

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Week #4 – Adult Bible Study**  
**Study Notes**

**2 Corinthians 4:16 – 5:10**

**March 4 & 5 2025**

1. Verse 16 repeats the opening conviction of the chapter: We do not lose heart.
2. These verses contained a number of contrasts between the weakness of his daily life and the ultimate source of that life, God.
3. Paul now gives a new twist to this by contrasting present life with life after death and sketching the nature of that life. In it lies his hope.
4. “Our outer nature” is the life we live among other people in which we may be persecuted or suffer in other ways (4:8-11)
5. “Our inner nature” is the new life that comes into being with our relationship to Christ when we become new beings (5:17).
6. Our inner nature is not yet perfect or complete; it will be hereafter; meanwhile it is being renewed and is growing every day.
7. Paul has his confidence because he does not look at the things that are seen but at those that are unseen.
8. For Paul, what is seen is transient, what is “unseen” is eternal.
9. Paul did not expect the “seen” to last for long. The Messiah would quickly return and the new age appear in all its fullness. The “unseen” things is life after death.
10. Already the new age appearing that “our inner nature is being renewed every day,” so that if the Messiah has not yet come we do not need to lose hope.
11. When we picture this to ourselves, we are sometimes dominated by **non-Christian** ways of thinking.
12. The Greeks thought of the soul being set free from every material constraint. Others have seen the next life in very physical terms, streets paved with gold and strumming harps, cotton candy clouds and cherub-like angels.
13. Paul doesn’t deal here directly with these misconceptions because he had already given the Corinthians his basic teaching on the nature of the heavenly life in 1 Corinthians 15 in his great discourse on resurrection

14. Since we cannot think of life at all apart from the body, Paul says that believers will receive after death new bodies no longer physical in nature but spiritual.
15. A new double image is introduced into the argument: tenting and clothing.
16. For Paul tents represent the insecurity of this life. They are destroyed when we die, but Christians should not despair, for new buildings await them in the heavens.
17. The second picture is tied in with the first but is in terms of clothing rather than housing. To pass from this world to the next is like the putting off and putting on of clothes.
18. For Paul what is mortal is swallowed up by life, eternal life. For this God has prepared the new garment and as a “guarantee” that Paul will someday wear it he has already given him the first installment, the Spirit.
19. In verse 6 Paul introduces his third image, that of being away from or with the Lord.
20. They have been united with Christ in a death like his (Rom 6:5), they have been baptized into him and are in him: He lives in them. To be “with Christ” in this sense is to be “at home with” him.
21. There are some who are still perplexed by what happens at the moment of death – is there a bodiless period between death when bodies of flesh and blood are lost and the general resurrection when new spiritual bodies are received? We have seen how the difficulty was created for Paul by his use of metaphors.
22. Paul posits that from our temporal angle if death precedes the return of Christ, we are forced to ask what happens in the period between the two since we associate resurrection with Christ’s return. The Parousia (Christ’s return) and the general resurrection, however, are both eternal as well as temporal events.
23. As Paul explains his ideas of the afterlife we appear to have drifted away from the main drive of his argument – the defense of his ministry.
24. Paul is not worried by the possibility of total rejection. Nor is he concerned with how unbelievers will be judged – elsewhere he speaks of a universal judgement. What troubles him now is the thought of a judgment at which he and all Christians will appear.
25. Can we trust that God will be just and fair, merciful, compassionate and full of grace? Hasn’t that been demonstrated over and over again that God does not wish to be separated from us?
26. Paul isn’t specific about the nature of the judgment, he doesn’t say anything about the nature of the reward or punishment, his language simply suggests that the whole of life will be weighed. More importantly we run the risk here, when emphasizing the nature of

judgment, of which we do not know anything about with any certainty, of beginning to live decently or spiritually or with kindness and compassion to be judged worthy of salvation or to escape condemnation (neither of which are biblical notions)

## **REFLECTIONS**

1. Describe your “inner life.”
2. How do you imagine life after death? What is most important to you in this image?
3. How do you feel about the idea of judgment? How does judgment fit in with your idea of the relationship you have with Christ? Discuss if your thoughts about judgment for you have differences or similarities to the way you imagine judgement for others?
4. Share your thoughts about Paul’s response to the possibility that the second coming of Christ would not happen in his lifetime as he so fervently wishes.

**Notes by The Rev. Janice Y. Cook, Interim Associate Pastor, The Village Church RSF**

## **RESOURCES**

1. Second Corinthians, Interpretation, Ernest Best
2. Second Letter to the Corinthians, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, Roy E. Ciampa and Brian Rosner
3. The Message of 2 Corinthians, The Bible Speaks Today Series, Paul Barnett
4. Feasting on the Word, David Bartlett, Barbara Brown Taylor Editors
5. C.S. Lewis, Paul and the Theology of Suffering
6. Second Corinthians, New Interpreter’s Study
7. The Message Translation – Eugene Peterson

## **The Message**

### **2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10**

**16-18** So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever.

**5 1-5** For instance, we know that when these bodies of ours are taken down like tents and folded away, they will be replaced by resurrection bodies in heaven—God-made, not handmade—and we'll never have to relocate our "tents" again. Sometimes we can hardly wait to move—and so we cry out in frustration. Compared to what's coming, living conditions around here seem like a stopover in an unfurnished shack, and we're tired of it! We've been given a glimpse of the real thing, our true home, our resurrection bodies! The Spirit of God whets our appetite by giving us a taste of what's ahead. He puts a little of heaven in our hearts so that we'll never settle for less.

**6-8** That's why we live with such good cheer. You won't see us drooping our heads or dragging our feet! Cramped conditions here don't get us down. They only remind us of the spacious living conditions ahead. It's what we trust in but don't yet see that keeps us going. Do you suppose a few ruts in the road or rocks in the path are going to stop us? When the time comes, we'll be plenty ready to exchange exile for homecoming.

**9-10** But neither exile nor homecoming is the main thing. Cheerfully pleasing God is the main thing, and that's what we aim to do, regardless of our conditions. Sooner or later we'll all have to face God, regardless of our conditions. We will appear before Christ and take what's coming to us as a result of our actions, either good or bad.