

Lesson Five

(4:16 — 5:10)

SECTION VIII 4:16 — 5:10

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

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; 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.

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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. 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 good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.

This section sort of sums up the idea of sufficiency which was brought up in chapter 2 by showing that God has all things in hand, even to the preparation of a home eternal for those who are being saved, 2:16, and who are being led in a victory procession by Christ, 2:15. If God can prepare such a home, then it is sure that he is able to make anyone "sufficient" for service in the new covenant, which has eternal glory connected with it.

V. 16 — **we do not lose heart** — Though God sustains, yet the "vessel" is fragile, the trials ever-present, and sometimes faith is weak. So, it is comforting to know that God raises the dead, and promises them the blessing of his presence, v. 14.

outer . . . inner — See here Ephesians 3:16; 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10; Romans 7:22; I Corinthians 15:44. That which is material and temporal (cf. Ch. 5) will pass away as does all which is material. The spirit, the real person, is alone of such nature as to be eternal. It can be "reborn," and renewed each day, even if we fail to understand just how. The spirit is of the same nature as God, who is spirit, John 4:23-24, and is thus in the image of God.

To some extent, as we have noticed, part of what Paul says is true of any and all Christians, in principle, if not otherwise. Hence, it is generally held that such texts as this one state what is true for every Christian, regardless of who it might be. When this admission is made, however, it becomes difficult to separate what is true of all and what is true only of the apostle. If we hold that Paul is talking only of himself (or only of the apostles), a considerable amount of teaching that is not found elsewhere, at least not nearly so clear, is removed from use. Few, if any, would hold to such a position. So, it is a rather arbitrary proceeding on the part of anyone to decide just how much, if any, is true only of Paul, etc. We do well to recognize such.

V. 17 — This verse bespeaks of the abiding hope of every Christian who by faith looks for an eternal city, whose builder and maker is God, Hebrews 11:10, and that this pilgrim's citizenship is in heaven, Philippians 3:20. Note Romans 5:1-5; Luke 16:1-18, 19-32.

Notice the contrasts: affliction/glory; temporal/eternal; light/heavy.

Note here how heavy the affliction may get, ch. 1:8; yet the glory makes it insignificant, as Romans 8:17-25 states.

V. 18 — The reason is given for what was stated in v. 17; Christians (we) look (i.e., make our lifestyle) at things eternal rather than things temporal. Check Colossians 2:20 — 3:17 for a good parallel. The idea here will be enlarged in 5:1-10, especially v. 10, where judgment will be based upon what we "behold" in this life. Jesus taught that we ought to mind eternal things, Matthew 6:19-34; not building upon the shifting sands and things that perish with the using, Matthew 7:13-29; I John 2:15-17. We are encouraged many times to be like those of Hebrews 11, who built arks for future floods, and sought cities that were "other worldly" and all this because they were not ashamed to honor God as God, living as if seeing him who is invisible. It is then good to ask about what is real, true, and eternal!!

we know — This is part of the reason that we habitually keep beholding that which is eternal (4:17): because of our hope in God.

earthly tent — Our mortal/physical body. See I Corinthians 15, where the mortal puts on the immortal.

destroyed — The Greek term was actually used in reference to striking a tent.

we have — Present tense, present possession. See the point about faith, Hebrews 11:1. Note II Peter 1:14. This promise of God is yet to be totally realized by us who are living, since some aspects of salvation are yet to be revealed, I Peter 1:5, though other aspects of salvation are presently enjoyed.

building — Contrast to tent, impermanent/permanent. Only God could make such a house. The figures Paul used are interesting because he was a tentmaker.

eternal — Generally this term denotes a quality of life, and only implied is the idea of time. See John 10:10b. However, in our text the idea of time is prominent, the temporal vs. the eternal state.

5:2 — This verse brings up a section that is difficult (though the whole section is notoriously so) with the idea of wanting to put on the heavenly dwelling (as one would put on a garment) to keep one from being found naked, v. 3. The problem is several-sided, as for instance, a) was Paul afraid to die and would rather not die, b) what does the "heavenly garment" do, c) what is the meaning of "naked," and so on. We will run into a somewhat similar problem in chapter 12, with the body as well as the earth/heaven (Paradise) idea.

The evident fact is that we do not have a systematic discussion anywhere of heaven and how it relates to earth, etc. The times and places where it is discussed, as here, only give occasion for application of the truths to the Christian and how life ought to be lived down

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here, while in this fragile vessel like unto a tent. Hence, we are left with most questions unanswered. Doubtless God planned it so. Our job is to teach in such a way that people will live right here, and believe that God will take care of the rest.

V. 3 — **putting it on** — Whether Paul means in place of his earthly tent or on over his earthly tent is a moot question for many. It seems to me that he desires to replace the earthly with the heavenly dwelling/covering, as the rest of the text seems to say, and as is plainly said in Philippians 1:21-23.

naked — Just what this means is not too clear. It may mean something like is mentioned in Romans 13:14 (i.e., to put on Christ, his righteousness, etc., and to be found in Christ, Philippians 3:9; Ephesians 4:22-24).

V. 4 — Because of the exceeding flimsiness of the earthen vessel and the exceeding greatness of God's heaven, Paul longs for the eternal, as should every Christian, or as I Corinthians 15 puts it, that the mortal may put on immortality.

V. 5 — This simply states clearly what has been said earlier about the activity of God here and hereafter for those who serve the new covenant.

V. 6 — The opposite idea of 4:1, 16. Of course, "away" from the Lord is not in opposition to Matthew 28:20, but rather distinguishing heaven from earth.

V. 7 — **faith/sight** — As Romans 8:24-25 shows. Sight means that hope is gone, being swallowed up in realization, for in heaven both faith and hope will have vanished.

V. 9 — The same sentiments can be found in Philippians 3:1-4; Galatians 2:20; etc. Note the idea of "pleasing" in Matthew 3:17; 12:18; 14:6; Acts 12:3; Romans 15:3; I Corinthians 10:5; 15:38; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 11:5; 10:38; 11:25; 13:16; I John 3:22.

V. 10 — One can hardly think of being with Christ and not also think that the way one's life is lived will determine just where one spends eternity. Hence, the apostle states the obvious: to be absent from the body and present with the Lord includes a judgment through which one must pass. Hence, how life is practiced here is most important, since the verdict will be based upon what is done throughout life.

So all the talk of things eternal and life eternal are shown to be quite relevant down here among things mundane and people human.

QUESTIONS:

36. Upon what basis did Paul say he did not lose heart?
37. If things that are unseen are the "real," and things seen the "transient," what is true of the world about us?
38. Which term (real/transient) would describe the "house" God has prepared for us?
39. Does "mortal" equal "transient"?
40. Is the judgment based upon what we believe or what we do?
41. What "use" or "application" do the Scriptures make of the subject of heaven?