

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- Sunday 5th January 2025 am

TITLE: "Keeping a heart full of hope through 2025"

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 3:18-4:18 Scripture references from the ESV

2 Corinthians 3:18-4:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

4 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practise cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ 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. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ 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.

At the end of the year, it is right for the Pastor to seek the Lord over what he wants to do in us as a church in the year ahead. This shapes his prayers for the church, forms the basis of a New Year's message, enables him to know how to apply scripture and is an aid to seeing if the church is making progress.

For 2025, our Pastor believes that God wants us to focus our hearts and minds on heaven and eternity. At the end of 2024, the Lord spoke through Colossians 3:1-4: **If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

The Pastor's prayer for the church is that we will look beyond both our suffering and our comforts. We will look beyond:

- Getting the next promotion at work or clearing debts and being able to save
- Having a positive medical diagnosis or a comfortable retirement

We will view everything in this temporary life in the light of the eternal world that is to come

We will set our gaze on the eternity with Christ for which we have been redeemed

There are good reasons why this is important:

- It honours God when our hearts are set on his kingdom and our eternal life with him
- It makes us more useful in this life, as we live holy lives, relate to others in Christlike ways and are more willing to serve.

However, there is another reason for having a mind set on things above. In 2025, we face the danger that we could lose heart. Losing heart looks like:

- A loss of joy, where the cares of this world become so great that we cannot rejoice in our God
- A loss of service where we become so discouraged by our trials that we cannot find the energy and enthusiasm to serve the Lord and one another
- For some, it even looks like giving up on Jesus, wondering if the Christian life is worth it.

Losing heart is a danger we all face this coming year, and indeed every year.

That is why we need to set our minds on things above where Christ is.

Paul proclaims: **we do not lose heart** (v16 above). This is a remarkable statement from a man who led a far from comfortable life. He had been truly afflicted in every way. He

had endured beatings, imprisonment, riots, hardships and many other difficulties, yet he could say twice in this passage that **we do not lose heart**(vv1,16).

What is the secret of living with that level of affliction and not losing heart? Paul gives five reasons. The first three (touched on only briefly in this sermon) occur in **vv7-15**:

Regardless of what happens:

- we have Christ who is the greatest treasure who dwells in us (v7)
- our affliction will not ultimately overwhelm us because Christ strengthens us (vv8-15)
- we have resurrection life to come (v14)

The other two reasons are the main focus in this sermon (**vv16-18**). If we can grasp these two reasons, and the link between them, then we will know the secret of not losing heart, and the other three reasons will also fall into place.

1. **Transformation is happening in us (v16)**. This verse speaks about transformation that is taking place in us **now**, not some time in the future. There is deconstruction taking place, and, at the same time, there is a reconstruction happening.

As surely as our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed

Our outer self is all that we are in Adam, and all that could cause us to lose heart.

- All that we see and feel with our physical senses.
- The daily decaying of our bodies, accompanied by physical, mental and emotional pain and ultimately resulting in death.
- The daily battles against our besetting sins and other sin that plagues us, battles we often lose
- The hostility we face on a daily basis, often because we are believers in Christ

Our inner self, by contrast, is all that we are in Christ. It is the opposite of everything that we are in Adam.

- Resurrection life in the face of failing health and death
- Victory over sin in the daily battles against temptation
- God's love experienced in the face of hostility from other people

Ultimately it is conformity to Christ

The Spirit of God is at work in us to enable us to see the glory of Christ with the eyes of our heart, and, as we behold that glory, to change us day by day into that same image (3:18 above). We might look at our lives and despair but

Every day we wake, God is at work to transform us

The wasting away is necessary for the transformation

Every day we live on earth, there is progress in our becoming what God intends us to be. We may not always be aware of it in ourselves or in others we are praying for but

Day by day Christ is being formed in us

We are not the same as we were last year. There has been a wasting away of our outer selves, but that wasting away has been replaced by a renewal of our inner self.

- We may feel physically weaker, but we have experienced more of Christ sustaining us
- We may feel more aware of our sin but that is because we have made progress in sanctification
- We may feel the weight of hostility, but that has deepened the awareness of God's love

Paul did not lose heart because he knew that, in the wasting away, transformation was taking place.

2. **Glory is certain for us.** Affliction in life is inescapable even as believers, as Paul's life demonstrates (vv8-11). The Bible nowhere promises a life free from suffering and sin this side of eternity, in fact quite the opposite. If we live with the idea that following Jesus will lead to a life free from trouble, then when trouble comes, we will believe that Jesus has failed us and lose heart.

Everyone, whether they are followers of Christ or not, suffers affliction. The difference for the believer is that

Although we know that affliction is inevitable, we know that glory is certain.

- Glory is the life to come where God will show us his glory and give us his glory.

We shall see Jesus Christ in all his resurrected glory, and we shall be like him

John tells us: **Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we**

know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2).

A day is coming when we shall see Jesus and reflect his glory in a way that honours him and fills us with joy in him. What Paul wants us to see is that this glory, which seems so vague now, is beyond comparison to the affliction we experience (v17).

- The glory will be disproportionately greater than the affliction. The latter may seem heavy, but in comparison to the glory to come it is light, and the glory will be far weightier.
- The glory will be disproportionately longer than the affliction. In this life, the affliction is momentary and for a season, but in the life to come, the glory will be eternal.

The glory to come is made weightier by the affliction. It is **preparing for us (v17)** the glory that we will enjoy.

The affliction we face here is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory.

Paul tells us: **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.** (Romans 8:28) That includes afflictions.

- Consider how all of this helps us not to lose heart.

When affliction comes though this year, though it is painful, and we would rather not have to face it:

The affliction is not meaningless

It is preparing for us glory that is certain, eternal and weighty.

Through 2025, we can be certain that transformation is happening in us and glory is certain for us

- How do we lean into this truth so that we will not lose heart?

Paul shows us in **vv16-18**, connecting all the facets so that we see it is **as** we look with the eyes of faith to the unseen realities of transformation and glory that we are not only renewed in our inner self, but we are kept from losing heart.

The secret of not losing heart in 2025 is to

look with faith at the unseen eternal realities that God has promised us.

Paul demonstrates this: **So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Cor 5:6-8).** He was facing the reality of death, following numerous afflictions, but faith rose in him. He looked at death in the light of what he knew. When death came, his soul would be with Jesus, awaiting the resurrection.

What we believe to be true will determine our outlook on life

Every single day, we need to refocus our vision on to what is eternal and unseen, looking in faith to all that God has promised us. As we do this, we need to ask him to give us faith to believe it, to make it real to us and to give us a heart that hopes in these unseen eternal realities.

- Every day, we need to look at the things that are seen (the outer self that is wasting away and all our afflictions) and to see those things as **transient and temporary**
- Every day we need to look at the things that are unseen (the inner self that is being renewed day by day and the weight of glory that will be revealed in us) and see those things as **eternal realities**.
- Every day, we need to look at any affliction and ask God to give us the assurance that, though it is painful, **it is not meaningless** but is working to prepare for us and eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison
- Every day, we need to look at our current suffering and **see it in the light of what it will be**.

Take time to think over afflictions you are facing and bring them before the Lord. Ask him to give you the eyes of faith and bring to your heart and mind his precious promises about the eternal realities that await us.

**The secret to not losing heart in 2025 is to
look with faith at the unseen eternal realities that God has promised us**

Though trouble and anguish increase all the more
They cannot compare to the glory in store
Come joy or come sorrow, whatever befalls
The light of the Savior will outshine them all

Christ our glory, Christ our hope
Christ our King forevermore

Christ our glory – Sovereign Grace
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