening. When we were invited in, I noticed that the house was almost bare, there was very little furniture. The husband was sitting in the kitchen and his wife and two daughters were standing against a wall. He was drinking a beer; it was obvious that it was not his first. He opened an old fridge and said, “Preacher, would you like a beer?” The shelves were almost bare of food, but there were several cases of beer in the fridge.

I was sad for the wife and the girls, but I was quite agitated at this man who didn't accept his responsibility as a husband and a father to care for his family. I said, “I'm here to speak with you about Christ as Saviour of your life.”

“Well, how 'bout that!” he exclaimed. “I'm a Christian too. I really love Jesus!”

“Do you ever go to church?” I asked.

“No,” he said, slowly shaking his head. “Those church people are all hypocrites.”

“You’re a Christian?” I questioned as I circled back to my initial question. “How can you feed yourself with beer while your children go hungry? Do you ever seek God’s blessing on what you are doing? How about blessing that beer?” I was on a roll, I thought.

However, at my challenge, he set the can down, bowed his head and began to pray. Yes! He actually asked God to bless that beer! It was a bit much for me. I was imbued with the brashness of youth in those days, not being nearly as restrained as I am today; therefore, I said, “There are hypocrites in this world, but I wouldn’t need to go to the church to find any. I’m in the presence of one now. There is nothing in your life, nothing in the choices you are now making that would ever make me think you are a child of the Living God.”

At this rather pointed comment, he became somewhat unglued. He wanted to know why I would judge him. After all, didn’t I know that the Bible said, “Judge not, lest ye be judged?” Isn’t it amazing that every pagan knows **MATTHEW 7:1**?

“True,” I retorted, “I’m not to judge; but I have been appointed to be a fruit inspector!” Just so, each child of the King is enabled to discern the fruit of people’s lives. You do not require a degree in botany to inspect the fruit presented by an individual’s life.

Dear people, we have heard the voice of the Master warning, “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” [**LUKE 6:43-45**].

Apparently, this was a common saying with the Master. On another occasion He taught, “Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits” [**MATTHEW 7:16b-20**].

This confidence is held in common with all who are followers of the Lord Christ. Therefore, we rightly anticipate transformation to be evident in those who claim to know Him. We expect believers to conduct themselves as though Christ the Lord lives and that He is at work in their lives. We anticipate that we will see the grace of God working in the life of one who is born from above. We expect that they will tell others of Christ, and back up their words with lives worthy of the Name by which they are called. It is well said, “Say not, thou hast royal blood running in thy veins, and art begotten of God, except thou canst prove thy pedigree by this heroic spirit; to dare to be holy in spite of men and devils.”<sup>6</sup>

Knowledge of the Holy One impels us to speak boldly. If you are a Christian, you both know the Saviour and are known of the Saviour. Paul asks those who name the Name of Christ, “Now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more” [**GALATIANS 4:9**]?

**A PROPER PERSPECTIVE OF NOW AND THEN** — “So, we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 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” [**2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18**].

---

<sup>6</sup> William Gurnall and John Campbell, **The Christian in Complete Armour** (Thomas Tegg, London 1845) 6

I thrill upon reading the Shepherd's Psalm. God prompted David to write,

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.”

[PSALM 23:4]

David did not find comfort *in* the valley of the shadow of death? He found comfort after he had passed *through* the valley of the shadow of death! Just so, you won't necessarily find comfort in your hard times, but when you have passed through the hard times, you can look back and say with conviction, “The Lord was with me; He brought me through!” To go through a trial means you are coming out on the other side. The reason some people can't praise God is that they haven't known any hard times. Others failed to look back to see that God was with them, carrying them through the hard times.

Let me show you something that I had never seen until I began this study. Oh, I had often read the words Paul wrote, and I knew what he said, but I had never really connected to what the Apostle was saying. You notice that he wrote, “This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 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” [2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18]. Take careful note of the fact that God does not waste your struggles; He ensures that the trials through which we are passing are “preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” Your needs—not your wants, but your needs—are being used by the Lord right now to prepare you for an eternal weight of glory. We are compelled to wear Christian armor now, but we are being fitted for eternal robes of glory. God has promised that we shall walk with Him in glory, clothed in white garments that reflect the righteousness of the saints. Isn't this the promise of the Risen Saviour? “The one who conquers will be clothed ... in white garments” [REVELATION 3:5a]. Moreover, the glory that is promised isn't simply glory, but it is “glory beyond all comparison.” Because this is true, we are encouraged to look to the things that are not seen. Things are looking better over there than over here.

The child of God can be confident that God does nothing half-way, He is working in the midst of our struggle, “preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” That fits with another verse that tells us God always does more than we imagine. Paul has written, “To him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen” [EPHESIANS 3:20, 21]. Amen, indeed. God is going to do things right! He will do more than I can ask or even think! God will take my troubles and turn them into blessing, in His time. I tell you, things are looking better over there than over here.

God took a dream out of your life, so that you could be better for having let that dream go. God took things out of your life that could only hinder the greater glory that He is preparing for you. God took people out of your life that would only drag you down. Now, He is preparing greater glory, an eternal weight of glory—not just any glory, but glory beyond all comparison! That is what God has been doing because you are His child and He loves you. God has been working constantly in your life and the full harvest of His work will be seen in a short while.

Things are looking better over there than over here. My dad passed over some years ago. My granddad has gone to the other side. My grandma has passed over. Most of my uncles and aunts have now passed through the river. I have friends and church members who prayed for me and encouraged me that have gone over. Things are looking better over there than over here.

You can't trust politicians, they'll lie to you, in case you haven't learned that lesson yet. Things are looking better over there than over here. I don't tolerate miserable people as well as I once did—you know, people who should be praying for me, but they would rather lie about me. No question but that things are looking better over there than over here. I haven't time for people who want to play church, coming when it is convenient and using the Holy Bride of Christ for tawdry purposes. Things are looking better over there than over here.

I notice that I don't move quite as easily as I once moved. The knees hurt, the back hurts, it hurts my head when I preach, but I won't stop preaching until Jesus calls me home. Some mornings I have to sit on the side of the bed and rub my knees until I can get up and walk. Things are starting to look better over there than over here. The headache pain sometimes drives me to my knees and I cry out to God for relief. My eyes don't see as clearly as they once saw, and I don't have the capacity to memorise that I once had. It takes longer to do that same things that I used to do. Things are starting to look better over there than over here.

It doesn't matter what colour you dye your hair, how much you exercise and how carefully you watch what you eat, you're going to decline in time. It doesn't matter how often you go to the doctor or how many supplements you take each day, your eyesight is going to grow dim and you're going to age. Over there is starting to look better than over here!

There is something wonderful in the text. If you believe it, you cannot help but shout. Trials, yes! Testing, yes! Pressure, yes! Opposition, yes! Heartache, oh, my, yes! But, as followers of the Son of God, "We do not lose heart!" This "outer self" is wasting away, the cracks are showing in this clay jar—the glaze is flaking off and the jar is getting warped from all the pressure it has had to endure for so many years. But, and this is the great promise of our God, "Our inner self is being renewed day-by-day!" Someone understands what this means.

God wants His people to live victoriously, and so He prompted the Apostle to write, "This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." There is a contrast here that we must see if we will be victorious—God encourages me to contrast what is now taking place in my life with what is coming. My trials? Light in comparison to the eternal weight of glory. My little sorrows? Momentary. Now, try to compare that with what is eternal. The opposition we face? Not even to be compared with what is coming. Over there is starting to look better than over here!

Dear people, I want to encourage you by reminding you that troubles never come to stay. Though you may face pressures till the day you go home, you are passing through this life and the time you spend now cannot even begin to be compared to eternity. A dear old saint was asked, "What is your favourite verse?" The aged woman didn't need to think as she replied, "My favourite verse is that one that says, 'And it came to pass.'"

Her interlocutor was confused and was compelled to ask, "How can that be a favourite verse? It isn't even a whole verse! Why would you say that is your favourite verse?"

She replied in measured tones, "Young man, my life has been hard. There have been many challenges. I've struggled many times, and not always successfully. But I learned to say, 'It came to pass.' My trials didn't come to stay, they came to pass." That is the spirit of one who has understands what is happening. You can handle anything if you know it won't last long. You can handle any trial if you know you won't be in the trial very long.

The text teaches that Christians “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.” I fear that too many of us are looking at the wrong things. We are looking at what we earn and what we now have invested in hope of financial stability. We’re looking at success in our career. We’re looking at how prosperous we can make ourselves look. We’re looking at how many “likes” we can get on Facebook. We’re looking at how many virtual friends we have. We’re looking for the ideal relationship.

There is no “ideal relationship.” If you’re looking for an ideal spouse, stop looking. All men are flawed. Your prince in shining armour will one day appear with tarnished breastplate, a visor that can’t be lowered and a sword with a broken blade. That beautiful princess will awaken in the morning with dragon breath and looking like something the cat drug in. It is the nature of things. If you’re looking for the ideal job, stop looking. All jobs become work eventually. If you’re looking for the ideal church and you think you’ve found it, don’t join! It won’t be ideal any longer if you join. If you’re looking for the ideal pastor, I can assure you that I’m not what you’re looking for. I can assure you that from the floor up I’ve been tore up and I am one flawed dude. I know my sinful condition; I know my failures. Thank God, I know my Saviour and He has set me free from the judgement I so richly deserve. There is no “ideal” in this life. Perfection awaits the return of the Master. Amen?

We’re looking at things that must pass away; we appear to think that those things we can see or touch will mean something when we can no longer walk these dusty trails! This is the basis for Paul’s warning, “If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—‘Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch’ (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings” [COLOSSIANS 2:20-22]? Oh, yes, things are looking better over there than over here!

If the Lord has brought you through some hard times, you know you are able to testify, “It wasn’t my college degree; it wasn’t my money in the bank, it wasn’t the many people who say they are my friends on Facebook, it wasn’t the doctor or the lawyer—it was God who brought me through.” When we begin to see matters in that vein, over there begins to look better than over here.

The closer I get to my eternal home the more I learn to hold the things of this life loosely. I don’t care what it is, if you can see it or touch it, it has “temporary” written all over it. I wish I had learned sooner that the things associated with this life are held for a brief while, and then I must release them so that I can move to my eternal home. This jar of clay is cracked, and the soul it holds will soon leak out. I, the true me, I am destined for another home. I tell you, over there is looking better than over here. However much I may resist, nevertheless, it won’t be long until “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” [ECCLESIASTES 12:7]. Over there is looking better than over here.

Well, it won’t be long before I’ll be passing over the river. I’ll be ready because I’ve put my trust in the Lord. I heard the voice of Jesus say, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” [JOHN 10:27-30].

I’m comforted whenever I remember that Jesus has promised me, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness” [JOHN 12:44-46].

**2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-18**

**WHEN OVER THERE LOOKS BETTER THAN OVER HERE**

I heard the Master say, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” [JOHN 14:1-3].

With the song writer, I can testify:

This world is not my home, I’m just a-passing through,  
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.  
The angels beckon me from heaven’s open door  
And I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.

I tell you, over there is looking better than over here.

Some who hear me this day need to join me in looking over there. There is no hope for you over there until you make the Son of God Ruler over your life over here. He calls you now to believe Him, to believe His Word and be saved. Amen.