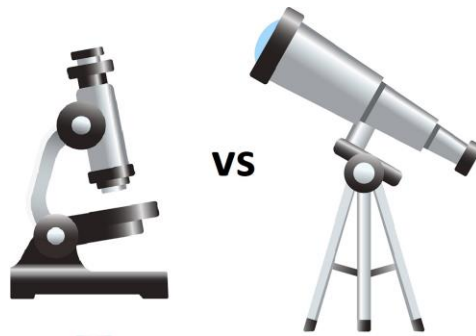


IT ALL DEPENDS ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT



TEXT: **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

INTRO.: A. "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." One man looks at a garden and sees the weeds, another focuses on the flowers. **"It all depends on how you look at it."**

B. In our trials everything depends upon our "look" v. 18a If Paul and Silas looked at their prison bars, the dark dungeon, their bleeding wounds, they would have sighed, cried, groaned and complained. Instead they kept their eyes on the One Who cannot be imprisoned, on their ultimate reward beyond the present, and instead of sighing they sang, instead of crying they clapped, instead of moaning they matured, instead of groaning they gloried in the Lord and instead of panicking they praised!

TRANS.: In this passage Paul reveals the secret of how to see things which are invisible, how to rejoice in the midst of pain, how to praise in spite of hardship and how to sing instead of sigh...

I. THE OUTWARD VS. THE INWARD: v.16

A. Our Focus Must Be on The Invisible:

1. The inward man cannot be touched by torture.
2. The inward man cannot be terrified by threats, trials, troubles or tribulation.
 - a. Everything about this life is transitory; in a state of flux.
 - b. Praise the Lord that no matter how great the trial, it can only touch our body and our soul (emotions), but it can never touch our spirit – the inward man.

ILLUS.: The really good news is that whatever you are going through it cannot affect your eternal standing or state with the Lord, nor your eternal home in the heavenlies. Our motto needs to be "this too will pass." In a sense "time (does) heal all wounds."

B. Our Perspective Must Be on The Inward:

1. The outward decays, hurts, suffers and eventually dies.
2. The inward rejoices, soothes, praises, lives.
3. The exterior is disintegrating, the inward is being strengthened.
 - a. Our cross is but for a moment, our crown is forever.
 - b. True thoughts of heaven prevent exaggerated views of earthly sorrows.
 - c. Our griefs are not even present injury, they are present good – they are grooming us for glory – **"IT ALL DEPENDS ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT!"**
 - d. Perspective is everything; the fire consumes the dross, the knife cuts away the diseased part, the chisel strikes off that which would impair the beauty of the statue.

II. THE LIGHT VS. THE WEIGHTY: v.17

A. "Light Affliction"?

1. The phrase seems to be a contradiction in terms!
2. But the secret is in the comparison.

ILLUS.: Paul probably knew more about affliction than any man alive. But because his focus & perspective was where it belonged, he views them as **"light."** He was comparing what he was experiencing with what he would later experience in glory. He had been there & got a taste of glory and realized that anything he experienced down here was nothing in comparison to the glory there.

B. *"Eternal Weight"?*

1. Another apparent contradiction of terms!

ILLUS.: Picture a scale: on one side is our afflictions; on the other side the blessings of glory forever. The balance is immediately pulled down on the side of glory!

2. Paul is saying that whatever you are going through right now is outweighed by the rewards awaiting you in glory.

QUOTE: Bultema, p.213 *"Paul cannot seem to find appropriate words to describe the glory. It is indescribable...A weight of glory which is superlatively superlative, transcendently transcendent...It transcends all measure and beggars all description...The word used here was used by the Greeks for a mountain crag..."*

(It is so far out of our reach right now, but soon we will scale its heights and experience its breathtaking view.

III. THE MOMENTARY VS. THE HEAVENLY: v. 17b

A. The Momentary Is Temporary:

1. No matter how long you may live down here, it is but a "moment" in relationship to eternity.
2. Everything we can sense about us is but "momentary" or "temporary."

QUOTE: O. Greene *"(Things of this life)...will soon pass. This would include wealth, pleasure, fame – even sorrow, pain, and all tribulation. The beautiful mansions of kings and queens will decay and pass away the same as the huts and hovels of the paupers will pass away. The exquisite pleasures of earth are momentary the same as the most excruciating pain is but for a moment...Not one thing of this earth will remain. Even the heavens will pass away and the earth will melt...How foolish for man to spend his time accumulating 'things' and neglecting the inner man!"*

B. The Heavenly Is Infinite:

1. The concept is mind boggling.
2. It is literally beyond our comprehension; but nonetheless real.
3. The believer is as infinite as God, i.e., we will never die, just as He will never die.

IV. THE INVISIBLE VS. THE INVISIBLE: v.17a

A. Keep Your Eyes on The Skies:

ILLUS.: This is what Abraham and every O.T. saint in the heroes of the faith of Heb. 11 did, from Abraham to the prophets. Abraham looked for a city he could not see and never reach in all his wanderings down here, but one he was certain he would reach after he died. He appropriated the invisible by faith.

Yes, we too, like Abraham, are looking for a city...

*"Looking for a city, where we'll never die,
There the sainted millions never say goodbye.
There we'll meet our Savior, and our loved ones too.
Come, o Holy Spirit, all our hopes renew!"*

B. Keep Your Heart on The Heavenly:

ILLUS.: Dr. David Otis Fuller used to sign off his letters with something like this: *"Don't look around our you will get discouraged, don't look within our you will get depressed, don't look down or you will get distressed; just look up!"*

V. THE TEMPORAL VS. THE ETERNAL: v.18

NOTE: The word "look" doesn't mean a glance, but a studied examination. **"IT ALL DEPENDS ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT!"**

A. What You See Is Not What You Get:

1. Praise the Lord that you will not end up as you are.
2. Thank the Lord that this trial you are going through will also pass.

3. We are urged not to look at the things which are seen; they are not worth looking at.

B. What You Don't See Is What You Can Claim:

1. I have never seen my Savior, but I claim His presence in glory.
2. I have never seen my mansion, but I claim the promise of Christ.
3. I have never seen my rewards for service, but I claim His faithfulness to give them.
4. I have never seen my position in the Millennium, but I claim it by faith, according to my faithfulness.
5. I have never seen the benefits & blessings of my sufferings & trials, but I know they are mine based on the promise of His Word.

NOTE: My wife suffered for years with excruciating pain. She had Polymyalgia Rheumatica (pain everywhere). She went from a cane, to a walker, then to a scooter, next to a wheelchair, then to a hospital bed at home, and next to 4 nursing homes and finally to a hospice and then to Heaven to see her Savior. Shirley, in all those years hardly ever missed a church service (except when not at home, and continued playing the piano in church until her last year on earth. Rarely did she complain, but she often asked the Savior to speed her trip to Heaven. He answered her prayer on March 29th 2019. She kept her eye on the Savior, instead of her pain down here. (I miss her every day!!!)

CONCL.: It is as important that we should be prepared for glory, as that glory should be prepared for us. The only way we will be prepared is if we are willing to go through afflictions, trials, sufferings, and trouble. But don't get discouraged along the way. Regardless of how badly things get or appear: **"IT ALL DEPENDS ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT!"** It is a matter of temporal or eternal perspective.