

Do Not Lose Heart

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567

“We may well say that no affliction weighs more than a gnat resting upon an elephant when the Lord’s upholding grace is sweetly manifested to our soul in times of perplexity, anxiety, and pain.”¹

Charles Spurgeon

Can anyone truly say that they have never felt discouraged living in this fallen world?² Do you always feel unspeakable joy of having every spiritual blessing in the Lord? Let me share with you a quick testimony of “John Doe” Christian’s typical day.

I woke up this morning with a “groggy mind” because my neck kinked all night and my inflamed hips made me toss back and forth like the waves of a ship in a storm. How am I supposed to get



a good night’s sleep when every single toss I make my back and knees cringe in pain? Once I climbed into the bathtub that feels like I am scaling Mount Everest, I proceeded to attempt to wash the best I can parts of my body that sadly I can no longer reach! O to look and feel like a twenty-year-old again! As I eat my breakfast, I turn on the news station. Listening to the stories of drug overdose deaths

topping 100,000,³ missionaries being kidnapped in Haiti,⁴ over five million Covid-19 deaths in the world, dramatically increased food prices that I must pay out of my fixed retirement income,⁵ the

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Our Light Affliction,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 163.

² Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2462.

³ Taken from the following website: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/17/health/drug-overdose-deaths-record-high/index.html>

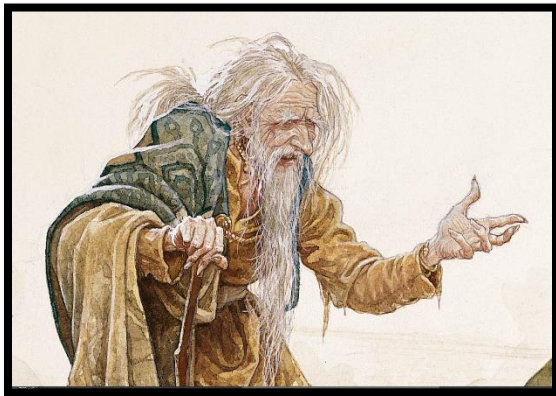
⁴ Taken from the following website: <https://christianaidministries.org/updates/haiti-staff-abduction/>

⁵ Taken from the following website: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/18/business/inflation-coffee-prices-weather/index.html>

enormous expansion of nuclear arsenal,⁶ the constant bickering of political parties, and earthquakes and storms causing in some cases up to 100,000 deaths;⁷ I can't help but feel slightly discouraged. As I finish my breakfast and read my Bible, I am reminded that while as Christ's ambassador I am called to preach the Good News by both my words and deeds (2 Corinthians 5:20) this too can be quite frightening for I often feel like I am a sheep sent amongst the wolves (Matthew 10:16) to a society that doesn't like approaching the light because it reveals their reprobate minds (John 3:20; Romans 1:28)! To be hard pressed, persecuted, and struck down by the suffering and pain that comes from living in an unjust, sinful world with a body that is constantly decaying is difficult but not impossible!

Outwardly Wasting Away but Inwardly Being Renewed

In just three verses Apostle Paul masterfully explains how to be happy by identifying



three contrasts between natural and spiritual reactions to living in a fallen world. The first contrast is found in his opening remarks, “though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (verse 16). Paul begins by acknowledging that our bodies or as he rightly calls them, “jars of clay” (verse 7), feel so intensely the pain and agony of decay that “joy, hope, and peace of heart and mind”⁸ seem like distant memories of a better time. Many days we feel like king David who said, “Oh that I had

wings like a dove, for then I would fly away and be at rest” (Psalms 55:6).⁹ To exercise, eat and sleep right to only have our brains, lungs, liver, heart, bones and muscles¹⁰ slowly show signs of returning to the dust of the earth in which they came is not only painful but at times downright depressing! Are we not like the orphan Dorian Gray who after having Basil Hallward paint his

⁶ Taken from the following website: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/03/politics/pentagon-china-report/index.html>

⁷ Taken from the following website: <https://www.trtworld.com/mea/five-deadliest-natural-disasters-of-the-last-20-years-205973>

⁸ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2462.

⁹ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2462.

¹⁰ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2463.

portrait declared, “How sad! I shall grow old and horrible, but this picture never will be older.”¹¹ How was Apostle Paul, who had five times received forty lashes less one, three times beaten with rods and shipwrecked, constantly in danger of losing his life to bandits, Gentiles and Jews (2 Corinthians 11:24-27);¹² was able to boldly and joyfully declare the Gospel when the people around him saw his battered body and assumed God’s wrath had fallen on him?¹³ As we wait for the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:22-23)¹⁴ and experience the constant decay that comes from living in a fallen world don’t we often feel so perplexed and crushed that all we want to do is yell at the top of our lungs “who will rescue me from this body of death” (Romans 7:24)? Surely the key to happiness is not to experience crushing difficulties to glorify suffering in one’s life?¹⁵

While “every day we lose a step, experience heartbreak, sorrow, pain, the effects of the curse of sin in this fallen world,”¹⁶ Paul states we are not crushed, in despair, abandoned or destroyed because these “jars of clay” contain a very special treasure that is the key to our happiness! “As death came through a man the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man” (1 Corinthians 15:18)!¹⁷ While our “liberation from the bondage of decay” does not occur until the Parousia when believers will be conformed to the likeness of the Son (Romans 8:29),¹⁸ the deposit guaranteeing this future liberation (2 Corinthians 1:22), i.e., the Holy Spirit, is our

¹¹ David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 241.

¹² David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 240.

¹³ David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 240–241.

¹⁴ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2463.

¹⁵ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 197.

¹⁶ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2465.

¹⁷ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 189–190.

¹⁸ James M. Scott, [2 Corinthians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 107.

strength made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9)!¹⁹ It is through “fellowship with the risen Christ and the power of the Spirit” that the believer is able not to just able to endure



hardship but can feel unspeakable joy of “being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18)!²⁰ It is through the daily feeding on the Word of God, prayers, fellowship with the saints,²¹ and total submission to His will that one is able to see the inward portrait of one’s life, rich with spiritual blessings and eternal crowns of righteousness hanging around one’s neck! While every day brings about new and potentially heart crushing circumstances into our frail lives the key to not becoming crushed, in despair, or destroyed is to ask for and the “measure of grace from the hands of the Father”²² needed to renovate and refocus one’s heart on our secured position as His child in His kingdom! “While suffering is

not the glory of Christ,”²³ it is a source of unspeakable joy for those who view God as their portion (Lamentations 3:21-26),²⁴ and want to show a dying world they too can live! To walk by this kind of faith and not by sight is truly like watching Christ mold and reshape one’s portrait before one’s very eyes that starts to resemble the very image of, He who gave one life.

Light and Momentary Troubles in Comparison to the Eternal Glory

The second contrast given by Paul that helps us feel unspeakable joy in the midst living in a fallen world of pain and suffering is as follows, “for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (verse 17). Had this been said by anyone other than Apostle Paul, who fulfilled the prophecy that he would suffer greatly for Christ’s name (Acts 9:14), we might be offended and take his words to be false and devoid of

¹⁹ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2465.

²⁰ David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 241.

²¹ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2466.

²² Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2465.

²³ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 197.

²⁴ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2465.

empathy for our trials and tribulations²⁵ and yet from these very words we find great hope! Even though Paul on the one hand often felt “pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that he



often despaired even life” (2 Corinthians 1:8)²⁶ he was also able to feel contentment and even unspeakable joy in such bleak circumstances because he knew these “birth-pangs of the Messiah” (Mark 13:3-8, 17-20, 24-27)²⁷ were being revealed in his perseverance.²⁸ Because Paul believed God would ultimately deliver him and in the mean time make him strong in his weakness (4:7, 12:7-10),²⁹ Paul was able to wander the darkest of valleys not with disappointment with God³⁰ but rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer while he was planting and

watering seeds amongst those “whom Christ had shed His precious blood.”³¹ Paul also knew that being one of the “worst sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15) whatever affliction he might have received was pale in comparison³² to the weeping and gnashing of teeth of hell³³ he deserved but by faith and grace had been pardoned! And finally, what gave Paul courage was knowing that his affliction was light in comparison to “the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane” of the

²⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Our Light Affliction,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 157.

²⁶ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2466.

²⁷ Colin G. Kruse, [2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 110.

²⁸ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2466.

²⁹ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 197.

³⁰ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 200.

³¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Our Light Affliction,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 159.

³² C. H. Spurgeon, [“Our Light Affliction,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 161.

³³ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Our Light Affliction,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 161.

Lord!³⁴ We are not to be offended by what Paul said for our affliction is momentary and light. Instead, may we humbly bow our knees to have our hearts strengthened by the very One who loves us and has promised to never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5)!

The key then to seeing troubles as being light and momentary is all a matter of having the right perspective!³⁵ When you demonstrated the extraordinary faith of believing in the atoning sacrifice of the Son³⁶ you were not promised an easy, trouble-free life but instead a radical transformation from spiritual death to life that was so pervasive that it radically changed your



mindset! Since the “old is gone and the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17); earthly albeit temporary treasures of living a long healthy and wealthy life³⁷ have taken a back seat to thirsting after, becoming like, and pleasing the Lord (Psalms 42:1-2)!³⁸ To keep suffering from feeling like a “lethal weight”³⁹ or unbearable albatross of affliction around one’s neck one simply must believe that suffering “does not overturn the purposes of God, even in an age characterized by pain and injustice!”⁴⁰ Troubles do not nullify God’s promise that “in all things He works for the good of those who love Him” (Romans 8:28),⁴¹ but instead are often the crucible in which sin is

³⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Our Light Affliction,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 162.

³⁵ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2467.

³⁶ David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 244.

³⁷ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 198.

³⁸ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2467.

³⁹ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 190.

⁴⁰ Paul Barnett, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#), *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 252–253.

⁴¹ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2467.

driven out,⁴² spiritual maturity and a glorious witness of “the glory of His presence and power” are obtained!⁴³ As if receiving a new heart and given the privilege of planting seeds of righteousness in another’s person were not sufficient to drown out the sorrows of affliction Paul states what brings us unspeakable joy comes from keeping our eyes fixed on the glorious day when the Lord returns. On this day the perishable and mortal get to clothe themselves with the imperishable, immortal new spiritual bodies (1 Corinthians 15:53-54)⁴⁴ and God’s own get to spend an eternity with their Lord! What God has given His own, despite often being given in the furnace of affliction, are “infinitely more valuable than anything the world has to offer, positively or negatively!⁴⁵ May our value of becoming more like and pleasing God in the present and our expectations of the final consummation of His kingdom⁴⁶ fill our hearts with unspeakable joy and an unquenchable desire to serve Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength!

Keeping Your Eyes Fixed on What is Seen and not Unseen

The final contrast given by Paul is to “fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (verse 18). Despite being image-bearers of He who bought them at the price of His very life and having received every spiritual blessing in His name, like us today the church of Corinth tended to define reality and what truly matters as being that which “can be estimated, calculated,”⁴⁷ and identifiable by the human senses of sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. Those who determine the value of their lives based on the satisfaction of personal wants and desires will never be happy for long because chance happens to everyone (Ecclesiastes 9:11) and with it often brings the tides of injustice, suffering and pain of living in this fallen world! What a shame that so many Christians trade in an intense, personal furrow making relationship of transformation that draws them ever closer to

⁴² C. H. Spurgeon, [“Our Light Affliction,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 164.

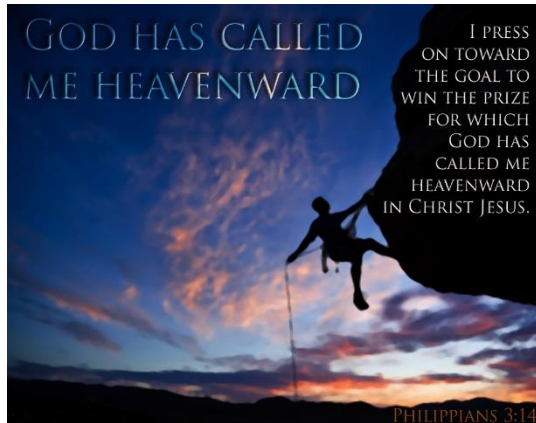
⁴³ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 190.

⁴⁴ David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 245.

⁴⁵ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 194.

⁴⁶ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 198.

⁴⁷ Mark A. Seifrid, [The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Second Letter to the Corinthians](#), ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2014), 219.



one heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14)! He who has placed eternity in our hearts wants our gaze, love, devotion, and attitude to be humbly and joyfully fixed on the pioneer and author of not only our faith but eternal life (Hebrews 12:2; John 3:16).

God’s image for but a few trinkets and toys from the god of this age.⁴⁸ Can anything the Devil offer humanity ever truly satisfy the heart’s desire much less last the test of time? While what God created is certainly not evil, we must not forget this world is not our home (Hebrews 13:14). To keep from “vanishing into a black hole of meaningless suffering”⁴⁹ we simply must embrace the true meaning of life which is “to do good works in which God has prepared for one to do” (Ephesians 2:10) and to “press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called

Ultimately what really makes life bearable, and a source of great joy comes from knowing that He who oversees all things seen and unseen has gone to prepare a glorious home for His children! While we pilgrims and strangers wait to go home to see Jesus yes there will be times that we will feel “disillusioned, defeated, and discouraged.”⁵⁰ During these times we are not to lose hope for by trusting the Lord through perseverance of affliction, pain and injustice these dire moments can be great times of rejoicing for they lead not only to increased spiritual maturity but also provides an incredible “life” witness to the world of being strengthened and sustained by grace!⁵¹ Joy not only comes from remembering past and present grace we have received⁵² but also in looking forward to the day of the Lord’s return.⁵³ The things we see in this world are

⁴⁸ David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 244.

⁴⁹ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 204.

⁵⁰ Alan Carr, [“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2469.

⁵¹ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 191.

⁵² Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 202–203.

⁵³ Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 202.



temporary, fleeting and passing away moment by moment.⁵⁴ As we live in this fallen world we must not forget that Christ, the Creator and centre of the universe is to be the focus of our every word, thought and deed ... not ourselves!⁵⁵ O the glorious day when the Lord returns and we receive eternal, incorruptible bodies (Romans 8:19–23; Philippians 3:20–21)⁵⁶ that will no longer be subject to decay, sorrow, pain, or injustice (Revelation 21:4)! O

to the glorious day when we get to walk and talk with the One whom every knee shall bow and confess to be the Lord (Philippians 2:10-11)! The secret to not only contentment, but happiness is to live with eternity in one's eyes and heart!

Let me finish with one final quote from Charles Spurgeon.

But does the brevity of life cause us any anxiety? Oh, no! “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;” and when once we reach that blest abode of all the saints, and look back upon our earthly experiences, we shall feel that any affliction we had to endure was light indeed compared with the unutterable bliss that shall then be our eternal portion. We are pilgrims to Zion’s city bound.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Mark A. Seifrid, [*The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Second Letter to the Corinthians*](#), ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2014), 219.

⁵⁵ Alan Carr, [*“Do Not Lose Heart \(2 Corinthians 4:16–18\),”*](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 2468.

⁵⁶ Colin G. Kruse, [*2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 111.

⁵⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [*“Our Light Affliction,”*](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 165.