

Christmas Retreat 2022 Participants' Handbook



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Christmas Retreat Meditation Passage #1 (2Cor 3:12-18)

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; ¹⁶ but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Several key Scriptural words in this passage that you might delve into more deeply:

1. **Hope:** This is the certain, unshakable divine hope, that is based in the New Covenant in the blood of Jesus the Messiah. This unshakable hope is surely part of God's word to us in the SW in this time.
2. **Boldness:** Like Paul himself, we are called to live in "great boldness" based on our profound hope, and the power of the Holy Spirit. I sense that this is another aspect of God's word to us in our current realities, especially during this year of our Jubilee.
3. **Veil:** This key image is used throughout this passage by Paul, with various nuances.
 - A "material veil" which Moses put over his face so that the Israelites not see the fading "glory". (Ex 34:33-35.) Why did he do this?
 - A "spiritual veil" that remains "unlifted" for those of the Old Covenant. What is this spiritual veil, and why is it "unlifted" in the Old Covenant? Possible reasons:
 1. Because of the failure of the Old Covenant people to respond: their fear; their "hardness of mind". "A veil lies over their heart."
 2. Because of God's own mysterious plan: His complete plan was not revealed in the Old Covenant. It remained "hidden, concealed" until the "kairos" moment of the Incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
 - [A personal thought here: At times, this "spiritual veil" seems to function almost like the temple curtain before the Holy of Holies. (That it is a different Scriptural image, but I find it helpful in grasping the different functions that the veil seems to accomplish by Paul in this passage.) Also, like the "veil", the curtain of the temple is abolished by the death and resurrection of Jesus.]
 - When one turns to the Lord, this "spiritual veil" is removed. In the New Covenant in Jesus' death and resurrection, in the power of the Holy Spirit, there is freedom!
4. **Face** (unveiled):
 - Moses unveiled his shining, glorious face when he turned to the Lord in the tent.
 - In the New Covenant, what is the "unveiled face" of the glory of God?
 1. In one sense, each disciple of Jesus, as we "turn to the Lord", we become like Moses entering the tent. We can enter directly into the presence of God, with the veil of Moses removed from our face.

2. Yet in another NT parallel, the “glory” reflected in the face of Moses is truly fulfilled in Jesus, the Incarnated, Resurrected Lord. Here, the veil does not lie upon Jesus’s face. Yet the removal of the “spiritual veil” of the Old Covenant allows the face of Jesus to reveal the true glory of God.
3. In 3:18, “we all...beholding” is in the plural, while the “unveiled face” is in the singular. Is this “unveiled face” that of Jesus, or of all of us (corporately)? Each of these interpretations make some sense (and each has its interpreters). Perhaps this may be one of those “both/and” situations that we find in God’s inspired word.
5. **Glory** [*“doxa”*]. A further key concept in this passage. The same word is used in 2 Cor 3:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 18, but it is translated as “splendor” (7, 8, 9, 10, 11), and as “brightness” (7). However, it is the same Greek word that is translated as “glory” three times in 2 Cor 3:18. (You might pursue these various uses of “*doxa*” by Paul here in 2 Cor 3.)
6. **Beholding**: This Greek participle is unique in all of the NT. I follow the RSV in translating the word as “beholding” or “contemplating” the glory of God in the reflection of the Incarnate Son of God. Others translate this phrase as “unveiled faces reflecting the glory of God” (e.g. NET translation).
7. **Changed**: This powerful Greek verb is very strong – the same word is used in the Transfiguration in Mat 17:2 (“*transfigured* before them”) and in Ro 12:2 (“*transformed* by the renewal of your mind”). The Greek is used in English in the word “metamorphosis”.
8. **Image**: The Greek word here is literally “image”, rather than “likeness” (as in Ro 8:29, 1Cor 15:49, Col 1:15, 3:10).

Some Meditation Considerations

1. Am I learning to live in this certain hope of 2Co 3:12? The Lord Himself calls us into greater hope: in our current challenges, in our future opportunities as a brotherhood, and in our ultimate hope in eternity. Holy Spirit, lead me and all of my brothers into a deeper, more unshakable hope, that is based in God’s own promises!
2. Consider Paul’s tremendous boldness in great difficulties and suffering. May these words of God’s encouragement and consolation lead us into stronger boldness in our personal lives and in the life of our brotherhood in this year of Jubilee.
3. Try to memorize this entire passage, or at least 3:17-18. May the power of the Holy Spirit continue to lead us into greater spiritual freedom by His grace. During these days of our Christmas retreat, may He lead us into deeper “beholding” of God’s glory in the face of Jesus, the Incarnate Son. May the Holy Spirit within us continue to transform our hearts, minds, and spirits into the very image of the Son.

Servants of the Gospel

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Genesis 1:2 (LXX): “The earth was invisible and unfurnished, and darkness was over the abyss.”

(ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκευάστος, καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου)

v. 1:

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

*(Διὰ τοῦτο, ἔχοντες τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην
καθὼς ἠλεήθημεν, οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν,)*

v. 2a:

But we have renounced disgraceful,
underhanded ways.

(ἀλλ' ἀπειπάμεθα τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης)

We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with
God's word,

(μὴ περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργία μηδὲ δολοῦντες
τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ,)

v. 2b:

but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

*(ἀλλὰ τῇ φανερώσει τῆς ἀληθείας
συνιστῶντες ἑαυτοὺς πρὸς πᾶσαν
συνείδησιν ἀνθρώπων ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ.)*

v. 3-4:

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world (or “age,” *αἰῶνος*) 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.

v. 5:

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake (ἐαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν).

v. 6:

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light (*πρὸς φωτισμὸν*) of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor 4:7 – 12 “But we have this treasure (*thesaurus* – deposit / wealth) in earthen (*ostrakinos* – ostrakon / terra-cotta) vessels, to show that the transcendent (*hyperbole* – throwing beyond / super-eminent / pre-eminent) 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 (*periphero* – bearing about (peri = walk) transporting) in the body the death (*nekrosis* – decease / impotency) of Jesus, so that the life (*zoe* – life / brio / zing / unsquashableness) of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death (*Thanatos*) for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you’

Some particular words:

- *Thesaurus*

- *Ostrakinos*

- *Nekrosis*

- *Zoe*

Some particular promises as we carry this life. We are:

Afflicted in every way

Not Crushed

Perplexed

Not driven to despair

Persecuted

Not forsaken

Struck down

Not destroyed

Questions for meditation

1. Meditate / reflect upon the “thesaurus” or “great treasure” of life that Christ has won and given to you in your life as a SW. Spend some time giving thanks for what he has given to you and the privilege of carrying it in the world
2. In what ways in the past year, could you find yourself afflicted, perplexed, persecuted or struck down? How have you dealt with these realities that the gospel promises those who follow after Christ?
3. Spend some time meditating upon also carrying “the body of death” of Jesus within you. Consider how your own shortcomings and failings have contributed to that body. Close in prayer thanking God for his all-sufficient merit in Christ and committing yourself once again to him in seeking to live for him.

Meditation on 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Christmas Retreat 2022

2 Corinthians 4:13 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

- quoting Psalm 116 from the Septuagint (114-115 in the Septuagint)
- "what shall I render to the Lord for all his goodness to me" (Psalm 116:12→16)
- Paul is choosing to speak truth in the midst of challenges.

2 Corinthians 4:15-16 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:(16) ***So we do not lose heart.***

Though our outer nature is wasting away,
our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

(17) For this slight 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.

So we do not lose heart.

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

Though our **outer nature** is **wasting away**,
our **inner nature** is **being renewed day by day.**

(17) For this **slight 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.**

So we do not lose heart.

Outer nature wasting	Inner nature renewed
Seen, transient things	Unseen, eternal things
Slight momentary affliction	Eternal weight of freedom from affliction <u>glory</u>

- 5 times thirty nine lashes
- 3 times beaten with rods
- Stoned
- 3 times shipwrecked
(adrift a night & a day at sea)
- Regularly in danger from robbers, nature, Jews, Gentiles, false brothers
- Many sleepless nights
Hungry, thirsty

- Cold, exposure (nakedness)
- Daily pressure of anxiety for all the churches
- Misunderstood by brethren & had to boldly fight for what he believed in

- Do you have 40 men bound by an oath not to eat or drink until they kill you? (cf Acts 23)
- Psalm 119:71 it is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

- If Paul's afflictions were "light", what does this say about ours...
- Maybe what you are going through now will make it into this community year's annual review.
Possibly it'll affect us in a few years...
BUT compare it to eternity

2 Corinthians 4:17 For this slight momentary affliction is **preparing** for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

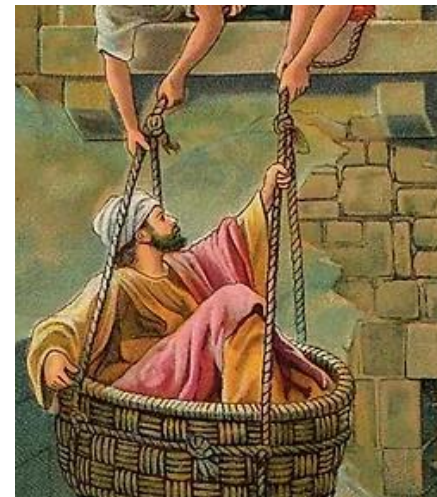
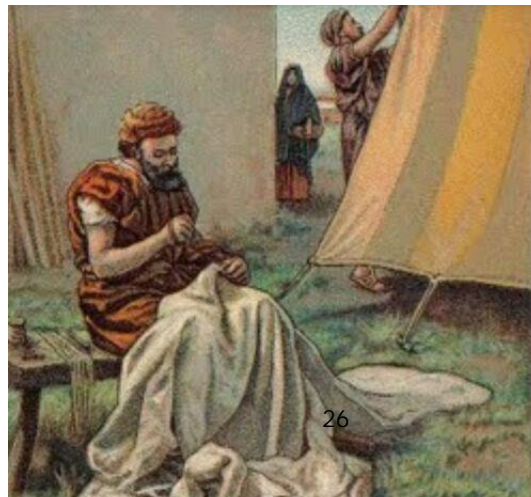
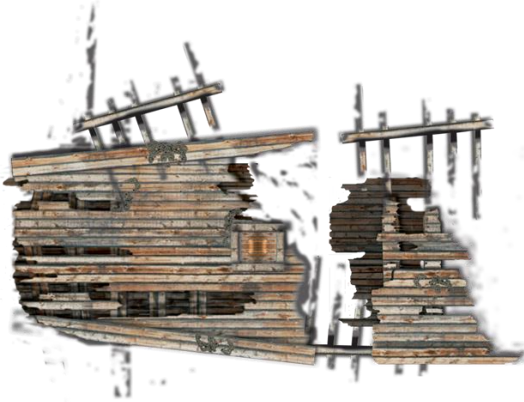
- “Preparing” = καταργαζεται
- Manufactures, works it fully
- Romans 8:17 and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.**

- Affliction can highlight what I value more than the Lord
- Our affliction is also light compared to what we deserve
- 2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore, having this ministry **by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.**

- 2 Corinthians 4:18 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.

Saul → Paul

- Studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)
- Mishna *Sotah* 9.15: "Since Rabban Gamaliel the Elder died there has been no more reverence for the law, and purity and abstinence died out at the same time."
- Zealously persecuting Christians (Acts 8 and 9)
- Left this for a life of persecution and martyrdom



- And if we do this well, grace will extend to more and more people (v 15).
- The Lord will raise us and we can rejoice with the psalmist for we are “sons of the resurrection”

- Read through 2 Corinthians 4:13-18 again, noting down anything that strikes you.
- Who are the people you are speaking truth to (v 13)? Are we speaking the truth in love: when persecuted? to each other when some of us are going through challenges?
- When my service or things around it suck life out of me or when I am on “manure duty”, am I just a mercenary wasting my affliction or do I choose to be a servant through whom God’s “grace extends to more and more people (so) it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God” (v 15)?

- As “our outer nature is wasting away (v 16)”, do we radiate the inner nature being renewed to those around us? Would an outsider who observes you aging be inspired or will they be put off by your attitude, speech, impatience...?
- What are you doing to “look” (v 18), to focus on the eternal? What distractions do you need to deal with to guard your focus? Where are betrayals, humiliations, or incorrect expectation affecting your vision?

2022 Christmas Retreat Meditation – 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

2 Corinthians 4:13-15 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

- V13 quotes Psalm 116 from the Septuagint (114-115 in the Septuagint).
- "We also believe and so we also speak." Paul is choosing to speak truth in the midst of challenges.

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

Though our **outer nature** is **wasting away**,
our **inner nature** is **being renewed day by day**.

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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**.

So we do not lose heart.

Outer nature wasting	Inner nature renewed
Seen, transient things	Unseen, eternal things cf 1 Cor 2:9
Slight momentary affliction	Eternal weight of glory

- Paul went through a lot of affliction. (see 2 Corinthians 11)
 - Paul's service involved sucking life out of him. He didn't give up but he wasn't sticking it out as a mercenary either.
 - Maybe you are labouring in an unfruitful vineyard/ not being appreciated / recognized.
 - Maybe for the last few years you have been on manure duty in this vineyard.
 - You have a choice to make anew today to look again at things with spiritual eyes.
-
- V 17: If Paul's affliction was light, what does this say about ours...
 - Maybe they will make it into our annual review this year, possibly we might be dealing with their effects in a few years but compare that to eternity.
 - The Greek verb for "prepare" (kat + ergazomai) **κατεργάζεται** = manufactures it, works it fully .

Romans 8:17 and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided we suffer with him** in order that we may also be glorified with him.

- Condition for glory: provided we **suffer with the Lord**
- Affliction may highlight what I value more than the Lord.
- Our affliction is also light compared to what we deserve. (2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore, having this ministry **by the mercy of God**, we do not lose heart.)

2 Corinthians 4:18

- “look” here means pay careful attention to or focus on.
- Not be distracted but look to the unseen and eternal.

- Some aspects of the fragrance of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14-16) will only come out through being crushed.

- If we do this well, grace will extend to more and more people (v15). The Lord will raise us and we can rejoice with the psalmist for we are “sons of the resurrection” as the Oriental Church Fathers describe Christians.

Suggestions to help with your meditation

1. Read through 2 Corinthians 4:13-18 again, noting down anything that strikes you.
2. Who are the people you are speaking truth to (v 13)? Are we speaking the truth in love when persecuted? Are we speaking truth to each other when some of us are going through challenges? If it helps you, name 5 men who you are evangelising and what you are doing to move them forward in the Lord.
3. When my service or things around it sucks life out of me or when I am on “manure duty”, am I just a mercenary wasting my affliction or do I choose to be a servant through whom God’s “grace extends to more and more people (so) it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God” (v 15)?
4. As “our outer nature is wasting away (v 16)”, do I radiate the inner nature being renewed to those around me? Would an outsider who observes me aging be inspired or will they be put off by my attitude, speech, impatience...?
 - a. As is helpful, meditate on Psalm 122 and Psalm 116
5. What are you doing to “look” (v 18), to focus on the eternal? What distractions do you need to deal with to guard your focus? Where are betrayals, humiliations, or incorrect expectation affecting your vision?



2 COR 5:1-10



(1) 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. (2) For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, (3) if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. (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. (5) He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.



2 COR 5:1-10 (ESV)



(6) 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. (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For 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.

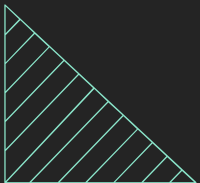


2 COR 5:1-10 (ESV)



THE PARADOX OF THE CROSS

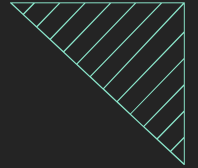
Corinthians view of glory and success and who is a credible leader as opposed to the exaltation of Jesus Christ that came through the cross marked by humility and suffering





THREE CONTRASTS

AND OUR TENDENCY TO BE LIKE THE CORINTHIANS



**TENT OUR
EARTHLY HOME
VS
BUILDING FROM
GOD**



**BEING NAKED
VS
BE FURTHER
CLOTHED**




**WALK BY SIGHT
VS
WALK BY FAITH**

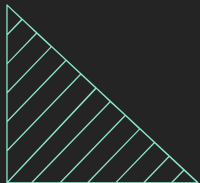
TENT OUR EARTHLY HOME VS BUILDING FROM GOD

We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands."

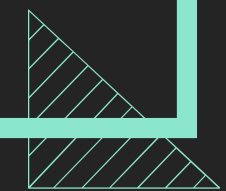
Mark 14:58



How often
does
Scriptures
warn us not to
put our trust
on human
capacity and
earthly means?



Our tendency is to hold on to our body and not let go of it, probably because of our vanity, pride or our fear of suffering. Whatever it is that's at work, it robs us of the vision that God has for us, that we are meant to be not just improved but a totally new temple.





“... We have a house in which, with time, humidity has come into the walls. You start having cracks, mold, and nails start coming out. Or you can have some holes in the roofs. I was telling God, repair the house, repair it Yourself. But the Lord was saying, no, I don't want to repair your house. I want to build a new house...


**EXCERPT FROM A PROPHETIC
SENSE AT THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY**



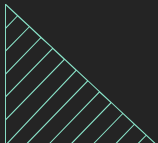
The Lord wants to give us a new mind, a new heart, a new spirit, not just repair or fix our lives, but to give us a new life - so that we can live according to the new covenant that was made by His blood... We need to believe this, and He wants to give us new relationships and a new zeal in the way of life He has given to us.

**EXCERPT FROM A PROPHETIC
SENSE AT THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY**

BEING NAKED VS BE FURTHER CLOTHED



“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”



Mark 14:58

DEATH NAKEDNESS AND SHAME

Death is not the end, but through death we will again be clothed by the glory of God that Adam and Eve lost.

Our tendency is to give in to shame and avoid death, not thinking that in our vulnerability God clothes us with his glory.

We put on Jesus Christ by first putting to death our sin and sinful desires. And how do we put to death our sin and sinful desires? By repentance and confessing our sin, yes this could be a very shameful thing to do, but God glory comes after.

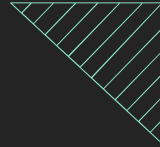


**RATHER, CLOTHE
YOURSELVES WITH
THE LORD JESUS
CHRIST, AND DO
NOT THINK ABOUT
HOW TO GRATIFY
THE DESIRES OF
THE FLESH.
ROM 13:14**

WALK BY SIGHT VS WALK BY FAITH



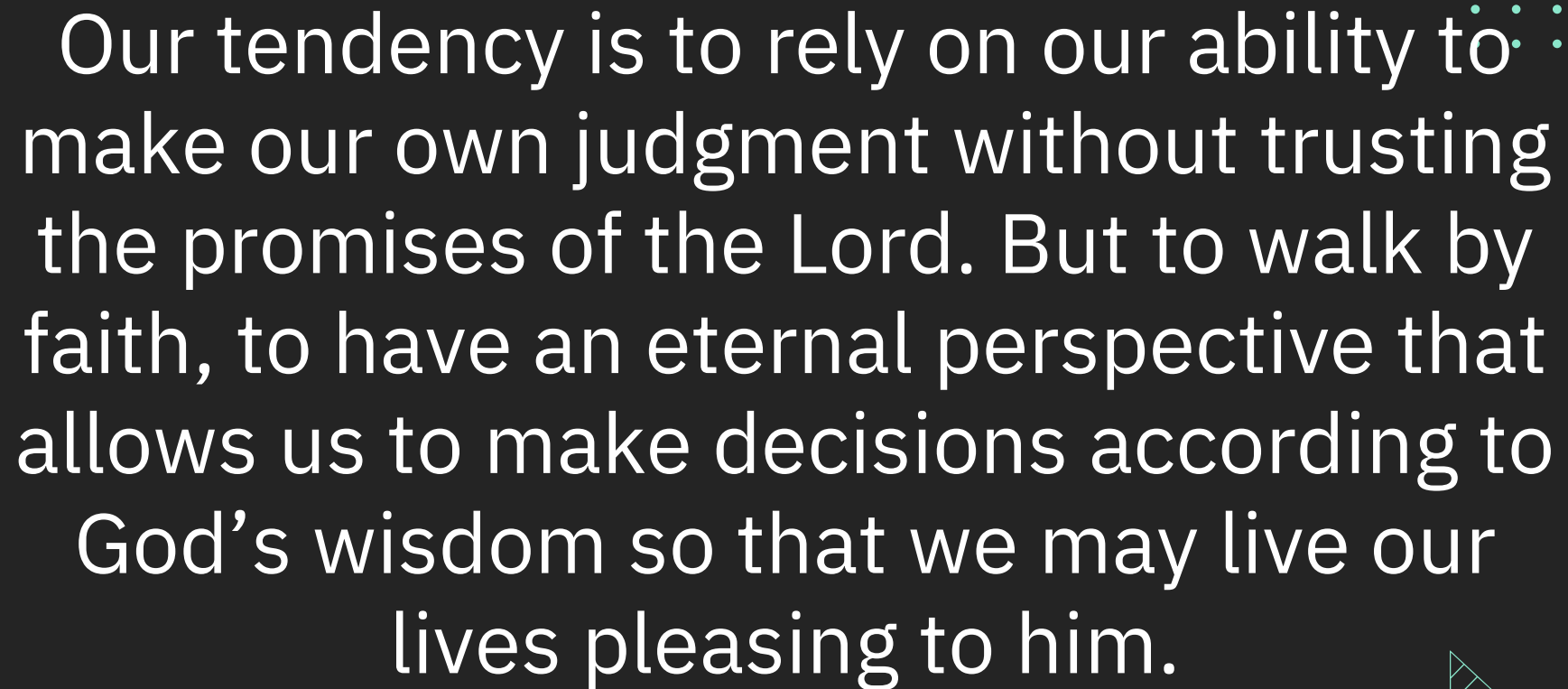
**FOR THE LORD SEES
NOT AS MAN SEES:
MAN LOOKS ON THE
OUTWARD
APPEARANCE, BUT THE
LORD LOOKS ON THE
HEART
1 SAM 16:7**



If our perspective is only limited to our earthly bodies then decisions as to how we should live will reflect that.

HOW MANY INSTANCES IN THE SCRIPTURES THAT WHEN HUMAN BEINGS SEE SOMETHING AS GOOD AND THEY TAKE IT, LIKELY IT'S NOT ACTUALLY GOOD?





Our tendency is to rely on our ability to make our own judgment without trusting the promises of the Lord. But to walk by faith, to have an eternal perspective that allows us to make decisions according to God's wisdom so that we may live our lives pleasing to him.

**EVERYONE WILL FACE THE
JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD
AND THEY WILL RECEIVE
WHAT THEY ARE DUE,
EITHER THEY PERISH OR
THEY RECEIVE A
HEAVENLY DWELLING,
THEY MUST IMITATE JESUS
CHRIST IN THEIR MORTAL
BODIES, THAT IS TO PICK
UP ONE'S CROSS AND DIE
TO ONE'S SELF.**



MEDITATION QUESTIONS

01

RECALL INSTANCES IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU WANTED TO HOLD ON TO YOUR OWN LIFE (ACHIEVEMENTS, GIFTS, STATUS, ETC.) WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF YOU WANTING TO HAVE THAT NEW HOUSE THAT GOD WANTS TO GIVE YOU? ASK THE LORD TO HELP YOU DEAL WITH PRIDE, VANITY, FEAR, ETC.

02

HOW IS SHAME AT WORK IN YOUR LIFE? ARE THERE STILL THINGS IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU NEED TO PUT TO DEATH? WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

03

HOW CAN YOU RELATE TO THE STORIES IN THE BIBLE OF PEOPLE SEEING SOMETHING GOOD AND TAKING IT EVEN IF IT'S AGAINST GOD'S WILL? HOW CAN YOU WALK IN FAITH MORE FULLY SO THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LIVE A LIFE MORE AND MORE PLEASING TO THE LORD?



2 Cor 5:1-10 (ESV)

(1) 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. (2) For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, (3) if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. (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. (5) He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (6) 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. (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For 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.

The Three Contrasts

- Paul continues to correct the thinking of the Corinthians about glory and success and who is a credible leader by using the imagery of our bodies.
- With our bodies subject to sickness, decay and destruction, we ought to recognize that the exaltation of Christ came through the cross. Jesus Christ took on a form of a human being that is capable of death but because of his resurrection, he made it possible for our nature to be transformed and share in his glory.
- Paul gives us three contrasts that could point out our tendency to be like the Corinthians, looking at glory just through our own perspective instead of God's perspective.

Tent our Earthly Home vs Building from God

- Mark 14:58 "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands."
- They'd rather stick to the building that they have and put all the hate on Jesus but totally miss out on what God could offer.
- Corinthians are missing the point when they just focus on outward status, eloquence and giftedness, whereas there's so much more that God wants to make of us, if only we'd rely on his power and strength.
- How often does Scripture warn us not to put our trust on human capacity and earthly means?

Jer. 17:5 "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD."

Is. 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen

Ps. 118:8-9 "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes."

Pro. 11:28 "He who trusts in his riches will fall..."

Ps. 147:10 "His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man"

- Our tendency is to hold on to our body, to rely on its own strength and not embrace its weakness, probably because of our vanity, pride or our fear of suffering. Whatever it is that's at work, it robs us of the vision that God has for us, that we are meant to be not just improved but a totally new temple.

Excerpt from Prophetic sense at the SA:

"... We have a house in which, with time, humidity has come into the walls. You start having cracks, mold, and nails start coming out. Or you can have some holes in the roofs. I was telling God, repair the house, repair it Yourself. But the Lord was saying, no, I don't want to repair your house. I want to build a new house... The Lord wants to give us a new mind, a new heart, a new spirit, not just repair or fix our lives, but to give us a new life - so that we can live according to the new covenant that was made by His blood..."

We need to believe this, and He wants to give us new relationships and a new zeal in the way of life He has given to us."

Being Naked vs Be Further Clothed

- Gen. 3:7 "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."
- After the fall, being naked becomes a shameful thing. Many seem to think that embracing death (longing for our resurrected bodies) would bring nakedness, and therefore death is such a shameful thing.
- He argues that death is not the end, but through death we will put on our heavenly dwelling and therefore we will be further clothed. We will again be clothed by the glory of God that Adam and Eve lost.
- Our tendency is to give in to shame and avoid death, not thinking that in our vulnerability God clothes us with his glory.
- Rom 13:14 "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh."
- In order to put on Jesus Christ, we must put to death our sin and sinful desires. And how do we put to death our sin and sinful desires? By repentance and confessing our sin, yes this could be a very shameful thing to do, but God glory comes after.

Walk By Sight vs Walk By Faith

- 1 Sam 16:7 "For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."
- It's innate for humans to judge things according to their own human capacity
- If our perspective is only limited to our earthly bodies then our capacity to make decisions as to how we should live will reflect that.
- How many instances in the Scriptures that when human beings see something as good and they take it, likely it's not actually good?

Gen 3:6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

Gen 12:15 And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

Gen 13:10 And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)

Gen 38:2 There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her,

Ex. 32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Num 32:1 Now the people of Reuben and the people of Gad had a very great number of livestock. And they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, and behold, the place was a place for livestock.

2 Sam 11:2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful.

- Our tendency is to rely on our ability to judge what is good for us and what is not without trusting the promises and the wisdom of the Lord.
- Instead Paul is exhorting us to walk by faith - here to walk by faith means to believe in the power of resurrection, that God has promised us to make us new human beings and that he already gave us the guarantee of that promise, the Holy Spirit...
- To walk by faith means to have an eternal perspective that allows us to make decisions according to God's wisdom so that we may live our lives pleasing to him.

Being Accountable

- Paul then gives the Corinthians a challenge. Since everyone will face the judgment seat of God and they will receive what they are due, either they perish or they receive a heavenly dwelling, they must imitate Jesus Christ in their mortal bodies, that is to pick up one's cross and die to one's self.
- It is in this frame of mind that Paul wants the Corinthians to look at the whole idea of glory and honor. To share in God's glory is to be a servant with sacrificial and self-giving love.

Meditation Questions

1. Recall instances in your life that you wanted to hold on to your own life (achievements, gifts, status, etc.) What gets in the way of you wanting to have that new house that God wants to give you?
2. How is shame at work in your life? Are there still things in your life that you need to put to death? What do you need to do?
3. How can you relate to the stories in the Bible of people seeing something good and taking it even if it's against God's will? How can you walk in faith more fully so that you'll be able to live a life more and more pleasing to the Lord?

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer those who pride themselves on a man's position and not on his heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Outline:

vv. 11-12 Paul's Confidence: What we are is known to God

vv. 13-15 Paul's Motivation: The love of Christ compels us

vv. 16-17 Therefore... We no longer regard anyone from a human point of view, but as new creations

vv. 18-21 The ministry of reconciliation: God reconciled us to himself and entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation

Meditation Questions:

1. Consider the phrase: "What I am is known to God". Is it enough for me to say this? Do I tend to unnecessarily defend or promote myself?

2. "If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come." Have I seen, in myself or in someone around me, that Christ makes each of his followers a new creation? In what specific way?

3. Am I growing holier as I grow older?

4. Do I regard those around me from a human point of view? Or do I see them as eternal beings?