



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10

Paul and the Ministry: 5

“The Supports of the New Covenant Ministry”

TRANSCRIPT

Now, we’re looking at Paul and his Ministry. And tonight we’re turning to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 16 through chapter 5 in verse 10 for our Scripture passage. The subject for tonight is “The Supports of New Covenant Ministry.” The ministry of the glad tidings of Messiah’s glory is solemn. It is glorious, but it is costly.

The apostle, in one of his most important letters, the letter to the Galatians, speaks about the fact that he bears in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. That would seem to indicate that service for the Lord was something that was very costly for the Apostle Paul. He could look in his own body and find evidences of his service, because it was a physical thing with him. He had suffered immensely for the gospel of Christ.

In the eleventh chapter of this epistle, a passage to which we will refer later on, he recounts some of the unusual experiences of suffering to which he was exposed. Someone has facetiously said, that there are three essentials for Christian work; the head of a father, the heart of a mother, and the hide of a rhinoceros. Now, that is not a bad comment really, because we do need the head of a father, and we do need the heart of a mother, and sometimes we need the hide of a rhinoceros, too, in order to be obedient to the things that are found in the Word of God in spite of the things that people may say.

We expect sufferings as Christians. The apostle warns us that if we are to serve the Lord, we must expect persecution. “They that will live godly in Christ Jesus,” he said, “shall suffer persecution.” So we should not be surprised if we have it. In fact, we should be surprised if we do not have persecution. It may be that our testimony is such that we’ve made no ripples at all in the society in which we are a part.

We expect sufferings, and we expect trials, but we also have some assurances that are designed to encourage us and strengthen us and give us support in the midst of our sufferings and trials. We have the assurance of the resurrection. The apostle says here in verse 4—13 and 14 of chapter 4,

“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak. Knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.”

So we have the assurance of the resurrection. We have the assurance of its legitimate issues; the glory of God, the home—the eternal home of which he speaks in the next chapter, and then those eternal rewards, of which he also speaks in the next chapter.

Dan Crawford was one of the great missionaries to Africa, and he described the death of a fellow missionary in this way. He said, “He was a white, fragile-looking traveler with a Pauline gleam in his eyes. So the fragrant saint died at his post. He had only died into glory, as the stars die at sunrise.” This particular earth of which we are a part is an earthly, physical environment. We are spiritual beings. It can never be our true home. This society—this world about us, plagued by sin, touched by sin, filled with sinful beings—it can never be our home. We can never feel completely at rest in the world of which we are a part. William Watson described this condition in one of his poems as “world strangeness.” That’s characteristic of a Christian. He feels a sense of strangeness in this world in which we are living for a time.

Now, Paul is been—has been talking about New Covenant ministry. He has said in the third chapter that he is a minister of the New Covenant, and that he has also spoken about some of the sufferings that the Christians are to experience. He’s spoken about the greatness of the New Covenant, and the salvation that is provided by it. But now having spoken of the sufferings, it would be natural for us to expect him to say something about the things that are designed to weigh in—and to help us in the midst of the sufferings, and he does now in chapter 4, verse 16 through chapter 5, verse 10. He will talk about the eternal weight of glory first.

And let me read now, verses 16 through 18 of chapter 4, and Paul’s comments concerning the eternal weight of glory. And I want you to notice as I read these verses the contrasts that the apostle draws.

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

There are three significant contrasts in this section, and, first of all, contrasting men, and in the sixteenth verse he speaks of that. “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”

The eagle is known for its longevity, sometimes living to be a hundred years old. It also renews its plumage every year, and you’ll remember that in the Old Testament, in more than one place, the eagle is used as an illustration of the renewal of the Christian. Paul says, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day.” It is characteristic of the Christian, in the midst of his trials and sufferings, for the outward man to decay.

It will ultimately perish, but the inward man—the man of the Spirit—is growing constantly in the grace of God, and so it is renewed every day.

Now, that’s the first contrast—contrasting men. The next contrast, in the seventeenth verse, might be called “contrasting weights,” for listen to Paul. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Now, this “for” that begins verse 17 explains how the inward man is renewed day by day. “For—to explain—our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” So the first thing you want to notice here, is the contrast between lightness and weight. Now, I’ve always thought that this was one of the most remarkable things that Paul ever wrote, because listen. He says that the sufferings that he experienced—his affliction—was light. Now, I wouldn’t think, looking at Paul’s life, that his affliction was very light. Let me ask you to turn over to the eleventh chapter, and we’ll just read some of his “light” affliction. Chapter 11 in verse 21. The apostle writes,

“I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Nevertheless, in whatever any is bold, (I speak foolishly), I am bold also.” [Paul finds it very difficult to be boastful. Verse 22,] “Are they Hebrews? So am I.” [Incidentally, he’s talking about the Judaists.] “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool). I am more.” See how difficult it is for him to—to be boastful? “(I speak as a fool). I am more.”

Now, listen to his afflictions,

“In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, night and a day I have been in a deep—in the deep. In

journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren.” [Well, I’ve had a little bit of that, but just a little bit.] “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I’m not ashamed? If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I do not lie. In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of Dama—of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me. And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped by his hands.”

Now, Paul calls this light affliction. That’s light. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal.” Now, in the Greek text, that expression, “far more exceeding,” is something like this literally, “passing through excess and arriving at excess”. “A far more exceeding.”

Now, he says this particular set of experiences “works for him a—an eternal weight of glory.” Contrary to the Law of Moses, which could only give to Moses’ face a reflection of the glory of God, which began to pass away and disintegrate when Moses went out of the presence of the Lord, the new—the ministry of the New Covenant, with all of the blessings that are bound up in it; the eternal presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart of each of those who minister the New Covenant, it is just the opposite from Moses’ Law. And Moses’ experience of being in the presence of the Lord, and finding his face glowing with the presence as he left, that began to fade. The Law can only give a fading glory, and ultimately, “it is abolished,” Paul says in chapter 3. But the New Covenant, and the experiences of the New Covenant convey to the individuals who are ministers of that New Covenant, “an exceeding weight of glory.” So as the days go by, and the service of the gospel of Jesus Christ is continued, the individual grows in likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you know, Paul was not a man who was stoic—stoical. You can read his letters and see that. You can see that he was not a light-hearted individual, and he was not ignorant of the ultimate experiences of life. There are people who say, “Well, if Paul had been sick like I’ve been sick, he wouldn’t have written like he wrote.” Well now, the apostle has already told us that he had far greater experiences than most of us ever had. Or someone has said, “If Paul was poor like I’m poor, and he had to wonder about where the next dollar was coming from, well, he wouldn’t talk so boastfully about the experience of the glory of God.”

Why, there was probably many a time in the apostle’s experience, when he didn’t know where the next dollar was coming from. Or perhaps there are individuals who say, “Well, if he had the experience of the death of a close loved one, well, he wouldn’t be so assured of the great honor and privilege of serving the Lord, and of the supports of the gospel of Christ, and all of those spiritual benefits that are ours. If he’d had an experience like I’ve had, he wouldn’t talk like that.” Well, Paul had all of those experiences and much more, yet he says, “Our light affliction.”

Now, mind you, if 2 Corinthians chapter 11 is “light affliction, and it works a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” what must the glory be? Because that, that Paul calls “light,” is great and deep and overpowering when we read it, to think of the experiences. He calls it light, in the light of the weight of the glory that belongs to the believer in the life that is to come. What must the glory be? That is a magnificent expression. Those contrasting weights, really great. There is the affliction versus the glory. There is the moment. “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works an eternal weight of glory.”

You know, it is a—it’s a notable thing, that the apostle was able to go through the things that he went through. And the reason that he did, was because he had such a good grasp of what lay before him. And I would like to say to you as Christians, that you will discover that in your experiences, the thing that will enable you to go through them, will be the concept and the knowledge of the tremendous future that you have as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is it not a notable fact that the Lord Jesus never foretold his death without—without also foretelling his resurrection? Because with the assurance that we must suffer as a servant of the Lord Jesus, there is also given us the assurance of the ultimate hope that we have in Christ.

Now, in the eighteenth verse, there are contrasting things. He says,

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal.”

Could we say of ourselves, that our hope, our sight—what we are really looking at are the things that are eternal? Or is it that we really have our minds and hearts on the things that are temporal? What’s your concern? Is it with your temporal existence? Your money? Your security? Your job? Your position? Your influence? Your children? All these things, of course, are right in their place, but the apostle says, “We don’t look at those temporal things. We look at the things that are eternal.” Those are the things that are really important, and they’re the things that we ought to have before us constantly. It doesn’t make a bit of difference whether the Cowboys beat the Rams. It’s more important that they beat the Dolphins on this coming Sunday. [laughter] But it’s not important—a football game. It’s not important, our job in the light of these eternal things that he’s talking about.

“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal; and the things that are not seen are eternal.” And if this concept really were to grip us, you would see it in every aspect of our life, our relationship to our neighbors, to our friends, to our employers, or employees, to our fellow Christians. In fact, our life would be different.

Now, that is what Paul has to say about here, the “eternal weight of glory.” But the apostle, in the first eight verses of chapter 5 speaks of the eternal home. Arthur Way, the great translator of ancient classical works, was one that—one—once asked to translate the New Testament, and he did

give us a translation of the Pauline Epistles and the Epistle to the Hebrews. It’s a very interesting translation, because it was made by a classical Greek scholar—not a student of Hellenistic Greek, but of course, a man who was well able to do something like that—but a truly great classical scholar.

When Arthur Way read this, and translated it, he called this particular section—chapter 5, verse 1 and following—the “Hymn of the Home Eternal.”

Now, the Greeks had a different idea of the body, from the idea that we have in a Christian church such as we’re in. They thought of the body as a kind of tomb. They thought of the body as, essentially, sinful in itself, and so the idea of the Christian doctrine of the bodily resurrection was something that went contrary to their views. They really thought that it would be nice to be released from the body, and they thought of death, as being the release of the spirit from the bodily frame which was weak and sinful, and thus, the spirit would be free from an encumbrance when they died. So the doctrine of the resurrection was a doctrine that was contrary to their ideas. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection is not the resurrection of the spirit. The spirit doesn’t die. It’s not the doctrine of the resurrection of the soul. The Christian doctrine is the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

James Denny said, “If you do not believe in the resurrection of the body, you do not re—believe in the resurrection at all, for the Christian doctrine, is the Christ—the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.”

So the apostle has words that are contrary to the ideas of the ancients, and particularly of the Greek philosophers. He was not looking for Nirvana. He was not looking for the peace of extinction. He was not looking for the peace of absorption in some eternal matter, but he was looking for the resurrection of the body. And if you’ll bear that in mind, you’ll understand what he’s speaking about, and also, if you’ll bear in mind that the apostle realized that it was possible for him to live to the time of the resurrection of the body. So he had a legitimate hope, that he would be alive at the time our Lord would come from the heavens, and catch up, not only the bodies of those saints that had died whose spirits were with the Lord when he came, but also, he would catch up the living and transform

their bodies as they were caught up, and they would meet all of the believers in the body of Christ, and thus, ever with the Lord. And those that lived until the time of the coming of the Lord, would not die.

Now, Paul has that in mind here when he says, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle—he’s talking about the body—were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this—that is, in this body—we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not that we would be unclothed.” Paul doesn’t want to be unclothed. He doesn’t want to die before the resurrection, and thus exist as a spirit without a body, for that is the condition of all who have died at the present time. Their spirits are with the Lord, as he will say in a moment, but their do not—they do not have their resurrection bodies yet. The only person who has been resurrected at this point is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has a glorified body. They wait the glorified body. They await it. We also await it.

So in verse 4 he says,

“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

So first of all, Paul speaks about the revelation of this eternal home. Now, some people reading this have thought the apostle to be speaking of an int—intermediate body. That is, that if a person dies—for example, if I were to die of a heart attack at the present time, my body would be placed in the grave, my spirit would go to be with the Lord, and I would be the better for it, of course. But nevertheless, I would not have a body. Now, some have posited a doctrine of an intermediate body. That is, that I would go to be with the Lord, but I would be given an intermediate

body, awaiting the body of the resurrection. And some have even looked at this passage as supporting that, but I don't think there's anything here that really supports that.

Paul says, “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” So he's not talking about any temporary body. He's talking about the fact that we know that if we die, we're going to have a resurrection body that will be a body that we will have for eternity, but it—in other passages, he makes plain, it is given to us at the time of his coming. That's when the resurrection takes place. So there is no intermediate body spoken of here. He's talking about the earthly body, and the resurrection body.

Now, he begins by saying, “Now we know.” Now, how did he know that? Did he know that by research? Did he go to the University of Tarsus, and take Philosophy 101, and come to understand from Philosophy 101 that, “if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”? No, they didn't teach that in Philosophy 101 in the University of Tarsus. Did he have it—did he understand it in psychology? Well, psychology wasn't even known as a science in those days, and some people doubt it's a science today. So it was not there. It wasn't taught in history. It wasn't taught in anything else. It was not taught in anything. It's not something you learn by research. It's something that you know by revelation. That's the only way that you can know about the resurrection body—by revelation. So this is truth by revelation. For ye know—or, we know—we know this by revelation.

Now, the apostle says that, “if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved,” he does not mean that there is any question about having the body if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved. What he means by that “if”—for it is a third-class condition, for those of you that read Greek—he means that it is probable, but not inevitable that we shall die. So he uses a condition that is suitable for the fact that it's not inevitable that we will die. It is probable that we will die. So he says, “If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved.” The experience of most of the friends of the apostle who were Christians to that time, was that they entered into the presence of the Lord

by death, but it's not inevitable. He knows that it is possible, that he may not die. So he puts it that way.

He says, “We have a building of God.” It is something given by God. That word, incidentally, suggests a kind of process of construction, and so the idea is of this building, is something that is—that God is at work preparing, and it's a permanent thing. It's “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan.”

What does Paul mean by that? Well, over in Romans 8—now, I'll just tell you about this, and you can look it up—over in Romans 8, he speaks about groaning in this present body. He means, we groan because we don't have a body with which we can completely please the Lord. “We would like to please the Lord,” Paul says, “but we have a body in which the sin principle dwells.” And because the sin principle dwells within it, we always desire to do the things that would please the Lord, but the body acts as a deterrent. So “in this we groan.”

Now, every true Christian knows exactly what Paul is talking about. How often have we desired to please the Lord and find the sin principle is overmastering us? We gain the victory here. We gain the victory there. We hope that our life is a life of progress and growth, but as long as we're in the flesh, there is always defeat. Not always in the sense of “I'm always defeated,” but always from time to time, we are defeated and we must make new steps forward in spiritual growth.

So “in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” I want you to notice that word “clothed upon.” It's used in verse 2, and used in verse 4. Verse 4 he says, “We that are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened: not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon.”

Now, the Greeks wore two pieces of equipment. They wore a—a garment that was a *ketone*. It was a—a basic garment that was put on next to the flesh. And then on top of that, they put an *ependutes*, or a kind of outer tunic. When Peter, for example, was in the boat—remember, after the death of the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus was on the shore, and—and he called out some words to them. Finally Peter said, “It's the Lord.” And it says, “he took up his *ependutes* and put it on because

he was naked.” Well now, he wasn’t naked out fishing in the lake. He wasn’t the original streaker, but he had on the inner garment, and he put on the outer garment, and he dove into the water and went to the shore, remember.

Now, that’s what Paul is speaking about here. He says, “We don’t want to be unclothed in heaven without a body. We want to be clothed upon.” Now, the “clothing upon” is the resurrection body given to those who are still alive. We don’t want to die, and enter the presence of the Lord unclothed, without our resurrection body. We want to be clothed upon, so we want to be living when the Lord comes, and we want to be caught up with it, and we want to have our resurrection body given to us in that way. “To be changed,” as he says in another place, “without having to pass through death.” Clothed upon. He wants to be an Elijah, not a Moses, so there will be no crying, no tears, no pain, no sorrow, no death, no funeral, no burial, no tombstone, no epitaph. Or as we sometimes sing, “Oh joy, oh delight, should I go without dying.”

That’s what Paul is speaking about here. That’s what he wants. This is a great hope, the apostle. It’s a great hope that every Christian should have; that he will be alive at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and will not pass through death. It’s not cowardly. It just means that you do not want to be in that incomplete state. You want to have your resurrection body. You want to have the fullness of redemption. You have it in your spirit now. You want to have it in your body. We all look forward to a resurrection body, at least I do. I’ve known some people that were quite happy with the one they have, and in fact, they seem to prefer that to the hope ahead. But just wait awhile, and they’ll join the rest of us, wanting something different.

Well, Paul validates this in the fifth verse by saying,

“Now he that hath wrought us for the very same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”

This is the validation. The Spirit is a kind of first installment toward the total inheritance. Now, the Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, is come to indwell everyone of us, but redemption is not complete in his coming. We don't have our body yet. God has put himself in the position of a debtor through redemption. He's given us the Spirit as the earnest, but we want more, for he's promised us more. I have the earnest money, but I don't have the full payment yet, and the full payment comes at the second coming of the Lord Jesus. But the Spirit is the assurance that I'm going to have the full thing some day.

Now, the apostle speaks of the confidence that he has, the expectation that he has, the inclination that he has in verses 6 through 8. Let me just read them—make a couple of comments.

“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith, not by sight). We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

That word “with” incidentally, is suggestive of “with in the sense of communion.” So to be absent from the body, is to be “with” the Lord. We don't pass through soul sleep. The soul doesn't die and sleep, and we don't know anything between the time of our death and the time of the resurrection, as some of the false cults teach. No, we are—the moment we're absent from the body, we are present with the Lord; consciously present with him, for that word suggests communion.

Many years ago, a very close member of my family lost a son, just after he had been married oh, six or eight months. His wife was pregnant, his mother—when he was in this—well really, he had something like an aneurysm of the brain. He went to the hospital. He was twenty-one years of age—or twenty-two. And she went to the hospital, and he died. And when she met the members of the family who came when they heard about it, her words to them were, “My boy is gone.” Well, she was a Christian woman, and she was expressing the thing that had happened doctrinally, correctly. “My

boy is gone.” The body was still there in the hospital room, but the spirit—he was a believing youngster—his spirit had gone to be with the Lord.

Now, finally, the apostle in verses 9 and 10 speaks of the eternal rewards. Look at Paul’s ambition, “Therefore—or, wherefore we labor.” Now, that word means “we make it our ambition.” Paul uses it three times in the New Testament. We had it once in Romans 15 in the series on Romans. I’m sure you remember exactly what I said then, so I won’t say anything more about it. Paul said remember, “He made it his ambition to preach where Christ was not named.” That’s the same word. So he says,

“We make it our ambition that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.”

The sum of all ambition for a truly Christian man, is to be well-pleasing to the Lord. You could not have anything more wonderful than that. It’s not to be well-pleasing to my family. It’s not to be well-pleasing to my friends. It’s not to be well-pleasing to the elders in the church, although I want to be well-pleasing to all of these people. It’s not even to be well-pleasing to me, but the sum of every truly Christian ambition is to be well-pleasing to the Lord. I think the only time I would ever question the Lord is if when I enter into the presence of the Lord, he should say to me, “Well done thou good and faithful servant,” because I’ve not been a faithful servant in so many ways. But the ambition of a Christian—truly Christian man and woman—is to be pleasing—well-pleasing to the Lord.

So Paul says, “We make it our ambition that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For why we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which he has done, whether it be good or bad.” The “*bema*,” the judgment seat of Christ is one of the necessary things. Every one of us who is a believer must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. If you’re not a believer, you must appear at the great white throne judgment, but for the believers, we must appear at the judgment seat of Christ. We’re

judged as sinners at the cross. We’re judged as sons in this life. He disciplines us, and we’re judged as servants at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, and there we’ll be stripped of every facade, and we shall be revealed for exactly what we are as servants of the Lord. Notice he says, “We must all appear, that every one may receive the things done in his body.” That’s the purpose of it; that we may receive the things which we have done. That word, is the word *proso* from which we get “practice.” Therefore, the things that we practiced, looked at as a whole—the things that we have done.

Incidentally, you’ll not be rewarded according to our motives, not according to our wants. In other words, we won’t be judged according to my want that I’ve just expressed. I won’t be able to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and say, “But I wanted to be well-pleasing to you.” No, it’s, “Well, I really was well-pleasing to him.” So it’s not by my motives, my wants, my thoughts, my hopes, but as Paul says, “according to the things that we have done.”

Now, he also adds, “whether they be good or bad.” I don’t think that means that we’re going to receive bad things, because this word is not the ordinary word that means “bad.” There is a Greek word *kakas*, which means “bad” in the sense of evil, but this is a word that means “bad” in the sense of “worthless”.

Now, when I was going through theological seminary many years ago, Bradford Lapsley was one of the students. He came along when I first began to teach. He’s—as you know—prominent here in the city of Dallas. His parents were also in the church at which I was pastor. Bradford Lapsley had a car—he went to Wheaton College—he had a car on the campus of Dallas Theological Seminary that he worked on for four years. I hardly ever saw that car run, but I saw Bradford work on it so much, that it was almost as if he were attached to it. Now that car was not an evil car, but it surely was a worthless car. And that’s the meaning of this word. I’ve seen people play golf too, and their golf game can only be described as bad. Not wicked, although they hit some wicked slices, and wicked hooks, but just bad games. Nothing immoral about it, just bad.

Well, this word is a word from which we get the English word—it’s related to the English word “foul.” So whether the things are good or worthless, if you’ve done things that are good, you

shall receive a reward. If the things you’ve done are worthless, you just won’t receive a reward—would have stubble. But fortunately, the apostle tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:5, that each of us will have something. So everybody’s going to get a little something. It’s like Christmas time when everybody gets one present. So we’ll all get something, because you see, if you have true faith in Christ, there must be some kind of product, and you shall be rewarded. That’s comforting.

I heard a story one time of an affluent woman who went to heaven. Yes, it’s possible. She dreamed she was in heaven really. The angel was showing her around, showed her a beautiful mansion, she asked who it was for, and she was told, “Well, that’s for your chauffeur.” She said, “That cannot be. He only lived in a little cottage—a lodge—on my estate down there.” She was then shown a cottage, and she asked, “Who’s that for?” She was told, “That was hers.” She said, “Well, I had a big mansion downstairs—down—down below.” But the angel said, “Well, this is all we have for you.” “There must be some error,” she said. And the angel explained, “No, there’s no mistake. It’s all—not all. It’s true. You lived in a much larger building down on the earth, but this was all that we could build out of the material that you sent up.” So “We shall receive the things that we’ve done, whether they be good or bad or worthless.”

Well, here are three wonderful supports for a Christian servant; the eternal weight of glory, these eternal rewards, and also, the eternal home of a resurrection body. Have you noticed those three phrases the apostle used here, which kind of give you a key to the enjoyment of these things? He says in verse 18 of chapter 4, “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are eternal.” That word means to “mark out.” It means to “concentrate upon it.” It’s the word from which we get a “bishop” really. *skopaeo*. And the bishop is the *episkopos*, the overseer. So it has to do with that which you “concentrate your attention upon.”

And then chapter 5, verse 1, “We know that that we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

And then verse 9, “We make it our ambition.” We look, we know, we make it our ambition.

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The present life—my believing friends—is the life in which you have responsibility and opportunity. This is the time to please the Lord. How may you please the Lord? Well, you can please the Lord of course by a love for him, created in your heart by the Holy Spirit. Responsiveness to that is pleasing to him. You have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, and you can seek to learn what it is, to walk by the Spirit. You will please him if you do that. You have an opportunity to be a blessing to other saints, and you can certainly give yourself to that in many ways. And you can be concerned for the glory of God and not the approval of men. These are the things that really please the Lord.

May God help us as believing Christians, to make it our ambition to be well-pleasing to him. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these words from the apostle. We thank Thee for the greatness of our hope, those eternal things in comparison with which the apostle's afflictions were light; the eternal home, and those rewards. Thou hast been good to us. O God, enable us by Thy grace to make it our ambition to be pleasing to Thee, and may we be pleasing to Thee.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.