

Weekly Reflection – “We do not lose heart.”

Paul claims in these verses to have found the remedy for an experience that virtually everyone in the world wants to have. I'm referring to verse 16: ***“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”*** And I am referring to the experience of not losing heart, but being renewed day by day. I would dare to say that nowhere in the world will you find someone who is longing to lose heart. Does anyone say, “Help me be hopeless. Help me lose my motivation. Help me be so discouraged I can't go on”? No, so if Paul is telling the truth here, he has found the remedy of an experience that everyone in the world wants to have. The remedy for not losing heart.

2 Corinthians 4:16: “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”

Our outer self is wasting away

“Our outer self” has the same idea as “jars of clay” in verse 7 and “mortal flesh” in verse 11. That is, our body, muscles, skin, bones, organs, brain. “Our inward self” is our soul, the immortal part.

“Wasting away” translates a word used five other times in the New Testament. Here's a couple of them: ***“Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.”*** (Luke 12:33 ESV) You put away your sweater for the summer and take it out in the winter, and it is ruined where the moths have eaten it. ***“A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”*** (Revelation 8:9 ESV) Destroyed not by being moth eaten but by a great mountain of burning fire being thrown into the sea (Revelation 8:8), capsizing and consuming thousands of ships. That's the word Paul uses here to describe the condition where he does not lose heart, where he is renewed day by day. Note that Paul is not teaching us how to avoid or escape or prevent this wasting away of our outer self. He is teaching us how to not lose heart even though our outer self is wasting away; he's teaching us how to be renewed day by day. Paul has found the secret of not losing heart and experiencing daily renewal while being destroyed.

Being Renewed Day by Day

Discovering the secret of not losing heart is not a one time experience that lasts a lifetime. Be sure you see the word “renewed” in verse 16: ***“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”*** Do you see what this means?

“Re-new” means something runs out. The bucket leaks. The car runs out of gas.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:34, ***“Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*** Its own trouble. Its own wasting away. Its own destruction. Its own moths and rust and persecution and pain and dying. Each day has its own. Which is why the Bible also says, ***“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”*** (Lamentations 3:22-23 ESV) There is new mercy flowing from the throne every morning sufficient for that day's trouble, everyday, day after day.

Why We Need Renewal Daily

There is a reason God would create us to need daily renewal. Verse 7 says: ***“We have this treasure in jars of clay (jars that need refilling, renewing day by day) to show that the surpassing***

power belongs to God and not to us." God saves us through a thousand battles, a thousand renewals, so that we never, never forget that we are weak and He is our strength. And the Giver of the strength, the Giver of hope and joy, gets the glory. That's what the apostle Peter said: "*...whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*" (1 Peter 4:11 ESV) The Giver of the strength gets the glory for the service. That's why we are weak and why we need renewals day by day so as not to lose heart.

The Remedy

What is the remedy to a life of not losing heart while our outer self is waiting away? What is the remedy to being renewed day by day? Verse 16 starts with the word "so", this is like the word therefore, pointing us to a connection of what has just been said. "The stove is hot, so, don't touch it." Also notice that verse 17 starts with the word "for", this is like the word because, pointing us to a connection of what is about to be said. "The stove is hot, so don't touch it, for I just turned the burner up to high." This shows us that the secret for not losing heart is found in what Paul has said right before this and also what Paul has said right after this. I am going to give you 5 ways, and there is more here, that enable us to not lose heart, that will renew our strength day by day.

Our suffering can strengthen others and glorify God.

These two things should be the great loves of our life: strengthening others and bringing glory to God. "*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 4:8-12 ESV) Hard pressed... perplexed... persecuted... struck down: Paul's life was hard, and it was hard because of his passionate devotion to Jesus Christ and His gospel. Though Paul's outer nature is decaying, in and through this suffering, life is flowing from him to the church. Christians are being strengthened by Paul's weakening. We have seen this so clearly the past couple of months, that through our suffering, through our being given over to death, God has used us to produce life in others, to produce hope in others. Verse 15: "*For all things are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people [through Paul's suffering for them] may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.*"

We do not lose heart . . . because in our suffering, grace is spreading to others and glory is going to God.

We will be raised from the dead.

Though our outer self is wasting away, we will be raised from the dead and be with Jesus. "*knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.*" (2 Corinthians 4:14 ESV)

We do not lose heart . . . because not even death can make the story have a bad ending. We are going to live forever; we are going to live together, and we are going to live forever with Jesus.

Our affliction is momentary.

We do not lose heart because our affliction is momentary. ***"For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison," (2 Corinthians 4:17 ESV)***

This does not mean it lasts 60 seconds. It means it only lasts a lifetime, which is momentary compared with eternity.

We do not lose heart ... because our afflictions will end. They will not have the last say in our life.

Our affliction is light.

We do not lose heart because our affliction is light. ***"For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison," (2 Corinthians 4:17 ESV)***

When Paul says his afflictions are light, he does not mean easy or painless. He means that compared to what is coming, they are as nothing. Compared to the weight of glory coming, they are like feathers in the scale. ***"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Romans 8:18 ESV***

We do not lose heart . . . Because our afflictions are light.

Our affliction is preparing an eternal weight of glory, as we look to the unseen eternal things.

We do not lose heart because our affliction is actually producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. ***"For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison," (2 Corinthians 4:17 ESV)*** What is coming to us is not momentary, but eternal. It is not light, but weighty. It's not affliction, but glory. The apostle contrasts things present to things future; a moment to eternity; lightness to weight; affliction to glory. And it is beyond all comparison. ***"But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" 1 Corinthians 2:9 ESV***

Often, the problem isn't so much in what we think about our light affliction but in that we think so little of our coming weight of glory. And the point is not that the afflictions merely precede the glory; they help prepare the glory. "The effect of these afflictions is to produce eternal glory. This they do: (1) By their tendency to wean us from the world; (2) To purify the heart, by enabling us to 'break off from the sins on account of which God afflicts us; (3) By disposing us to look to God for consolation and support in our trials; (4) By inducing us to contemplate the glories of the heavenly world, and thus winning us to seek heaven as our home; and, (5) Because God has graciously promised to reward his people in heaven as the result of their bearing trials in this life." (Albert Barnes Commentary) Not one moment of pain is wasted.

Is this weight of glory automatic, in other words, are we afflicted and automatically with no effort on our part, glory? Lets read verse 16 and 17 together: ***"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."*** We can't miss that two letter word "as". Paul isn't saying that all afflictions automatically produce glory. It is possible to allow suffering to destroy us and to let affliction make us bitter, miserable, and self-focused. However, "as" we look to the

things which are not seen then our affliction will work in us an eternal weight of glory. God might offer you all the glory in the universe to keep you from losing heart and to renew your soul day by day, but if you never looked at it, nothing would come of it. When we look at the things which are seen, all we see is our light affliction, and then it doesn't seem very light! But when we look at the things which are not seen, then we see and appreciate the eternal weight of glory.

We do not lose heart...because as we look to the unseen-eternal things, an eternal weight of glory is being prepared for us.

God's Lavish Invitation

There was a boy who was looking at the reflection of the moon glistening in a pond. A friend of his threw a stone into the pond and the water began to ripple. The boy said, "What happened to the moon?" For the stone in the water so rippled the water that he could no longer see the reflection of the moon and it looked like the moon was gone. His older friend said, "When you can't see the moon in the pond, stop looking at the pond and look up at the moon because the moon hasn't gone anywhere."

This text is one lavish invitation from God for us to look up at all the reasons why you don't have to lose heart, all the reasons why you can be renewed day by day. Think on these things! Believe what God says, and you will not lose heart, and your inner person will be renewed day by day.