

June 7, 2015 – 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 (OT: Genesis 3:8-15 Gospel: Mark 3:20-35)

Our Assurance of the Resurrection and Eternal Glory Gives Us Confidence

- *Confidence in the face of difficulties*
- *Confidence to speak the good news*

Two and a half years ago I hit a deer and totaled my car. It turns out that I had good insurance as they gave me much more for my car than I was expecting. They used a third-party to search in the area for an equivalent car to what I had been driving – one that was the same year, make, model and mileage. While I did receive more than I was expecting, at best I could only have purchased a car that was the same as the one that I had been driving. It wasn't enough to get something better.

The same thing applies to other types of insurance that we purchase to protect ourselves from calamity. If a tree falls on your house, your home-owner's insurance will give you money to fix the damage. You might end up with a new roof, but it is still the same old house. Even if your house is completely destroyed by a tornado or hurricane, you may get fair market value, but that won't be enough to let you purchase a significantly better place to live.

But God gives us something far better than insurance. He gives us the assurance of taking part in the resurrection and receiving eternal glory. This assurance gives us confidence in the face of difficulties on this earth and confidence to speak the good news to others.

In the last verse of this section (2 Corinthians 5:1) we read: *“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”* Notice the contrasts here: an tent vs. a building, a temporary dwelling on earth vs. an eternal dwelling in heaven, a tent made with hands and acquired by our own labor vs. a building from God, not made with hands, that is given to us. That is a significant upgrade!

And God does not say that we *will* have a building from Him if our earthy tent is destroyed, but that we *have* a building from God right now, as we speak. This building has already been bought and paid for. It was paid for by the innocent blood of God's only Son Jesus Christ which was shed on the cross to pay for your sins and earn you this eternal house in the heavens. It is there waiting for you.

We could never afford this heavenly house ourselves, as the price is a life of perfect obedience to God – a life in which we never fail to do what God commands. But we all have sinned against God by our thoughts, words, and actions and so are excluded from eternity in heaven.

But God sent His Son to live the perfect life that He requires, to die in our place to take away our sins, and to rise again from the dead, so that through faith in Christ we now have this eternal dwelling as a gift from God.

The fact that God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead assures us that God will raise us up as well. In verse 14 the Apostle Paul writes that *“He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.”* This assurance gives us confidence in this life, no matter what we may face. The knowledge that God would raise him up gave Paul confidence in his work as a missionary. In the verses prior to our reading, Paul talks about how he and his fellow workers constantly faced persecution and death for Jesus's sake (2 Corinthians 4:11), but they continued on, knowing that when they did die, God would raise them up with Jesus, as He will raise us all.

We may not face the same life and death situation that Paul did for being a Christian, but this life is filled with difficulties. We have another great assurance in v. 17: *“For our light affliction,*

which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Again, notice the contrasts: light affliction vs. weight of glory, momentary vs. eternal.

Often our affliction doesn't seem very light when we are going through it. Our difficulties can seem to go on and on and not seem to be very temporary. But in reality they are light and only for a moment. If you think back to some of the hard things that you have experienced, you will probably agree that even though at the time they may have seemed almost more than you could bear, now they do not seem to have been that heavy. As you look back they probably seem to have lasted only a moment.

But it is not the passage of time that really puts our problems into perspective, but rather God's promise of eternal glory. No matter how difficult your situation may be, it does not even compare to what God has in store for you in heaven. If you were put all the problems you have ever had and will ever have in your life on a scale, the eternal glory you will receive far outweighs them all. As it says here, it is “*a far more exceeding*” weight of glory that you will receive.

The phrase translated as “*far more exceeding*” is rather interesting in the original Greek. It twice uses the word from which we get the English word “hyperbole”. In English “hyperbole” means an exaggeration, but the original word meant literally “to throw beyond”. It refers to something that goes beyond one's expectations. The glory that awaits us because Jesus has redeemed us is not hyperbole! It is not an exaggeration! In fact, I am not sure that we can exaggerate it – it is so much more than we can think or imagine!

This assurance of eternal glory beyond our imagination and the assurance of an eternal dwelling in the heavens gives us confidence to face the difficulties we experience in this life. Because of God's promises, “*we do not lose heart.*” (v. 16).

But what God gives us is not limited to a future hope. He also provides for us here and now. Verse 16 reminds us that “*even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.*” None of us are as young as we used to be. When you were young, you may have thought you were invincible, but as time passes, it becomes evident that “*our outward man is perishing.*” Aging brings its own challenges and afflictions.

But that isn't the whole story. Through baptism you were washed of your sins and made a new creation. Originally you were dead in your trespasses and sins, but you have been made alive spiritually. Now you are being inwardly renewed day by day through the Holy Spirit working through God's word. This renewal will not be completed until we enter into the eternal weight of glory that God has prepared for us, but this constant renewal from God helps us as we go through our light affliction here on earth. It enables us to “*not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*” and it helps us to remember that “*the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal*” (v. 18). We see past our earthly situation to the unseen, which we can only see through the eyes of faith.

We have confidence in our afflictions because of the certain promise we have from God of an eternal dwelling in eternal glory. This assurance also gives us confidence to speak His word and a desire to tell others what God has done for them in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul writes at the beginning of this section: “*And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' we also believe and therefore speak*” (v. 13). Paul is quoting from Psalm 116:10 where King David talks about the great affliction he faced but endured through faith in the Lord. Paul had same faith as King David that trusted in God's salvation even when surrounded by enemies. Because Paul believed, he continued to speak the life-saving message of salvation through Jesus Christ. He continued to speak not only

because he believed that God would raise him up with Jesus if his enemies did kill him, but also because of what he believed. He knew that Jesus was the only way to the eternal house and the eternal glory in heaven.

When I shared the story of totaling my car by hitting deer, did you want to know what insurance I had? When we have a good experience with a company, we naturally want to tell others about so that they can benefit as we have. A person may not take our advice, but that possibility usually does not stop us from sharing our experience.

But how much better is the experience we have had with God? Think of what you have received from God. Unlike the insurance that you purchase, the assurance of eternal life and eternal glory is free because it was paid for by Jesus Christ. It is a free gift you receive through faith in God's only begotten Son. This is the message that Paul spoke so "*that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God*" (v. 15). Paul endured all things to tell others about the glory and salvation God offers through Christ, so that those who would listen may experience God's grace and glorify God themselves

We have the same spirit of faith as Paul. Because we believe we therefore speak and tell others what God has done for us and them in Jesus Christ. But sometimes it is easier not to say anything, isn't it? We think that this person or that person will never listen to what we have to say because we are looking at what is seen. But the message we have here of the eternal home and eternal glory can help us overcome our hesitations and fears, just as it helped Paul overcome his fears in the face of danger and death.

May the great assurance we have inspire us to share what Jesus has done, so that other may have the same assurance we do – so that they can share the eternal building from God and the far more exceeding eternal weight of glory that God promises to all who believe. May the assurance we have of the resurrection and an eternal dwelling give us the courage to speak – for what do we have to fear, if God is with us? And may the certainty of our salvation keep us from losing heart as we experience the difficulties of life. "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*" through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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