The Best Is Yet To Come!
II Corinthians 4:16-18 (NKJV)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to our scripture text in 11 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NKJV).

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

18 while 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.

PRAYER
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INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION: Sometimes you can find HUMOR in some of the strangest places. Take for example some EPITAPHS engraved on some gravestones around America.

This one is on a gravestone in a cemetery in Chapel Hill, North Carolina:

I was Carolina born,
And Carolina bred,
And here I lie,
Carolina dead.
Or howabout this one in a cemetery in Round Rock, Texas: “I Told You I Was Sick!”

I love this one on a gravestone in Ruidoso, New Mexico:

Here lies
Johnny Yeast
Pardon me
For not rising.

Here’s an interesting one from

Ma loved Pa,
Pa loved women,
Ma caught Pa with one a swimmin'
Here lies Pa.

Here’s a classic epitaph on a gravestone in Tombstone, Arizona:

Here lies Butch,
We planted him raw,
He was quick on the trigger,
But slow on the draw.

Here’s a good one from a cemetery near Wetumpka, Alabama:

SOLOMON PEAS
Peas is not here,
Only the Pod.
Peas shelled out
And went home to God.
And this last one is not humourous, but very sobering......

MY DEAR FRIENDS AS YOU PASS BY,
AS YOU ARE NOW, SO ONCE WAS I,
AS I AM NOW, YOU SOON MUST BE,
PREPARE YOURSELVES TO FOLLOW ME.

In our scripture text Paul reminds us that “our outward man is perishing.” Day by day........hour by hour........minute by minute........all of us are steadily marching toward the grave.

What does Paul mean by “our outward man?” Well obviously he is referring to these earthly, physical bodies of ours.' He says “our outward man,” “our physical bodies are PERISHING.”

Think of “perishable” food items in the grocery store like fruits and vegetables. These things have a relatively short shelf-life........they have an “expiration date” because they begin to rot and decay.

ILLUSTRATION: Every day for lunch I eat a peanut butter and banana sandwich. When I buy my bananas at the first of the week they are usually bright yellow or yellowish green. But by the end of the week the bananas have started turning more of a brown color with black spots all over the peeling. They are “perishing.” Their earthly lifetime is brief.

Now I don't mean to imply that you are “a banana,” but just like a banana, day by day our earthly bodies are in the process of perishing. We are moving steadily towards “our expiration date.”
But notice what Paul says in VERSE 16, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing.”

*It’s easy to “lose heart” when our skin that was once soft and silky gets wrinkles and age spots.

*It’s easy to “lose heart” when our muscles and joints ache and get stiff and our legs and feet don’t move as well as they used to.

*It’s easy to “lose heart” when our eyes don’t see as well...........and our ears don’t hear as well...........and our minds don’t remember as well as they once did.”

As this “perishing process” progresses and our bodies start getting older and more feeble and we can no longer enjoy the activities we once enjoyed, it is very easy to get discouraged and start thinking “our best days are behind us” and we don’t have anything to look forward to.

But Paul gives us the wonderful hope in this passage that our best days are not behind us, “THE BEST IS YET TO COME!”

In verses 16-18, Paul gives us three reasons not to “lose heart.”
I. We Do Not Lose Heart Because Inwardly We Are Being Renewed Day By Day (v.16b)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

1. There is no denying our “outward man is perishing.” We feel it in our bones. We can see its effects when we look in the mirror. But “our inward man,”........”our soul ” is being renewed day by day.

2. Inwardly you and I are constantly growing and maturing into Christ-likeness. The Holy Spirit is transforming us inwardly to become more and more like Jesus. While our physical glory is fading away day by day, our inward spiritual glory is increasing day by day.

3. If you will stop and think about it you can see areas of your life where this inward renewal is taking place.

   (a) One way we know this inward renewal is taking place is that SPIRITUAL MATTERS take on a greater priority in our lives.

   In the days of our youth, when it seemed like we had our whole life ahead of us we didn't make time for important matters like READING THE BIBLE or SPENDING TIME IN PRAYER, or even ATTENDING CHURCH because we were too busy living life. But as our outward man begins to perish, spiritual matters start to matter much more to us.
(b) Another way we can know this inward renewal is taking place is that we become more **content** with the things God has **blessed** us with and less driven to accumulate more and more material things.

In fact, it is not unusual to even start “down-sizing” and giving away or selling many of the material things we once thought we couldn’t live without.

(c) Another way we can know this inward renewal is taking place is that we develop a greater sense of **peace** about things we used to worry ourselves sick over. This is because the Holy Spirit is developing a stronger **faith** and **trust** that God is in complete control.

(d) Another way we can know this inward renewal is taking place in us is that we become more concerned about the **souls** of our lost loved ones and friends. When we were younger we didn't think about the lost souls of our loved ones and friends so much because we never thought much about their mortality. But as our outward man begins to perish and we face our own eternity, the Spirit makes us keenly aware of the souls of those we love.

(e) Another way we can know this inward renewal is taking place is we become **victorious** over the **sins** of our youth. That doesn't mean Satan won't tempt us, but it means our lives are no longer driven by the **sinful** passions of our youth.

4. You see, as our “outward man perishes” our “inward man is being renewed every day to become more like Christ, and we are becoming more like the Christian we always wanted to be.
Secondly...........

II   We Do Not Lose Heart Because Our Troubles Here On Earth Are Achieving For Us An Eternal Weight of Glory (v.17)

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

1. There is a spiritual irony here: The trials and troubles and hardships of life are what is causing “our outward man” to perish. But yet the Holy Spirit uses these same trials, troubles and hardships to renew our inward man day by day.

2. You see, after living many years in this world our outward bodies start to show the “wear and tear” of all the trials and troubles and stress and pressure we have experienced in this life. These things “age us”.............they “wear us down and wear us out” as we go through this perishing process.

3. But these same trials and troubles that are causing our physical bodies to perish are actually causing our soul and spirit to grow stronger and stronger to prepare us for eternal life.

4. Paul refers to our troubles in this life as “light and momentary afflictions.” Right now our troubles seem anything but “light and momentary.” Right now our trials and troubles look really big to us, even insurmountable at times.
5. But Paul is telling us in essence, if we will look at our current trials and troubles in this life through “the lens of eternity” we will see them for what they really are, “light and momentary BLIPS on the radar.”

6. Everything you and I have to go through in this life is preparing us for eternity. And one day we are going to trade this old life of trouble and misery and sorrow for an eternal life with no more tears........no more pain........no more sorrow........and no more death. And the weight of our ETERNAL GLORY will forever erase the memory of everything we had to endure in this life.

We Do Not Lose Heart Because Inwardly We Are Being Renewed Day By Day

We Do Not Lose Heart Because Our Troubles Here On Earth Are Achieving For Us The Eternal Weight of Glory

And finally.........

III. We Do Not Lose Heart Because We Have Our Eyes Fixed On Eternity (v.18)

18 while 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.
1. It is a strange paradox: The things we can see with our eyes are not real. The invisible things we can’t see are what is real.

The good things we see in this world such as its **pleasures** and **treasures** and **honors** are only for a time. These things will soon disappear forever. Likewise the bad things we see in this world, **the troubles, the poverty, the hunger, the violence, the wars, the crimes**, these things too will soon disappear forever.

2. But the invisible things we cannot see right now with our physical eyes, these are the things which are real and lasting and eternal.

*WE CANNOT VISIBLY SEE GOD* right now, but by FAITH we believe that He exists and one day we will live in His presence for all eternity.

*WE CANNOT VISIBLY SEE JESUS CHRIST* right now, but by FAITH we know He is presently seated at the right hand of His heavenly Father, and One day soon He is coming back, and He will be our King forever and ever.

*WE CANNOT VISIBLY SEE HEAVEN* right now, but by FAITH we know such a place exists, and by faith we know that Christ has gone there to prepare a place for us to live with Him for all eternity.

*WE CANNOT VISIBLY SEE THE INDECRIPTABLE GLORY OF ETERNAL LIFE* right now, but BY FAITH we know that is what awaits us when this earthly life is over.
3. If we keep our eyes fixed on the things we see now, the things that are visible to our human eyes, the things that are temporary, we will “lose heart” and always be discouraged.

4. But we will not lose heart if we can stay focused on the invisible, eternal things our eyes cannot see.

CONCLUSION

ILLUSTRATION: Many of us can remember the days of the FULL-SERVICE gas stations where an attendant came out to pump your gas for you, and wash your windshield, and check your oil.

Well one day a man had pulled into one of those FULL-SERVICE stations, and after the attendant cleaned his windshield, the man told the attendant, “You did a terrible job, my windshield is as filthy as when you started, clean it again.” The attendant washed and wiped the windshield again. And the man said, “My goodness, can't you even clean a windshield? Its still dirty, now clean it again!

The man's wife who was seated in the car with him was so embarrassed she wanted to crawl under the seat. She told the attendant “wait a minute.” She reached in her purse and took out a tissue and reached over and took her husband's glasses. She cleaned them really good and handed them back to him.

You see, the windshield was perfectly clean the first time. The problem was the man's vision had been distorted by the dirty spots on his own glasses.
In today's scripture text the Apostle Paul in a sense has “cleaned our glasses” to help us see the truth about life here on earth and the wonderful life that awaits us once our earthly journey is done!

**Brothers and sisters, LET US NOT LOSE HEART........THE BEST IS YET TO COME!**