

1. There is much in this text which we cannot fully comprehend now. The text is full of contrasts and paradoxes. We shall not fully appreciate until we experience fully that of which Paul was allowed to get a glimpse. II Cor. 12:4. All that our Lord requires now is that we be faithful unto death.
2. In vs. 1 Paul had said: "Therefore, because we have this ministry just as we have received mercy, we do not grow weary." In vs. 16 he repeats "we do not grow weary" because he had just said "because we know that the One Who raised the Lord Jesus will raise also us with Jesus and present us with Him." At Gal. 6:9 Paul says: "Let us not grow weary of doing good." At II Thess. 3:13 he says: "Brothers, do not grow weary of doing good." At Hebr. 12:3 we read: "Consider Him (Christ) who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls." And at Lk. 18:1 we read "Then He (Christ) spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not get weary." There the point is that the conviction of faith overcomes all weariness.
3. The remainder of vs. 16 is paradoxical. It speaks only of a Christian. The outer man means the ordinary, earthly things and the inner man denotes the spiritual and heavenly things. In one sense a Christian is slowly wasting away and dying. All that is merely temporal is dying. But in another sense a Christian is being renewed daily. This refers to that which is spiritual, heavenly and eternal. The unbeliever has only the outer man. When he dies, all dies. The Christian has also the inner man. When he dies, life truly begins.
4. Vs. 17 explains vs. 16. Note the combination of phrases or words of contrary meaning: momentary-eternal; lightness-weight; affliction-glory. Paul is not saying that affliction is not grievous. He is saying that it is light in comparison with the glories of everlasting life. Paul is talking about suffering for Jesus' sake in which the Christian has no self-interest. Like the Baptist he says: "He must increase but I must decrease." Jn. 3:30. The apostles learned that "we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22. One translation reads thus: "The light trouble of this moment is preparing for us an everlasting weight of glory, greater than anything we can imagine." The Roman Catholic Church misuses this passage to say that our suffering earns everlasting life. It does not. As we translated above, it "prepares for us" not "earns for us." Remember Rom. 8:18: "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed in us." The word "glory" occurs with higher frequency in II^A Cor. 3 and 4 than anywhere else in the Bible. Here, in vs. 17, is its last occurrence.
5. The Christian is seeing what the unbeliever cannot see. Read Hebr. 11:1 and 3. He believes the summary of the unseen enumerated in the three articles of the Creed: Creation, Redemption, Sanctification. There is no lasting satisfaction in things which can be seen. There is eternal joy and satisfaction in things which cannot be seen. David said at Ps. 16:11: "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Paul says at Php. 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" One commentator says: "Exceedingly, abundantly, from one excess to another, will God give us the glory which He has prepared since before the foundation of the world for them that love him."
6. At Col. 3:1,2 we read: "If therefore you've been raised with Christ, ~~seek~~ the things above where Christ is seated at God's right hand. Think on the things above not on things on earth." If and when we use the things of this life in a God-pleasing way we are seeking and thinking the things which are above. But, they are only temporal. The book of Ecclesiastes urges the man of God to enjoy the things of this life in the fear and love of God.

Theme: WHAT CHRISTIAN FAITH DOES FOR US

Introduction: Vs. 13 before our text reads: "I believed and therefore I spoke" which is quoted from Ps. 116:10. (Read all of Ps. 116 for yourself). Christian faith, a gift of the Holy Spirit, renews us, forgives us, gives us courage, gives us the right view of the things of this life and of that to come. II Cor. 5:7 says "We walk by faith and not by sight." Christian faith is our link with Jesus.

I-Faith gives us courage. Vs. 16 reads: "For which reason we do not get weary." For what reason? Go back to vs. 14: "Because we know that He Who raised the Lord Jesus will raise also us with Jesus and will present us with Him (to God)." Jesus' resurrection is my resurrection. Because He lives I will live too. And that is why we do not grow weary. Because of Jesus' resurrection I am renewed daily. And, although all temporal things are constantly dying, my inner man, my renewed self, is being renewed every day. This is something which is understood and believed only by Christians, people who have repented, people who have the forgiveness of sins, people who are born again of water and the Spirit. Because of sin the world is one huge morgue and cemetery. But midst all this the inner man of Christians lives.

II-Faith causes us to endure affliction cheerfully.

Vs. 17 says that our affliction is light. Can that really be? Isn't affliction bitter and defeating? Of itself, yes. But St. Paul tells us: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time cannot be compared with the glory which will be revealed in us." Rom. 8:18. The Christian's life is truly paradoxical. St. Paul said: "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, I am strong." II Cor. 12:10. And our text, vs. 17 says: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Faith in the resurrection of Jesus makes affliction light, it knows that it lasts only a moment, and it clings to the wonderful prospect of eternal glory in heaven.

III-Faith gives us the correct view of things temporal and eternal.

A-The unbeliever looks only to the things which he can see. Think of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Lk. 16:19-31. The rich man had no time for the Word of God. He lived only to fare richly every day. He lived only for linen and fine clothing. But he lost his soul. At Lk. 12:29-30 Jesus speaks about the goals of the children of this world. He says that they seek only what they will eat, drink and wear. In the parable of the greedy man who built larger barns to store his grain (Lk. 12:16-21) Jesus tells us that this man was not rich toward God. He had more of this life than he needed but he lost it all and his soul in death. The children of this world look only at the things which they can see.

B-The believer looks at the things which cannot be seen. What are these things? St. Paul says: "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Rom. 14:17. By faith in Christ the believer is clothed with the righteousness of Christ. By faith in Christ the believer has peace with God. By faith in Christ the believer knows what true joy is. That is why our text says: "We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

C-The believer has the right view of things temporary. God has given the believer many gifts: wife, children, property, honor, work, friends, good weather. These are gifts of God to be enjoyed. But they are only temporary. This life is only the vestibule to everlasting life.