



December 13, 2009

2 Corinthians 3 – 5

“We Were Made For Eternity”

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Someone once said Christians can be “so heavenly-minded, they are no earthly good.”¹ But, when you think about it, is there really a Christian like this? Do any of us really know someone who prays too much, fasts too much, reads the Bible too much, memorizes Scripture too much, attends church services too much, witnesses too much, serves the Lord too much? There isn’t a person alive who has such a great focus on heaven that they don’t think about earthly things, like having a job and caring for their family. The truth is that most people are too earthly-minded! We’re consumed by thoughts of work, jobs, traffic, paying bills, getting the car repaired, retirement, worrying about kids and other family members, the stock market, what to wear, what to eat, and the list goes on and on.

Paul writes in chapters four and five to encourage the Corinthian church to be more concerned about heavenly things. He writes in **2 Corinthians 5:5** that we were made for the purpose of eternity, in spite of the fact that we’re living in a temporal place with a temporal body. In fact, **2 Corinthians 5:1–4** is all about the contrast between our “earthly tent” and our “*heavenly dwelling*,” i.e. our physical bodies and our eternal home. He also writes in **2 Corinthians 4:17** about the fact that all of the “*light and momentary troubles*” won’t matter when it comes to the “*eternal glory*” that is to come, even though this life can be difficult at times. It’s easy to discern that this is all about the “here and now” versus “there and to come.”

Paul also writes about the fact that Christians have been given “*the Spirit as a deposit*,”² which means that God is serious about holding up his end of the contract, so to speak. It’s worth emphasizing that the Lord is serious about us, and he is guaranteeing that he’s good for the rest! What is in store for us is far superior to anything that is in this world. This has been given to us so that Christians won’t become weary, overwhelmed and discouraged by the things that happen in this life. We have this struggle because we have to live in an environment that we weren’t ultimately designed for. Originally, we may have been made for

¹ Use this link to listen to the Johnny Cash song *No Earthly Good* that Pastor Gary mentioned – <http://www.lala.com/#search/no%20earthly%20good%20johnny%20cash> The lyrics are available using this link – <http://www.metrolyrics.com/no-earthly-good-lyrics-johnny-cash.html>

² KJV uses the word *earnest*.

earth, but not now. When Adam and Eve were created and placed in the Garden of Eden, everything was perfect. Man was intended to live forever, but the moment they disobeyed God, sin entered the human race, and with sin came death, disease, suffering, immorality hatred, murder, envy and every evil practice! So Jesus died to gain Paradise back, but not here on earth, because this world is just temporary. Praise the Lord that he has given Christians an eternal home.

So, how do we live in world in which “*we groan and are burdened*”?³ How do we deal with the struggles that are bound to come our way, which may cause us to lose heart? In this study we’ll see that Paul gives counsel that we must keep the eternal perspective in focus,

Keep The Eternal Perspective In Focus

1. **2 Corinthians 4:18** – “*So 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.*”
2. The Greek word for “*fix our eyes*” is *skopeo*, which describes a close examination.⁴
3. Paul instructs Christians to closely examine eternal purposes and keep the focus on eternal things, otherwise this life will become weighty and wearisome, which is why Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 5:7** that “*[w]e live by faith, not by sight.*”
4. Paul isn’t saying that we should just pretend there aren’t any real problems in life; he is saying that practically speaking, in the midst of it all, it’s vital that we return the focus to eternal things when we’re in the midst of difficult times.
5. **Hebrews 12:2–3** – “*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*”
6. **Colossians 3:2** – “*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*”

Live To Please God

7. **2 Corinthians 5:8–10** – “*We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*”
8. Paul writes that we’re to “*make it our goal to please Him!*”

³ **2 Corinthians 5:4**

⁴ We get the words microscope and telescope from this Greek word.

9. We will be judged about how well we've pleased the Lord or not.
10. Once false notion about Christians being judged by the Lord is that there will be a giant video screen that will show all of the terrible things they've done.
- a. For those who've embraced this idea, take comfort, because there won't be any such event!
 - b. Chapter five ends with these words: *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*
 - i. This means that the record our record will be clean because our sin has been forgiven and forgotten! ([Psalm 103:11-12](#))
 - ii. [Romans 8:1-2](#) – *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."*
11. This judgment is not one of salvation, but evaluation.
- a. The Great White Throne Judgment in [Revelation 20:11-15](#) deals with salvation.
 - b. For those who have trusted Christ for salvation, this is the Bema Seat judgment of Christ.
 - i. Paul is speaking metaphorically when he uses *bema*, which is the Greek word used for the place where the judge would sit at the end of a race in the Olympic games. It would be this judge's responsibility to determine who came in first, second, third, etc. The judge would reward the runners accordingly, and so it will be with Christians in this judgment of evaluation.
 1. The Lord will reward every Christian *"that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."* ([2 Corinthians 5:10](#))
 2. Every Christian will be rewarded, or not, based on his or her words, deeds, and faithfulness.
 - ii. This counsel is given to motivate Christians to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord, because the Lord is keeping a record for that day.

Serve As Christ's Ambassador

12. [2 Corinthians 5:19-20](#) – *"...that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."*

13. Once a person is reconciled⁵ to God, the Lord then entrusts the message and the ministry of reconciliation, that they would be his witness and his ambassador.⁶

⁵ <http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word,reconciliation> Reconciliation – 1. The act of reconciling parties at variance; renewal of friendship after disagreement or enmity. Reconciliation and friendship with God, really form the basis of all rational and true enjoyment. 2. In Scripture, the means by which sinners are reconciled and brought into a state of favor with God, after natural estrangement or enmity; the atonement; expiation.

⁶ <http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word,ambassador> (Note: This word was also spelled ambassador at the time this dictionary was written) Ambassador – 1. A minister of the highest rank employed by one prince or state, at the court of another, to manage the public concerns of his own prince or state, and representing the power and dignity of his sovereign. Ambassadors are ordinary,

14. Christians are called to represent the King and the kingdom while living in a foreign land.
15. While we wait, the Lord wants us to be his representatives in this world, so that others, through the way we act, the way we live and the way we speak, would see and hear about Jesus Christ. So that they, like we, might be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10, 16–21](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share a recent struggle or difficulty that falls in line with the illustration Pastor Gary gave regarding his sister-in-law's dog, the leaking faucet and the clickety-clacking refrigerator.
 - a. Did you find that you were able to “talk yourself down” from an anxiety attack over the person or situation?
 - b. Did the problem or difficult situation come to a resolution?
 - c. Looking back at the situation, would you have done anything differently?
4. Read and discuss [Hebrews 12:2–3](#).
5. Read and discuss [2 Corinthians 5:8–10](#).
 - a. How are you living your life to please the Lord?
 - b. Do you or have you accepted the idea that there would be a giant video screen?
 - i. Emphasize the fact that because of God's forgiveness ([Psalm 103:11–12](#)), we should be encouraged to know that the Bible doesn't indicate any such thing will take place!
6. Spend time talking about different experiences, teaching and opinions regarding the Judgment Seat of Christ.
 - a. Read and discuss [Revelation 20:11–15](#).
7. Read [2 Corinthians 5:19–20](#) and discuss God's call for believers to be Christ's ambassadors.
 - a. Do you see yourself as an ambassador for Christ?
 - i. What does this kind of life look like?
8. Close your time by allowing everyone in your group to: ask the Lord to minister to them in the times when they feel as though the world is pressing in on them; ask the Holy Spirit to help them put things in proper perspective, so that eternal things would have an even greater importance in

when they reside permanently at a foreign court; or extraordinary, when they are sent on a special occasion. They are also called ministers. Envoys are ministers employed on special occasions, and are of less dignity.

their life; to fix their eyes, not on what is seen, but what is unseen; and that while they wait on eternity, they would live to please the Lord; that they would be Christ's ambassadors so that others can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.