

2 Corinthians 4: 16 – 5: 9; “A Building from God”, A sermon delivered at Carrington Place Nursing Home in Tama, Iowa, by Pastor Paul Rendall on the Afternoon of October 7th, 2012.

The first verse that I read to you shows us a very important truth for all of us to think about, especially those of us who are growing older. Our “outward man is decaying”. Now, young people, you do not always realize that you are growing older. In fact, many of you can’t wait to grow older because you think that there are many things that you cannot do because someone has told you that you are too young to do them. Well, perhaps you are. When I was your age I used to pray, before I became a Christian, that I would live to be old enough to meet a girl and get married. I used to see how many cracks in the sidewalk that I could step over to see if I would live to be 100. That was about as far as I could see spiritually, and it wasn’t very far. Anyway, that was almost 50 years ago now, and having been happily married for 37 years, and having seen my children grown and raised to hopefully fear the Lord, I now see that there is something else that I need to be concerned about. It is my own growing older; my own outward man is decaying. Some of you might say that I am a very young looking 60 year old man, but if you would have seen how young I looked at 50, you would agree that a lot has happened since then. I now find grey and fading hair to be a problem; wrinkles on my face, and spots on my body; warts and crustaceous bumps where there used to be fair and smooth skin; pains in my body where once all was good feelings. The problem with old age is that once, you did not have to think about your body much at all, and now you are continually having to think about it and evaluate it. Should I run up and down those stairs? Should I climb that ladder? Should I jump down from a height of 4 feet? Those kinds of questions are coming up on a regular basis. This afternoon I want to speak to you about renewal and resurrection as being the key to facing the reality of growing old and dying. 1st I will speak to you about the renewal of the inward man. And then 2nd I will speak to you about the glorious prospect of the Christian’s death and resurrection. May each of us see our great need to understand Christ and the gospel better as we go through this sermon.

1st of all – Let’s think together about the renewal of the inward man in the life of a Christian.

Why is it that people lose heart? Why is it that they sometimes grow discouraged and depressed? Is it not because they cannot do the things which they used to like to do; things which were so very natural and easy for them to do, even a few years before? I can understand this kind of discouragement. But the only way to face it, and to really deal with it, is with the words of our text. The encouraging thing about being a Christian is the words of verse 16 – “Therefore, we do not lose heart”. “Even though the outward man is perishing, yet the inward

man is being renewed day by day.” Paul calls the outward man’s perishing, “our momentary light affliction, which is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Now the context of these verses was the suffering and persecution that the Apostle Paul and his co-workers in the gospel were facing for their being persecuted for preaching the truth. In 2 Corinthians 4: 8 Paul says, “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” Paul is saying that the Christian who is suffering has something that the unbeliever who is suffering does not have. He has Christ and all the sustaining grace that Christ gives to him, and to all Christians, in their times of suffering. His inward man is being renewed day by day. That is how the Christian can face death. That is why he does not lose heart.

Let me ask you if you have come to know the reality of this saving and sustaining grace? You only know this powerful grace working in your heart, when you believe in Jesus. Some people say to me, “Well, I have always known the Lord; I don’t need to be converted to Christ.” Well, that is a very unlikely thing, that you have always known the Lord, because if that was the case, you would hardly have had time to realize that you are a sinner who needs a Savior, or a Lord to guide you. It is more likely that you went to church when you were little, and because you had those good influences, you thought that knowing the Lord was going to church and being around religious people. It is not. Jesus says, “Unless you are converted and become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18: 3) What does he mean? He does not mean that you must become foolish like a little child to enter; He means that you must simply receive and believe the gospel, like a little child, to enter. The gospel is that each of us is sinful by nature. Ours is a nature which we have inherited from Adam, the first man. He brought sin into the world by disobeying God’s word to him, not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He passed this sin on to all mankind after him; all of his descendants. And so, each of us needs to have a change of heart in order to become a righteous person. Our nature is fallen from our birth. Many times people get this wrong. They think that from birth that they are a basically good person who needs a little help. They think that they become a righteous person by attempting to do good work in their own strength and according to their own views of what it means to be righteous. They think that they are saved by being baptized and by going to church, and by associating with religious people. But this is not the case. You are only saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because Jesus is the only perfectly righteous man who ever lived, and He being sinless, went to the cross and died there, a sacrifice for your

sins if you will believe in Him. It is by believing the gospel that you are saved and become a true Christian.

If you are a true Christian, you have become so by being born again; by being born from above by the Spirit of God, who gives you the gift of spiritual life so that you can discern things spiritually, and see that the Bible is true when it tells you that you need a better righteousness than your own. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy God saves us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.” So there you have it; your heart is washed spiritually in regeneration, and then in an on-going sense, all through your Christian life, you are being renewed by the Spirit in your inward man. You are becoming day by day, more like the Lord Jesus, and you come to know and to pray for more of this inward working, this inward renewal, day by day. This is the reason that a true Christian does not lose heart. This is why suffering and death are seen by him as momentary light affliction. It is not because there is not real pain. It is because there is this powerful spiritual renewal that is taking place that gives him or her strength and even joy and peace in believing in Jesus. It is the resurrection power of Jesus that is sustaining them. They are looking forward to death because they are learning to look at the things which are not seen, the eternal things, and they long for that time when they will be with Jesus. But all the while they are well content with whatever the Lord providentially orders in their life, because they know the reality of Christ’s grace. Let me ask you whether you know this blessed reality. You can, by faith in the living risen Christ. Believe in him today, and begin to know this reality. If you already are a believer, learn to have your mind renewed by this thought; that there is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that is coming. Think more on eternal and spiritual things, the truths that are found throughout the Bible; read your Bible and pray in the name of Jesus that you would know more of the Holy Spirit’s working in your life, and you shall understand how to cope with your daily distresses and the pains and difficulties of aging.

Now 2ndly - I will speak to you about the glorious prospect of the Christian’s death and resurrection.

Verse 1 of Chapter 5 says, “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.” Now what is Paul talking about here? He is saying that our body is like an earthly house. Our soul lives in our body, which is this house. And someday the house is going to grow old and decay so much that we are going to have to evacuate it. There is nothing that we can do to stop the process of aging. Aging and eventual death will occur. It will happen according to God’s timetable, and not yours. And besides this, you do not know the thousand ways of God’s so ordering His providence, that he may take you out of your house, out of your body,

and into eternity at any time or any moment. You may not have realized this, but you have always been completely in God's holy hands in this way. But when you get older, or when you experience sufferings or persecution, you will groan. But the question is, what will your desire be when that time comes? The unbeliever simply wants to be relieved of their earthly pain. And they think of others in their dying in this same way. They think of death and dying in earthly terms. They do not want themselves or others to suffer, and so they think of ways to alleviate the pain and suffering, even longing for a quick route to death through some form of euthanasia to be able to get out of it. They do not realize that if they die without Christ that they will end up suffering forever in hell, because they have not dealt with their sins by believing in the only remedy for sin in God's sight; the sufferings and death and resurrection of Christ.

Now listen to me. If you believe in Christ you long for something else besides an end to your sufferings. You long to glorify God in and through them because you know that something much greater and much more glorious and beautiful is coming. You desire to be clothed with your "habitation which is from heaven". You want to enter the building which is from God, the house not made with hands, which is eternal in the heavens. To die is to be naked in this sense we are talking about. You have lost your earthly house and your soul is unclothed. But in entering heaven, even though you are unclothed, you will receive proper white garments to be clothed with. Listen to Revelation 6: 9-11. This is speaking of those martyrs in the days of the early Church who laid down their lives in the cause of Christ, when persecuted by the Roman Emperors. "When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held." "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'" "Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed." You see, they had rest, they had holy garments given to them, and they were awaiting the time when Christ would judge the world. This is also what will happen to each one who is a true Christian when they die. At your death, you will lose your body for a time, but all of your indwelling remaining corruption will be taken away. Your spirit will be made perfect. You will enter the dwelling place of heaven and your soul will be clothed in this spiritual way, to await the time of Christ's return when He will judge the world and bring about the resurrection of the dead.

This is why we are always confident as Christians. We know that while we at home, in our body, in this world, we are absent from the Lord. Therefore we are always longing to be with Him. We are a forward looking and rejoicing people. We walk by faith and not by sight. We walk in the faith that things are always better in this world, with Jesus, than they ever could be, by simply believing the

false encouragements of money, possessions, and worldly wisdom and philosophy. These things have no lasting answers or substance. We are being renewed in our inward man day by day and we are awaiting the glorious things which are coming. When Jesus returns all the dead shall be raised, and all those believing in Jesus will be raised in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, and stand in their resurrection bodies before Him. They will meet Him in the air at His Second Coming. Then we shall be clothed forever with our dwelling from heaven. This is the glorious prospect which awaits each and every believer in the Lord Jesus. Therefore, will you not make it your aim, whether you are present or absent from the body, to be pleasing to Him?