

DON'T LOSE: YOUR HEART FOR HEAVEN

THESIS: Don't Lose Heart

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 4:6-18

OPEN: (A glimpse of Heaven from Ezekiel 1)

A Glimpse Of Heaven

Ezekiel 1:13-14, 25-28 “The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright and lightning flashed out of it. The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning...Then there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be His waist up He looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down He looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded Him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around Him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.”

In **2 Corinthians 4** let's discover how to keep affection for the afterlife amidst adversity in the day-to-day world.

1. DON'T LOSE YOUR HEART FOR HEAVEN INSTEAD LET THE LORD'S LIGHT SHINE THROUGH YOU.

A. **2 Corinthians 4:6-7** “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. ⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”

1. *Let the light of the knowledge (Scripture) of God shine through you.*

a. **2 Corinthians 4:13-15** “It is written: ‘I believed; therefore I have spoken’ (Ps 116:10). With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, 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. 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.”

1. Believe—therefore speak. If not you, then who—the immorality and godlessness of the world and false religion? They are always talking to people. Pray for the Lord to give you the wisdom and insight from Scripture of what to say and how to say it.

b. **2 Corinthians 2:14-16a** “Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life...”

1. *Historical:* “Jars of clay” describe bowls and pitchers made of fired clay. Coins and jewels could be stored in such vessels. In one Roman triumph, precious metals looted from conquered foes were melted down and poured into clay pots to be carried in the victorious military procession (Gareth Reese, *NT Epistles 2 Corinthians & Galatians*, p. 82).

a. **Illustration:** “Do This and Criticism Can't Hurt You” (*Lifetime Plan For Success*, p. 424-425).

Do This And Criticism Can't Hurt You

by Dale Carnegie

(*Lifetime Plan For Success*, p. 424-425)

Many of us take the little jibes and javelins that are hurled at us far too seriously. I remember the time, years ago, when a reporter from the New York *Sun* newspaper attended a demonstration meeting of my adult-education classes. He lampooned me and my work. I took it as a personal insult. I telephoned the chairman of the *Sun* and practically demanded that he print an article stating the facts instead of ridicule. I was determined to make the punishment fit the crime.

I am ashamed of the way I acted. I realize that half the people who bought the paper never saw that article. Half of those who read it regarded it as a source of innocent merriment. Most of those who may have gloated over it forgot all about it in a few weeks. People are not thinking about you and me or caring what is said about us. They are thinking about themselves before what is said about us. They are thinking about themselves before breakfast, after breakfast, and right on until ten minutes past midnight.

I discovered years ago that although I couldn't keep people from criticizing me unjustly, I could do something infinitely more important: I could determine whether I would let the unjust condemnation disturb me.

- c. **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
 1. ***Insight from John MacArthur:*** “False teachers in Corinth waged an assault against the Apostle Paul. They denigrated him for his physical imperfections, his human weaknesses, the way he spoke. He acknowledged that he wasn’t anything special. After all, he reminded the Corinthians, ‘we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake’ (2 Cor 4:5). In other words, it wasn’t about Paul in the first place. He was only a servant whose role it was to proclaim the majesty and wonder of the new covenant message in Christ. Paul freely admitted that in his case, the message was packaged in a humble, frail, imperfect, common container—an instrument or vessel to pour forth the gospel message. That is precisely what he said in 2 Corinthians 4:7 “we have this treasure in jars of clay.” The imagery is drawn from Jeremiah 18 where God is portrayed as a sovereign Potter, making and remaking His creatures into vessels fit for whatever use He chooses. Paul did not deny his status as a lowly jar of clay; he admitted it. Clay pots were for common use such as from tableware to washbasins to garbage containers—cheap, replaceable, and unattractive. The more feeble the vessel, the more evident it is that the power is God’s. Paul was quite content to be a clay pot in the service of the Lord. He was seeking not the approval of men but the ‘well done’ of the Heavenly Judge. God delights in choosing plain, regular, despised, humble people, whom society might say are good for nothing. By using common, ordinary ‘clay pots,’ God puts His glory on display in a bold way” (*Called To Lead*, p. 105-113).

B. **2 Corinthians 4:8-10** “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”

1. *Let the light of the life (Spirit) of God shine through you.*

a. **2 Corinthians 7:5-7** “For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.”

1. **Comfort** (Greek: *parakaleo*) means to encourage or to urge one to pursue a course of conduct (always prospective, looking to the future).

a. **Hebrews 12:7, 11** “Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as sons...No disciple seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

1. When facing many hardships not of our own wrongdoing perhaps our attitude should be: “God must really love me to give me this much attention and direction” rather than think he has abandoned us.

b. **Heb 13:5b-6** “God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’”

1. **Illustration:** Recent headline at *dailycaller.com* “‘Better Days Will Come’ Marine Corps Veteran And Amputee Kirstie Ennis Says.”

Believing God: Hope & Supernatural Strength

“When God is our strength, it is strength indeed; when our strength is our own, it is only weakness.”

--Augustine

In a world that can wear us down, how do we renew our strength? What do we do in the face of too many projects, temptations, conflicts, and other soul-sapping dynamics in life? The prophet Isaiah ministered to a nation on the verge of collapse. It wasn't just the acute threat from foreign powers - though that was an obvious stressor - but the once proud and righteous country was sinking in its own cynicism and corruption. Isaiah's antidote to spiritual fatigue was simple: Hope in God. Others might help you, but don't put your hope in them. You might be able to muster more determination within yourself, but don't place hope in yourself. The only place to turn for a renewed spirit is the One who has given you every good and perfect gift. So how was your week? How is this month shaping up so far? Are you hopeful and inspired or are you discouraged? Either way, place your hope in the Lord and let Him give you His supernatural strength.

CONCLUSION: Better days forever are coming for those who let the light of the knowledge and life of God shine through them.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So 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.”

Insight: “Believing God—Hope & Supernatural Strength” (author unknown)

2 Timothy 4:7-8, 18 “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing...The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

CLOSE: Don't lose your heart for Heaven instead let the knowledge and life of God shine through you.