

# Temporal and Eternal Things are Compared

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Troubles, distresses, perplexities, persecutions, afflictions, and sorrows will soon be over for God's people. Christians are instructed to bear these things by comparing them with the things that are reserved for us in the future. "...Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). "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" (II Cor. 4:16-18). The language of neither Paul nor the Psalmist can be applied to the ungodly. The perpetuity of eternal joy enables us to bear the brevity of the weeping.

Weeping is like an uninvited guest who enters the believer's dwelling, making him sorrowful by his unwelcome presence, but he comes to sojourn for only a night. Another guest will arrive in the morning, and weeping will disappear in the presence of joy. Hence, the affliction of every Christian will soon be ended. The last pain will soon have passed through his mortal body. The last pang of a departed loved one will have been experienced.

Therefore, the believer will take the last step out of the night of weeping into the glorious morning of eternal joy. Paul drew a distinction between things seen and things not seen: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen..." (II Cor. 4:18a). There are only two worlds, terrestrial and celestial. Furthermore, there are two ways of seeing. The terrestrial world is seen by physical eyes, but the celestial world is seen by faith. Paul began the verse with a negative statement. His participial expression (me skopounton, present active participle of skopeo, which means to view attentively; to see or observe) is taken in a temporal sense. Thus, Paul was saying, "While we are not

considering the things that are seen." He went on to make a positive statement. Hence, he made another participial expression: "...but at the things which are not seen..." (alla ta me blepomena). Here we have a present middle participle of blepo, which means to have the faculty of sight, to see, to exercise sight, to discern mentally or perceive. This participial expression has been translated "while we look," "because we look," "since we consider," etc., but perhaps the best translation is "looking as we do."

Paul's present troubles did not overwhelm him because he turned to the things that God prepared for them that love Him (I Cor. 2:9). The Christian must turn from the seen affliction to the unseen support. Christian support in trial does not come from that which is seen, but too often one finds himself leaning on the arm of the flesh. If the believer is physically ill, he must not do like the good king Asa who sought not the Lord but the physicians (II Chron. 16:12). The king had previously entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God; but in the time of affliction, he sought the physicians. The statement "entered into a covenant" of II Chronicles 15:12 is what we would call "a revival." There is nothing wrong with seeking physicians, but there is with seeking physicians and not the Lord. Asa fell into his former sin of creature confidence. The king was not completely divorced from the confidence of man. Prosperity by fleshly schemes is disastrous to a Christian. The sad fruit will soon appear. The king induced Benhadad to break the treaty with Baasha, king of Israel, who had come against Judah. Did Asa think all was fair in war? Asa's action may have been "good worldly politics," but it was a black mark against Christianity. The prophet Hanani warned Asa: "Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand" (II Chron. 16:7). Unlike Asa who slept with his fathers for his sin, Paul sought the Lord in his affliction, and God gave him support (II Cor. 12:7-10). The Christian must turn from seen vicissitudes to unseen possessions. The changing conditions of life may be manifold— so-called friends become enemies; a good economy becomes bad; a time of peace becomes a time of war; good health becomes ill; joy is

turned into sorrow; etc. Turning to his unseen possessions, the believer knows he has a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24). He is an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, who is the appointed heir of all things (Rom. 8:17; Heb. 1:2). He has a joy that cannot be destroyed by circumstances (Hab. 3:17-19; John 15:11).

Hence, the Christian can say with full assurance of faith— “nothing shall separate me from the love of God, nothing shall remove me from the grace of Christ, and nothing shall deprive me of the communion and support of the Holy Spirit.” In his personal testimony, Paul attested that the thrice holy God has provided abiding realities, which the changing circumstances of time are powerless to change (I Tim. 1:12-17; II Tim. 4:9-18). Believers are related to the two worlds of sense and spirit— terrestrial and celestial. Unsaved people act and talk as though there were only the one world of sense. They are able to relate only with what their five senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling experience. On the other hand, Christians are able to relate with the spiritual world because of the spirit of grace. Therefore, all that affects Christians is not visible. They know that faith is not the eye, sanctified reason is not the ear, the regenerated heart is not feeling, the renewed will is not tasting, and a good conscience is not smelling.

The invisible, renewed inner man in Christians thirsts for the invisible, spiritual world. Believers experience two kinds of rest— body and soul. The experience of physical rest is known to all. God gave man the night and set aside one day a week for the purpose of resting. Christ spoke of rest: “...Sleep on now and take your rest...” (Matt. 26:45; Mark 14:41). “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while...” (Mark 6:31). The verb for “rest” used in these verses is *anapauo*, which means to cease from any movement or labor in order to recover one’s strength; to cause to rest; to take rest, repose, or refreshment. The compound word *ana* (up or again) *pauo* (to make to cease or desist) has been translated to mean to “rest up” or to “refresh oneself.” The verb is used twelve times (Matt. 11:28; 26:45;

Mark 6:31; 14:41; Luke 12:19; I Cor. 16:18; II Cor. 7:13; Philem. 7, 20; I Pet. 4:14; Rev. 6:11; 14:13). It is translated give rest, take rest, rest, take thine ease, and have refreshed. The noun anapausis is used five 5 times (Matt. 11:29; 12:43; Luke 11:24; Rev. 4:8; 14:11). There is rest for the body and the soul (Matt. 11:28). Soul rest is permanent; it is God's gift. This rest is not dependent on the body. The soul that has been once-for-all renewed by the grace of rest also finds rest (anapausis) by taking Christ's yoke and bearing His burden. The rest that is found could also be called "spiritual refreshment" in Christian fellowship (I Cor. 16:18; II Cor. 7:13; Philem. 7, 20; I Pet. 4:14).

The Psalmist knew the difference between soul rest— "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him..." (Ps. 37:7); "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell..." (Ps. 132:14)— and body rest— "... neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin" (Ps. 38:3). Believers enjoy two kinds of joy— things and thoughts. Enjoyment of things is derived from things that are seen, and enjoyment of thoughts is obtained from the thoughts of the mind upon eternal verities. The person who makes temporal things his end and whose enjoyment is in the things of time will soon discover that they are temporal. Therefore, they cannot give lasting enjoyment. With the decaying of the body, the time will come when the body will be incapable of enjoying the senses. Conversely, the Christian enjoys the properly used things of time; but as afflictions and trials come and as the body deteriorates, he has another source of enjoyment. His real source of enjoyment is not the seen but the unseen. Hence, spiritual enjoyment comes not through the five senses of the body but through the thoughts of the mind through meditation on the things of God and claiming His promises. (See Heb. 13:5, 8; Deut. 33:25; Rom. 8:18-39.) The life that transcends the senses is not simply in the senses. The true philosophy of life is that which seeks to turn the mind to the unseen. To the Christian, the unseen is the nearer experience. Looking at eternal things which are present of II Corinthians 4:18 is a Divine paradox. Are not our eyes made to look at things which will be seen? What did the apostle mean when he spoke of looking at the things which are not

seen? The Christian's inner man and his body both have eyes. The ability to see eternal things is entirely a matter of revelation. Hence, Paul disclosed the great secret of the Christian's life power. He did not say we look at future things, but he said we look at eternal things which are present. Persons who look at "the things which are not seen" are not to be regarded as visionaries, and persons who look only upon "the things which are seen" are not to be regarded as men of solid and practical sense. People who live in the illusion of a false or partial vision, not those who discern things for what they are, are visionaries. The very things not seen by natural men are the things that inspire Christians to suffer, endure, and die. (See Heb. 11.) Comparing temporal and eternal things of II Corinthians 4:18 is Paul's second Divine paradox. From a natural point of view, things that can be seen are the things to be viewed. However, Paul told us to look at the things that are not seen.

How can we look at what we cannot see? When we are persecuted, despised, forsaken, or seriously ill, we can by faith say, "This is temporal; therefore, it will not last long. There is something permanent." The Greek word for "temporal" is *proskaira* (nominative plural neuter of *proskairos*), which means continuing for a limited time, temporary, or transient (used only in Matt. 13:21; Mark 4:17; II Cor. 4:18; Heb. 11:25). The Christian must consider the transient nature of things seen and the eternal nature of things not seen. Looking at eternal things includes assurance of their reality and importance by a fixed and repeated consideration. Furthermore, the believer must consider the fact that he will soon pass from time into eternity. This consideration weans him from all low and selfish aims. Looking at eternal things by faith means seeing the eternal Father who chose me in Christ before the world began. It means seeing the eternal Son who loved me and purchased my redemption. It means seeing the eternal Spirit who regenerated me, thus giving me eternal life in a decaying body. It means that if this decaying body is put off in death, I will step into an incorruptible body. It means seeing that if I am alive when Christ comes for His assembly, I will step out of this mortal body into an immortal one. It means when I see

Christ, whether by the route called death or by the rapture, I will be like Him— soul and body.

It means when I see Christ, my metamorphized body will be capable of coming back into time with Christ and reigning with Him in the kingdom. As Christ moved back and forth from time and eternity in His glorified human nature between His resurrection and ascension, I see that being like Him I shall be able to do the same as I reign with the King of kings in the kingdom. What an exciting and glorious future for me and all “that love [who have loved, perfect active participle of agapao] his appearing” (II Tim. 4:8).

[From “Good News in Perilous Times,” week of March 13, 2021, published by Spring Assembly of Christ, Spring, Texas, Brother Robert Jaynes, Editor]