

We've talked before, about how disciples of Jesus have an eternal perspective... And today we're going to make this really personal:

I want us to each be asking ourselves the question, "Do I have an eternal perspective?" And then, we're going to really 'make the rubber hit the road', by considering: "OK, so if I **do** have an eternal perspective, is this something which is merely theoretical (or cognitive) (something that I know), or is it something that's practical (Is it something that I **live**)?"

You see, **most** people who believe in Jesus would be very quick to agree that they have an eternal perspective. We know that this life is short, and eternity is forever,, but do we then translate this, into the way that we practically live???

One thing I've learned in all the years that I've studied the Scripture (and all the years that I've been following Jesus), is "Being a disciple of Jesus **isn't** about how much I know. It's about following. It's about following our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ... And to follow Jesus, involves a practical outworking of this new, eternal life that He's given us."

Following Jesus isn't a theory – it's life...

Righto: So,
Even in the world, some people have a very 'short-term perspective', while others have a more 'longer-term perspective'... *I don't think this was ever more evident to me, than when I first started work, and all my mates that I we all started earning a bit of a living – I noticed how very different*

we all were to each other... And you would've noticed this too (amongst your contemporaries)...

Some people have a very short term perspective. As soon as they could arrange it, they borrow as much money as they can (from dodgy finance companies that locks you in to high interest rates) and they go out and buy the flash car,, And then they get a Credit card (or several), and "Woohoo!! Now I can buy whatever I want, right now..."

The world was offering them all these things, and with their very short-term perspective, they thought, "Oww, that's a good idea – I'll have one of those; & one of those; & one of those..."

And I don't know if they ever considered the cost or whether they didn't... But the long-term cost of immediate gratification is a long-term debt. And it was something that would stifle them for years to come, and would impact on them for much of their life & right into their retirement...

But then there were others, who were very forward planning... They spent hardly anything on their first car, because that was 'dead money'. And instead of having the cool car, and instead of spending money on trinkets and gadgets, they invested their money in:

- *Little farm;*
- *Houses to rent;*
- *Investing in the Share Market;*
- *And if they borrowed money, it was always invested into something that would pay for itself, and give them a long-term return*

And looking back now, those with a short term perspective (spent everything they had as soon as they got it [or even before they got it]) are now saying “*Look how lucky those other people are – they started out with nothing, and look where they are now... I didn’t get the breaks they had...*” But of course, the reality is, their short-term perspective is what sunk them...

But it doesn’t stop at financial decisions. It was also to do with relational decisions and ethical decisions...

- A quick harsh word now, may result in a decades-long broken relationship;
- A one-night adulterous liaison, can put an end to a marriage that might’ve otherwise been long and happy;
- One moment of rage can lead to assault or murder, and a criminal record that will follow you the rest of your life;
- In exchange for a short-term high, drug-induced-psychosis can leave someone with mental illness until the day they die...

Some people make very bad decisions, because they go for the short-term gratification option, instead of thinking about the longer-term...

And it’s really wise advice – to take the longer-term view...

But do you realise, that so far, I’ve only been talking about ‘**worldly wisdom**’... We haven’t even touched on the eternal view... **Worldly** wisdom can very quickly recognise the

benefits of having a longer-term view over a short-term view... But worldly wisdom can only weigh up the benefits as far as it can see them. It only values the benefits for this life, because that's all it can see...

Now, just for a moment, I'm going to jump to the end of the reading: Paul says V¹⁸ we look **not** to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient (temporary / passing) , but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Now, the dilemma for us Christians is, we've probably been brought up with good, worldly wisdom about taking a longer-term view of things,,, And that's our mind-set... But when we have a **truly eternal** view, well to the world, that's even more foolish than the short-term view... And so it becomes a very real test of our **faith** – to be able to live-out an eternal perspective of life...

Righto:

Over the last couple of weeks, we've learned about the glory of God... And how we are being transformed, from one degree of glory to another... God is making us more and more glorious. Through His Holy Spirit (living inside of us), God is transforming us, and making us more and more like Jesus Christ... (that's the glory).

But by looking at my outward appearance you can't see that I'm getting more glorious ... Don't laugh – you don't look particularly glorious either...

Robyn told me the other day, that I'm starting to look really old (She was blaming the grey beard [of course])... But I've noticed in the last few years that I'm starting to get shoulder aches and pains; and I've got a fused ankle from when I smashed it in an accident...

Here I am – I'm being transformed from glory to glory,, And yet, my body is degrading...

Paul says:

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

The **treasure**, is the glory that God is developing us... He is preparing us for eternal life, in His glorious presence... I don't know if you realise, but this is what we're praying for, every time we sing that Christmas Carol (Away in a manger), and we say:

*And fit us for heaven,
To live with You there...*

That's like saying, "Lord, put the treasure of Your glory, into this Jar of Clay (that is my body), to prepare me for eternity...

But what's he mean, when he refers to our bodies as "**jars of clay**" – they're breakable, and they're temporary – they don't last that long... Our bodies are fragile – *Robyn is very mindful*

of this at the moment – a simple slip, and she broke 2 of her leg bones, a total of 3 times...

And God has **designed** our bodies, to be weak; temporary; and breakable, to demonstrate that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us... What's this surpassing power that he's talking about??? It's the power to raise the dead, and it's the power for eternal life...

Australia's population is getting older and older. (I don't want to offend anyone, we may have a few examples of that here).

But it's become 'big business' to help our aging population, to extend their life for another year or two... Healthy aging initiatives try to keep our bodies strong, and if you're strong enough, you might be able to live to 90 or 100...

*And if you make it to 100, well "**Good on you**"... If your family request it, you'll even get a letter from the Queen congratulating you... If you manage to live a long life, it's **glory to you**. "What's **your** secret to living a long life?"*

*I'm pretty sure that genetics help... Robyn's grandmother turns 100 next year. Her sister turned 100 last year... And we're looking for the secret: "Hey, that person lived to a ripe old age because of their genes; fitness; lifestyle; what their diet..." **Glory to you**...*

But we can't say that for eternal life. *Scientists are searching for the 'aging gene' (if there is such a thing). And if they can find a way of switching it off, they won't only become Nobel*

laureates – they'll become Kazillionaires, because there's a very large market, who would pay whatever they can, to never get old and die...

They'll never succeed, though, because eternal life requires the power of God...

God **designed** our bodies to be weak; temporary; and breakable, for a reason. He did it so that **He** can demonstrate **His power**, by raising us from death, to eternal life.

Now, this is good news for all disciples of Jesus, but it's **especially** good news for the persecuted church... *Do you remember when Ting Ting was here a few months ago? And she was telling us what it's like being a Christian in China, and with a big smile on her face, she said that it's not a problem if they get arrested or killed for their faith in Jesus – it's GLORY!!!*

Our bodies **are** fragile, and those who persecute disciples of Jesus, **are** able break our bodies, and they're even able to **kill** our bodies,,. But **that's** not the treasure (Our bodies are just the jars of clay)... The glory that God is developing in us – **that's** the treasure, and they can never touch it... And by killing the body, they expedite our transition to future glory and eternal life...

And so he says:

- **⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;**

No matter what affliction we go through in life, whether it be persecution, or whether it be some other kind of suffering, it cannot crush us, because it cannot touch the treasure of God's glory, that He's working within...

- **perplexed, but not driven to despair;**

Yeah, sometimes, we **will** find ourselves asking "Why is this happening???" ; Why are we hated so much; Why are we despised for following Christ... We may be (at times) somewhat perplexed, but we're not driven to despair, because Jesus warned us that it's going to happen, and it's for the glory of Christ.

- **⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken;**

Paul and his fellow missionaries suffered regular persecution, and the false teachers were saying "There you go – evidence that God isn't with them"... But it's actually the exact opposite... When we are persecuted for our faith, God is never nearer... He **is** with us. He **doesn't** forsake us...

- **struck down, but not destroyed;**

Even if we're killed, that's not the end of us – I love the Salvation army euphemism for the death of a Christian: "Promoted to glory"... Isn't that wonderful???

We might get struck down, but that doesn't destroy us. The clay jar that we are might get broken, but the treasure

remains intact...

You see, the persecution of the Christian church, is never a sign of its weakness – it's a demonstration of the power of God... And it's done with a purpose. In V10, Paul says that we're ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

What.... That sounds all very airy-fairy... ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. – But he goes on to explain it. It's to do with evangelism – it's to do with sharing our faith...

If you haven't copped much persecution for being a Christian, you probably haven't shared your faith very much... If there's one thing that'll make the persecution come, it's when we start sharing our faith... And I reckon there's probably a couple of reasons for that:

1. the Devil hates it when we share our faith, and persecution is one of the tools he uses to try and stop us
2. the second reason persecutions come when we share our faith is because the Gospel message itself is offensive... Some people are so sure of their own goodness that they don't want to be told they're a sinner in need of a saviour... And most people want to be their **own** lord

and master – they’ve got no interest in submitting to Jesus...

And so, persecutions increase when we share our faith. Why would we bother? And **this** is where the rubber really hits the road for us... If we truly live with an eternal perspective, persecution and death is **no** barrier... What do you really believe??? Is your faith real???

Well, here’s a bit of a test: Faith, cannot remain private... Faith drives the mouth to open and for the words of witness to be spoken...

In V13, Paul quotes the ancient **Greek** version of the Old Testament (LXX or Septuagint) which equates to our Ps 116:10. But because he’s quoting the Septuagint, it’s quite different to what we find in our Bibles, because they’re translated from the Hebrew Scriptures (not the Greek)... And he says:

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**

Alright, Faith / Belief, cannot remain private. **we also believe, and so we also speak**

As we preach the Gospel, more and more people get to hear the Gospel. And more and more people have the opportunity to receive the grace of the Lord Jesus ... And the more people who receive the Grace of Jesus Christ, the more Disciples of

Jesus there are, to give Him praise and thanksgiving, to the Glory of God...

And Paul says **V¹² death is at work in us, but life in you.** Because Paul & his missionary mates, were willing to put **their** lives at risk, by sharing Jesus into the world, those who hear, have a chance to receive eternal life... **death is at work in us, but life in you.**

And so they go on speaking, and they go on speaking, and it doesn't matter if they get killed for their faith, because they're confident in the resurrection... **¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.**

2 Corinthians, would have to be one of the least popular books of the New Testament, to preach from. But I'm finding what we're reading today, simply amazing....

- We proclaim Christ because of His glory in us;
- As we proclaim Christ, His glory increases; and
- His Grace increases; and
- Thanksgiving to Him increases; and
- Those who suffer and are killed for preaching the Gospel, that doesn't matter... **he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus**
- And it doesn't stop there... Those who **hear** their preaching – those who receive the Grace of Jesus because of their preaching – they don't miss out on glory because

they haven't been martyred... Paul says He will bring us with you into his presence.

More glory!!! Glory all round!!! Are you catching the vision here??? **Glory!!!**

You know, if our hope – if our greatest dreams, and our very existence, are bound to this life, and bound to what we can see and touch and feel – if that's our hope, we'll very quickly lose heart, hey...

But when Paul thinks of the increasing Glory of God, he says this:

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our **inner** self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ 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.

Now, when we think about how our outer self is wasting away, we might think about:

- the way we're aging;
- sickness;
- disease;
- cancers;

- depression and anxiety
- about everything that debilitates

And our encouragement might be: OK, my outer self is wasting away, but that's only temporary anyway... My inner-self – the glory that God is renewing in me day-by-day – that's the treasure that goes on into eternity... And so we don't lose heart – dealing with getting old, and heading towards the end of life...

And that's fair enough, and that's a good way for us to understand it, but that's not what Paul's really talking about here. He's talking about persecution...

As they preach the Gospel, a few will give thanks and praise to God, but most don't like it, and the weight of persecution will come down on the preacher... And even though Paul has:

- been run out of town after town after town;
- flogged;
- stoned;
- ridiculed

He considers this as **light momentary affliction...**

When disciples of Jesus suffer for their faith, but continue to preach the Gospel, how can **any** level of affliction compare to **eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison???**

It just doesn't matter. Persecution, in all of its barbarity (Alright, don't think I'm making light of persecution – it's hideously horrible) But compared to eternal glory, it's but a **light momentary affliction...**

Let's come back to where we began, and ask the question. Are I **living** the eternal perspective... I'm not just talking about **knowing** about eternity – I'm asking, "Are we **living** as if eternal glory is our reality?"

Does the glory that God is growing in us, and the **eternal weight of [eternal] glory** that we look forward to – **is it** driving us, to open our mouths, to share Jesus with a world that's perishing???

What's stopping us???

- No persecution;
- No suffering;
- No mocking;
- No ridicule

Could possibly deter us. It's all just **light momentary affliction [that's] preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison**

Do you believe it??? **we also believe, and so we also speak**

Let's keep speaking... **Glory...**