

June 25, 2006  
Pentecost 3

*"Let's Stay Focused on Our Hope of the Resurrection"*

## **2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-18**

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*It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, <sup>14</sup> because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. <sup>15</sup> All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. <sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but what is unseen." Christians are like the soccer player in the world cup who keeps his eyes fixed on the ball as he drives it with tremendous power to the top corner of the goal into the back of the net. We keep our eyes fixed on what is unseen, the hope of the resurrection that is ours on the last day. If the soccer player takes his eyes off the ball at the last second he will not be able to hit the ball accurately. We keep our eyes fixed on the hope of the resurrection. This allows us to join Paul in saying that our troubles are light and momentary compared to the glory that will someday be ours. As Norm Larson is so fond of telling us again and again, "In the light of eternity does it really matter?"

How would you rate your life this past week on a scale of 1 to 10? Has it been one of the best of this past year, a definite nine or ten? Or has it been one of the most difficult weeks of the last several months, a two or three. Or maybe it has been just a middle of the road week. Whatever your circumstances in life may be, the hope of the resurrection that you have in Jesus and the hope of a place that he has prepared for you remains the same. The more we think about this future home that is ours, the more boldly we will witness to our faith and the more boldly we live our lives here on this earth.

### **This leads us to speak more boldly**

Keeping your eyes fixed on the hope of the resurrection actually makes you bold to witness to what you believe. Paul tells us how true that was in his life. "It is written, 'I believed; therefore I have spoken.' With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us up with Jesus and present us with you in his presence." Paul did not go on missionary trips because he liked to travel. He traveled from city to city because he wanted to share the hope of the resurrection through Jesus. He quotes from the psalmist who said, "We believe therefore we speak."

In Psalm 116 it says, "The cords of death entangle me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord."

When the Lord delivers you from trouble, you feel like bursting out and praising the Lord by telling everyone what the Lord has done for you. The ultimate deliverance will come on judgment day when our bodies are raised to life again. We live in the hope of that deliverances as the psalmist says in verse 15 of that same psalm: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

When my wife's mother went home to heaven, Susan opened a card and in it was this verse of Scripture, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Her sorrow was turned to joy as she celebrated the hope of the resurrection. This hope so fills us with joy that we cannot help but share it with others. We believe. Therefore we speak.

The more you believe in something, the more you will want to talk about it and share it with other people. Driving through LA I was listening to the traffic reports on KNX and heard a financial expert talk about Garmin, the company that makes the GPS systems. People like the product so much they talk it up among their friends and even want to purchase stock in the company. What we have waiting for us such a beautiful thing it is hard not to share it with out people. We believe that our heavenly Father who raised Jesus from the dead will someday also raise us from the dead.

The Greek word for resurrection is "anastasis" which means literally to stand up again. That is what happened to Jesus. His lifeless body was taken down from the cross, wrapped in linen and spices, and laid horizontally in a stone tomb. But then Jesus was raised up again. That same thing will happen someday to you and me. We will stand up again, raised to life, and life in a real world that Jesus has prepared for us.

And when we are raised to life again, Paul tells us that our heavenly Father will present us with you in his presence. Just think about how beautiful that will be when our Father takes people like you and me, raises us back to life again and then presents us to himself. Jesus does the same thing according to Ephesians 5. He loved the church so much that "he gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain, or wrinkle, or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." Have you ever attended a wedding and heard the pastor say, "I present to you Mr. and Mrs...?" On judgment day you will hear the Father say to you, "I present to you.... (Names) They are holy and blameless in my sight, raised to life and fit for eternity with me.

This thought of our God presenting us to himself as pure and holy in his sight on the day of the resurrection is so overwhelming, because we are so impure and unable to even purify ourselves from one sin. What kind of week was this for you? I was able to help Susan's dad move to Tucson. I drove the U Haul across the desert. I unloaded it when the temps soared well over a hundred degrees. Yet, in the midst of noble thoughts, kind actions, expending ourselves for others, praying for them, trying to keep our thoughts pure within, we find ourselves always, always falling short of God's perfect stand of holiness. Even our most shining moments have within them the ugliness of sin. Isaiah was not exaggerating when he wrote, "All of us have become like the one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we are shriveled like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." Now we have Jesus, Jesus who took our sins upon himself, cried out it is finished, and then proved that the work of cleansing us was complete by rising from the dead.

That is the hope that so fills our lives that it wells up inside of us, overwhelms us, and leads us to say, "We believe, therefore we speak." It creates people all over the world who share this glory with each other. Paul says the grace of God is reaching more and more people, and thanksgiving is overflowing to the glory of God. This hope of the resurrection that leads us to speak boldly also leads us to live so boldly that even the troubles of life seem light and small compared to the glory that is waiting for us.

### **This leads to living boldly**

As we fix our eyes on the hope of the resurrection it enables us to not become weary and lose heart. "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away. Yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." We don't lose heart, even though we are wasting away outwardly. The Greek word for "waste away" is used also in Luke 12:33 where Jesus speaks about clothing that has been eaten by moths. When we lived in Tucson we made the mistake of storing an old wool blanket in the storage shed. It was not moths that ate the blanket but crickets. When you held up the blanket it was completely full of holes, like a piece of Swiss cheese. For some people their bodies become more and more subject to decay and deterioration. Paul certainly saw his body wasting away from multiple beatings, imprisonment, poor food, shipwrecks, and a life of just traveling from place to place. Yet he knew that he was going home. This gave him strength to face each new day to live for Christ and confidently say, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Even though we waste away outwardly, we are renewed inwardly. Something inside of us keeps every day fresh and new. The next chapter tells us how this inward renewal takes place inside of us. "Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come." The Holy Spirit has put a purpose and direction in your life. Just as Your heart pumps blood through miles and miles of blood vessels in your body, the Holy Spirit keeps pumping into every fiber of your being this glorious hope that you will someday live for every with Jesus after being resurrected to life again. This renews you, it charges you up, and gives you new energy, just as you charge up the batteries for your cell phone.

The troubles that face us in life actually make the eternal home more real to us with each passing day. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs them all." It is not our crosses or troubles that earn eternal salvation for us. Salvation was earned for us by Jesus, given to us as free gift, and secured for us in our baptism. The troubles of life enhance the hope of the resurrection and make our eternal glory more real to us. The glory that will be ours far outweighs any troubles or problems we might face. Paul calls them light and momentary troubles.

I am holding in my hand a rock, a heavy rock. Imagine if this were pure gold. It would be hard even to lift this rock. It would be so heavy. I am holding in my other hand a feather. The stone or rock of gold would easily outweigh the feather. Troubles are light like a feather floating in the breeze compared to the eternal weight of glory that is ours. This is how we face each day, firmly believing that this body that is subject to pain and suffering, will someday have an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs the problems. Thus we can say of all trouble, "In the light of eternity does it really matter?"

So we live each boldly and confidently sharing with each other the hope of our future resurrection on the last day. It allows us to live above our circumstances not underneath them. It allows us to say confidently with Paul, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." The Greek word for "Fix" is "skopeo" from which we get words such as scope, microscope, and telescope. Last week I was able to see the lab where my daughter is doing research on cancer cells. We were able to see cells underneath a powerful microscope. You could actually fix your eyes on these tiny cells and see them move. With your miracle eyes, your faith eyes, you are able to look beyond this present world and see the place that Jesus has prepared for you. When you see what lies beyond, you begin to believe that it is more real than the world you see all around you today. The mountains, the ocean, the homes, the streets, the flowers, the trees, and everything in our world will pass away. As Peter tells us, "But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."

Looking forward. Keeping our eyes fixed on the resurrection and the future glory that will be ours. That allows us to speak boldly and live boldly as the end draws near. Amen.