**OUR OUTWARD vs INWARD MAN**

***Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled***

Would you take about 20 seconds and read carefully these three verses in which God perfectly describes who you are?

*“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 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”*(2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Did you hear what Paul said? “*We do not lose heart*.” Let me tell you what you already know – all of us need to hear that message daily! And not just once or twice, but many times during the day. Maybe it’s because of the isolation from everyone during this pandemic, or because of the non-stop news of anarchy in our cities, or because of the economic downturn that has affected so many, or because of the sadness from some in our congregation due to deaths, diseases, discouragements and desertions of faith. It’s easy to fall into depression over such reports. So Paul echoes Jesus words to His fearful apostles: “*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*” (John 14:1, 27).

Easier said than done, right? But go back and read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 again, highlighting the underlined words. Christians are to think in contrasts.
We are to compare the outward with the inward man.
We are to balance the momentary with the eternal.
We are to measure the seen with the unseen.
We are to weigh the temporary beside the eternal.

The outward man, by his very nature, focuses entirely on the momentary, temporary, visible world in which he lives. That’s all he can do. Our bodies automatically judge everything by the world’s viewpoint. We want our creature comforts. We desire everything and everyone to work toward our pleasant circumstances. After all, doesn’t our Declaration of Independence give us the right to “life, liberty and pursuit of happiness?” Our outward man wants our cake and eat it too. We live for the here and now, hoping for heaven on earth. But, as those of my generation remember Donovan singing in his 1965 A.D. hit, or Solomon telling every generation in his 1000 B.C. book, “Ah, but I may as well try and catch the wind” (Eccl. 1:14).

Our outward man is perishing. Surely I don’t have to tell anyone over 30 that fact. When I do any kind of physical exercise, even walking, I sound like a bowl of Rice Krispies: “snap, crackle, pop!” Reading Ecclesiastes 12 I learn that beyond my youth I will come to “*the difficult days*” of old age when life starts to lose its meaning and enjoyment. For those who live only for the temporary, momentary life on earth, nothing is fresh and exciting as it was in the “*days of my youth*.” That outward man declares, “*I have no pleasure in them*” (Eccl. 12:1-2). Soon, very soon, “*the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it*” (vs. 7). By only thinking on these outward, earthly, momentary, temporary circumstances I will one day cry out “*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*!” (vs. 8). My heart will be troubled, and afraid.

That said, I must forever resist the urge to think like a mortal. Let the world have its say, but then discipline yourself to let God have His say. Drive out the news reports, the internet buzz, the TV and computer screen images, the non-stop negativity that forever screams in our faces, and focus instead as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. Think like an “*inward man*.” Think like an immortal. Think like a spirit being who will live eternally. Believe me, that changes everything! Instead of tossing and turning all night, worried about all that is going on in this world, visualize what is happening from heaven’s viewpoint. See the big picture. View things from God’s perspective. He “*knows the end from the beginning*” (Isa. 46:10). Cool, calm and collected God is the conductor who knows the entire symphony of history and brings it all into harmony to fit His divine purposes. Knowing that to be true I can rest in peace. “*Let not your heart be troubled*” takes on a reality that brings me peace, knowing all is in His omnipotent, omniscient hands.

Think back to what troubled you last year on this date. I’ll venture to guess that you don’t even remember what you were worried about on August 18, 2019. Even if you do remember, is that crisis now past? Of course it is. You’ve moved on to new worries. But while your outward man continues to perish with age, your inward man continues to get stronger by the day. While your outward man endures temporary afflictions, which on a scale weighs only 12 ounces, your inward man now tips the scales at 12 tons. Gaining weight never felt so good!

The outward man is temporary. He is temporal. This simply means he is time-bound. He counts in days, weeks, months and years – knowing there will be death at the end. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

The inward man is permanent. He is eternal. He is not limited to time or space. He does not think in terms of clocks or calendars. Like God, “*one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*” (2 Pet. 3:8).

As a kingdom citizen (Phil. 3:20) I live in the realm of the immortals. I don’t worry about growing old or dying. What I see in the mirror is not what God sees. And what I see in the news is but a blip on the radar screen of history’s timeline. “This too shall pass” is our way of saying, “*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*.”

Which brings to mind an 18th century children’s prayer which many adults could take to heart: “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen”

Until tomorrow… *do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”* – Jesus (Matt. 6:34)

I love you. - Rick