

Our New Perspectives!

2 Corinthians 4:7-18

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When a person becomes a Christian, everything changes. Nothing is the same. The way we think about life. The way we engage with our world. The way we relate to people. The way we set our priorities. The way we endure suffering. The way we evaluate our own lives. And most significantly, the way we relate to God. Everything changes. If a person does not fundamentally change when they come to Jesus Christ, then they have not come to Jesus Christ. Every follower of Jesus experiences a radical change of life. Now this change is varied among God's people . . . we are all a different stage as we grow in this change. But every true believer experiences a whole life change.

Question: Since you have come to Jesus Christ, have you experienced a dramatic change? Another way of asking this question might be, "Have you been born again . . . born from above?"

In 2 Corinthians 4, God describes the beginning of this change this way:

"For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6 [ESV](#))

To help us understand HOW we might experience this transforming work in our hearts, Paul takes us back to Genesis 1 and **compares the action of God in giving physical light to the dark world with the action of God in giving spiritual light to the dark human heart.**

He says, "Just as God in power said, "Let there be light" and there was light. **So God says to the person whose heart is blinded by Satan and sin, "Let there be light" and there is light.** Now God uses the instrument of the preaching of Jesus to bring light to His elect, but it is God alone who performs the miracle of new life.

Paul is going to return to this analogy in 2 Corinthians 5:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17 [ESV](#))

The believer experiences transformation in a similar way that creation experienced transformation at the beginning of time. Just as God created the world through His spoken Word. So God creates a new world of spiritual life inside every true Christian through God's Incarnate Word.

This new creation that we experience through the Gospel of Jesus changes everything for us. The lights are turned on and behold everything is new!

Main Idea: Every follower of Jesus experiences a complete change of perspective about life. Our new perspective defines how we live our lives in relationship to God and to others.

What specifically does this change of perspective involve? What should I look for? We look this morning at **five new perspectives** that a believer possesses as the result of God imparting His life to our souls.

As we look at these five new perspectives keep in mind two important truths:

1. **These new perspectives are free gifts imparted by God to those who believe.** We cannot give ourselves these new perspectives. God must work in us.
2. **These new perspectives are gifts to be nurtured by our pursuit of God and His grace.** We are to be active, not passive in growing in these new perspectives. If these new perspectives are weak in our lives, it is not because God is stingy with His gifts.

New Perspective #1: We are nothing but have everything.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." (2 Corinthians 4:7 [ESV](#))

I love the way Paul talks about himself here. How different from modern leaders when their legitimacy is attacked. He says, "Hey, you want to talk about my personal weakness? I will join you! I am a clay pot. Nothing impressive. Nothing that attracts attention. Nothing out of the ordinary."

Truth: Our new life in Christ will change our perspective about our significance. We will have a deepening sense of our own smallness.

And yet, Paul does not sink into self-loathing. He does not shrivel up and say, "Well, I guess because I am chipped and cracked, I have nothing to offer anyone." He says, "We have this TREASURE! We possess something of infinite worth!"

What is this treasure? Answer: The treasure of seeing and knowing God! The treasure is the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus." This is what Paul has been explaining in chapters 3-4.

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, " (2 Corinthians 3:18 [ESV](#))

Truth: Our pricelessness and our purpose are tied to the treasure of seeing God and serving Him.

Note God's purpose in giving us this treasure: *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." (2 Corinthians 4:7 [ESV](#))*

The surpassing power to bring life to our dead souls belongs solely to God. No clay pot has the power to create spiritual life.

Friends, we live in a weird age of demonic deception.

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self," (2 Timothy 3:1-2 [ESV](#))

Our age is an age that says, "Your problem is never with you. Your problem is always because of someone else. There are two answers to your problem:

1. Think more highly of self. Be more ABOUT yourself. Sacrifice everything for yourself. Be independent and self-ruling.
2. Find the person who lies at the root of your hurt and hate them. Destroy them with condemnation. Cancel them. Cut them off.

The Gospel according to the World says, "If you do these two things, you will live." Little wonder as to why dark despair has become an epidemic in our times. Only Jesus can liberate us and make us free.

Jesus does not ask us to hide from sins committed against us, but He does not urge us to answer those sins with hostility and rage. Jesus answers those sins with a vision of God who is greater than our hurts. Jesus answers those sins with a pronouncement of His judgment and an offer of His grace. Jesus opens our hearts to behold the LORD in His glory. **This beholding casts treasure into our poverty. This beholding creates a transformation that overcomes our timidity and terrors.**

Let us think for a moment about applications that flow from the truth that we are simply jars of clay filled with the treasure of the LORD.

Principles of Clay Jars:

1. The clay jar is valuable when it is filled with treasure.

Let us pursue daily a fresh beholding of God's glory in the face of Jesus. Let us keep the treasure growing!

God is most glorified through unimpressive, weak vessels. God's power and wonder are on display through the weakness of His people. Our weaknesses help us to shine a light on Jesus' perfections.

2. The clay jar is useful when it is clean and empty.

Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work." (2 Timothy 2:20–21 [ESV](#))

Let us confess daily our sins to the Lord. We cannot behold the glory of the Lord while we embrace sin. We must receive the daily foot washing that Jesus promises to His disciples if we are to be useful as clay jars.

3. The clay jar is beautiful when it displays the treasure.

Let us not hide our light under a bush, but let your light shine! Let others see this God whom you know and love! Let them see Jesus in you. We communicate Jesus through our good works, through our attitudes under suffering, through our

conversations, through our responses to anxious times, through our joy in Him.
Do not be more concerned about the paint on the clay jar than we are about the display of the diamonds inside!

3 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—4 but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. (1 Peter 3:3–4 [ESV](#))

Application: Lord, here I am . . . use me. Whatever you want, I want. Whatever you ask, I will do.

Friends, we cannot imagine how the Lord will use us for His glory if we simply present ourselves to Him every day for cleansing and for His use.

New Perspective #1: We are nothing but have everything.

New Perspective #2: We suffer purposefully.

*8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, **so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.**” (2 *Corinthians* 4:8–10 [ESV](#)).*

*We are sore pressed at every point but not hemmed in. We are persecuted by men but never abandoned by God. We are at wit’s end but never at our hope’s end.
 We are knocked down but not knocked out! William Barclay*

God’s people will suffer many of the same things that the world’s people do. God’s people will suffer extra things that the world’s people do not. If you are choosing to follow Jesus because you believe that He will keep you from troubles in this world, you have not listened very well to Jesus.

“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”” (John 16:33 [ESV](#))

Paul says, “Yep. We are afflicted IN EVERY WAY!” Later in this letter, Paul will list some of the specific afflictions that the ministry of the Gospel brought into his life:

24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.” (2 Corinthians 11:24–28 [ESV](#))

BUT the KEY part of Paul’s testimony is not that he suffered, but that Jesus held him fast all through every trial. He was not destroyed by destroying problems!

8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

All of us are appointed some troubles to endure. Some of you are appointed extremely severe afflictions. What helps you to endure in the midst of severe afflictions?

Paul points to three keys that hold Him fast in times great suffering:

1. Jesus suffered for us to give us life and He is ever with us.

“always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.” (2 Corinthians 4:10 [ESV](#))

This life that Jesus gives to us is not fiction. This life is real. The reality of this life is “manifested” when we walk through trials. **The life of Jesus shines most brightly when we find warmth in the dead of our winter.**

Illustration: Malakai and the car wash. Sing “What can wash away my sin?” OG, can we sing “A Sure and Steady Anchor”? I love this song, but my memory of the lyrics is unsure. So while the soap began to pour down on my car, I found it on YouTube. But this little five year old knew the lyrics.

*Christ the sure and steady Anchor
In the fury of the storm
When the winds of doubt blow through me
And my sails have all been torn
In the suffering, in the sorrow*

*When my sinking hopes are few
I will hold fast to the Anchor
It shall never be removed
--Matt Papa and Matt Boswell*

In the back of my car, I heard this cute high-pitched voice belting out these lyrics. Such depth of conviction flowing from his little heart.

“Malakai, do you know what that means?”

“It means that God is always with us.”

A five year old strengthened my faith that afternoon. I thanked God for sending His Son Jesus to be our sure and steady anchor. I thanked God also for our music pastor, Isaac, for teaching songs that brings the Gospel to us all . . . even to a five year old.

11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Corinthians 4:12 [ESV](#))

We are right to rejoice when something we purchase fulfills its promise to us. But so often we do not know if the promise that we received when we purchase something will actually do what we were told it would do.

Illustration: Car insurance. Had a bit of a fender bender. But \$5000 damage. Called insurance. How relieved to know that the insurance we had been paying for is going to pay for the repairs!

Here is Paul's point: How do we know that the life of God which promises to sustain us through every trial will be sufficient?

Truth: Our trials PROVE the reality and sufficiency of the new life Jesus grants us.

11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Corinthians 4:12 [ESV](#))

The life He imparts is not a sham, not an empty suit. **It is good to know this prior to the day we die.** One of the reasons that my mom was SO VERY confident that the life Jesus gave to her would provide for her on the day of her death is that ALL THROUGH HER LIFE she experienced the life of God holding her fast in every suffering.

Paul points to three keys that hold Him fast in times great suffering:

- 1. Jesus suffered for us to give us life and He is ever with us.**
- 2. Our suffering always accomplishes an eternal end.**

12 So death is at work in us, but life in you.” (2 Corinthians 4:12 [ESV](#))

Our suffering is the means by which God brings His life to others. Our troubles are the bridge that opens the door to communicate Jesus to our friends and family. The weaker the Gospel messenger, the stronger the Gospel impact.

- 3. A day of glory awaits God’s people.** Suffering will end and give way to joy.

“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,” (2 Corinthians 4:17 [ESV](#))

*Christ the sure and steady Anchor
As we face the wave of death
When these trials give way to glory
As we draw our final breath
We will cross that great horizon
Clouds behind and life secure
And the calm will be the better
For the storms that we endure
Christ the sure of our salvation
Ever faithful, ever true
We will hold fast to the Anchor
It shall never be removed*

New Perspective #1: We are nothing but have everything.

New Perspective #2: We suffer purposefully.

New Perspective #3: We are being renewed every day.

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16 [ESV](#))

Giving up on serving Jesus is a real threat. Satan tempts us to distance ourselves from Jesus’ church and from the mission of Jesus that He is doing through His church.

Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16 [ESV](#))

God is continuing His work in us. We are becoming more and more like Jesus. We dare not quit now!

As I age, this verse takes on new meaning. I KNOW that I cannot stop age from weakening my body. I guess I have always known that, but now I KNOW IT! 😊

I remember when I was in my thirties, I was putting on my gym shoes to play basketball. I was SOOO excited to get out on the court. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, I was like a kid. I could not tie my laces fast enough. I remember seeing some guys whose bodies no longer could play basketball and I thought, “*Man, that has to be hard. I wonder if they are sad every day.*” Well, it has been a long time since I could play basketball. And I am not sad.

As Christians, we have a new perspective.

Truth: The most joyful, life-giving part of us keeps growing stronger and stronger and stronger. Our ability to enjoy God and worship Him does not wear out or run down.

Though we cannot keep our physical bodies from wobbling, through Christ we CAN actually become more vibrant, more beautiful in our inner person.

Evaluation time: Is my inner-self continuing to grow stronger and stronger with each day? Left to our own efforts, our soul would become more enslaved to sin, more misshapen, more deformed.

Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16 [ESV](#))

New Perspective #1: We are nothing but have everything.

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New Perspective #3: We are being renewed every day.

New Perspective #4: We await a future day of complete glory.

13 Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak, (2 Corinthians 4:13 [ESV](#))

Paul says, “I believe God’s Word. That is my life. God’s Word shapes my thoughts, my words and my actions.”

14 knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. 15 For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:14–15 [ESV](#))

Paul looks into the future and smiles. He knows that his life will not end with his physical death. He knows that Jesus will raise him from the dead. He does not fear death, but awaits the day when he will fully reflect the glory of God.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” (Daniel 12:2–3 [ESV](#))

Wow! This future day motivates Paul to persevere in the faith. He KNOWS how the story ends. It ends in glory for all who are in Christ Jesus.

Truth: Our future hope defines how we live today.

“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,” (2 Corinthians 4:17 [ESV](#))

Application: Feed your vision of the future day when God completes His work in you! Read about it. Think upon it. Pray over it. Talk through it.

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New Perspective #2: We suffer purposefully.

New Perspective #3: We are being renewed every day.

New Perspective #4: We await a future day of complete glory.

New Perspective #5: We look to the things which are unseen.

“as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:18 [ESV](#))

The invisible world is just as real as the visible world. Angels and demons are active in our lives in every place we go. The Holy Spirit is present when we gather

to worship. Jesus walks among us as His flock. Heaven awaits all who are in Jesus. Hell awaits all who reject Jesus' as Savior and King. As Christians, we KNOW by faith that a world invisible to human eyes exists alongside the world that we see, feel and touch.

The word translated "look" is skopeo. We get the English word "scope" from it. It means to fasten your sights upon something. If you are a hunter, you understand what it means to look through a scope and to fasten your eyes upon an object. You know that if you take your eyes off your target, you will likely come home without any meat for the freezer.

Paul urges us to "look not" at the things that are seen, but to look "to the things that are unseen. We are to fasten our eyes upon a specific set of realities . . . those things that are eternal.

Why? Because the things that are not seen possess eternal value. The things that are seen possess a value that is fading fast. Everything in this present world will wash away like a sand castle on the beach. It is beautiful for a time. But do not invest your life building sand castles.

Truth: Eternity changes what we believe to be important.

Illustration: Eternity time line. Dot on the line. Seems pretty insignificant. The Gospel opens the door so that our joy on the line is impacted by our life in the dot. **Are we living as though the dot is all there is?**

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15–17 [ESV](#))

If we are living for more luxury, that will pass away.

If we are living for more power, that will pass away.

If we are living for the approval of man, that will pass away.

If we are living for athletic/academic accomplishments, that will pass away.

If we are living for earthly pleasures, those will pass away.

If we are living for false religion, that will pass away.

Not one part of the visible world will last, why would we live as though it did? We see reminders of this every day. Look at your trash can. The trash is filled with stuff that we once paid hard-earned money to receive. Look at the junk yards. These are filled with cars that once were the pride of some family.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” (Colossians 3:1–4 [ESV](#))

Principle: God transforms us, but we participate. We are called to look at those things which are not seen. This is not easy to do. Everything in our world screams, “This is all there is! Focus on what you can see.”

God’s salvation in Christ procures for us a soul that is designed to renew day by day from one stage of glory to the next. With this gift comes a command: Seek it!! Pursue it with zeal and focus! No one accidentally stumbles into a soul that is growing in beauty and health.

Two Gospel truths motivate us to seek after the transformation that God promises:

1. **God is working in us to renew us.**
2. **Life transformation is a great treasure.**

Conclusion: Do you have the life of God in your soul? Gospel here!

If you do have the life of God in your soul, are you experiencing His transformation?

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New Perspective #4: We await a future day of complete glory.

New Perspective #5: We live by faith not by sight.