

2 CORINTHIANS: DEFENDING GOD'S SERVANT TO HIS CRITICS
Part IX: Drawing Encouragement From Our Yet Unseen, Eternal Possessions
(2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9)

I. Introduction

- A. 2 Corinthians was written "to defend the authenticity of " Paul's "apostleship and his message" to a church of believers who were susceptible to heeding false teachers who critiqued him, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552.
- B. Opposite this difficulty, Paul's ministry team drew encouragement from their yet unseen, eternal possessions, and He clarified these in 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9. We view them for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Drawing Encouragement From Our Yet Unseen, Eternal Possessions, 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9.

- A. Paul was encouraged by the yet unseen eternal possession of God's discipling of his inner man, 4:16-18:
 - 1. The sufferings Paul's ministry team faced (cf. 2 Cor. 4:8-9), though humanly difficult, still did not cause them to "lose heart" (KJV "faint") or to "give up" in ministry, for though their outward man of mortal humanity was wasting away through such trials, their inward man of the spiritual realm was being renewed by the Holy Spirit every day, 2 Corinthians 4:16 NIV; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 564-565.
 - 2. Another reason for this encouragement was that Paul knew that this comparatively light affliction that was also temporary when compared with eternity to come was being used of God to disciple in their spiritual man a far more weighty eternal glory to that believer's reward in heaven, 2 Cor. 4:17; *Ibid.*, p. 565.
 - 3. Paul's team chose to focus on the unseen things of the inner man that were yet to be revealed in glory rather than the visible entities of the trials they then faced in the ministry (2 Cor. 4:18), thus enabling them to draw encouragement from even the trials they faced rather than be dismayed and thus defeated by them!
- B. Paul was encouraged by the yet unseen eternal possession of his heavenly body, 2 Corinthians 5:1-5:
 - 1. The wear on the mortal human body their current trials produced was itself only temporary, for Paul added that his team was encouraged by the hope of obtaining a glorious eternal body in heaven, 2 Cor. 5:1.
 - 2. Currently, Paul and his ministry team groaned in their earthly bodies due to their current sufferings as they earnestly desired to be clothed with their heavenly dwelling, the heavenly body, 2 Corinthians 5:2.
 - 3. Paul added that the believer will not be found to be naked in the eternal state, that is, not clothed with a body, but he will be clothed with a heavenly body, the hope of a bodily resurrection in glory, 2 Cor. 5:3-4.
- C. Paul was encouraged by God's promise of possessing his heavenly body with the seal of the Holy Spirit, for God has pledged that the believer will acquire a heavenly body by giving him the Holy Spirit, 2 Cor. 5:5!
 - a. The term "earnest" (KJV) in 2 Cor. 4:5 translates the Greek term, *arrabona*, "a down payment which obligates the payer to make further payments," *Ibid.*, p. 557, 566.
 - b. God is the One Who gave His Holy Spirit to the believer at salvation (Eph. 1:13-14), so the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer acts as God's ongoing pledge to him that the Lord will one day miraculously provide that believer with a resurrection body. This is the doctrine of unconditional eternal security.
- D. Paul was encouraged by the yet unseen possession of an instantaneous transition to heaven, 2 Cor. 4:6-9:
 - 1. While Paul's ministry team was living in this earthly life, they were absent from the presence of the Lord, but that did not deter their confidence of a wonderful hope to come of glorification in heaven, for they walked by faith, not by sight, so what was visible and hence discouraging did not cause them to be discouraged in view of what was unseen and eternal, 2 Corinthians 4:6-7.
 - 2. Second, Paul was confident and willing to be away from the body and at home with Christ, v. 8. This confidence means there is no purgatory, that to be absent from the body is to be in heaven for the believer! [Jesus taught this truth, promising the thief on the cross who was guilty of a capital crime that he would be with Jesus in Paradise the day he died, not having to go to purgatory to pay for his sins, Luke 23:39-43!]
 - 3. Accordingly, amid all their sufferings in their labors for Christ, Paul's team could focus on their ministry that whether present in the body or absent in death [or the rapture], they might please the Lord, 2 Cor. 5:9.

Lesson: *Paul's team was not discouraged by their sufferings in the ministry, for they focused on their yet unseen, eternal possessions of (1) God's use of their sufferings to disciple them for an eternal reward, (2) of the heavenly body God would give them, (3) of God's evidence of the reality of this hope of a heavenly body via the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and (4) of their instant transition from this life to being home with the Lord.*

Application: *May we offset discouragement for suffering in serving God by focusing on our eternal possessions. In doing so, we will stay fervent in serving the Lord regardless what sufferings we might face in this life.*