

Bible Study for Small Groups W.B. 30th June '24

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

2 Corinthians 5:1

- We have heard the saying 'seeing is believing.' What do you think about that saying? Is it something that you would depend on?

For those who have been to the optometrist we will recognise the procedure. 'Look into the screen. Can you see the red line? Can you see the green line? Look at the test card. Which of these lenses is clearer, this or this?'

Now imagine the same scenario but with nothing to look at.

At the optometrist there is always something to look at, something to focus our eyes on. But in these readings Paul gives us an invisible focus. Then he tells us, in verse 18, to open our eyes and see what is unseen. He is talking about the eternal Kingdom Of God. To do that we need hope. Hope in Christ.

Here are three things to consider about the eternal Kingdom Of God.

1. If we have that hope then we should speak about it. Paul says that it is written in the Old Testament that 'I believed and so I speak.' We need to believe in order to be able to speak of that hope. Because we believe we should speak.

Read 1 Peter 3:15

- What does that hope mean to you?
- Has anyone asked you about the hope we have?

If they do it is because they can see that hope alive in us. If they do not, is it because that hope is not there, is it because they are blind or shy or is it because hope is very carefully hidden?

- When did you last speak of that hope?

God enabled Paul to speak of the hope even though he had suffered and was still suffering terrible things for the Gospel. It would have been impossible to speak if he did not have the hope inside his heart. He made the decision to speak of the hope no matter what was happening to him because he had received and believed

the hope of heaven. It was that hope that kept him going. We, too, are encouraged not to lose hope because there is an eternal state of glory waiting for us.

2. We focus on a hope that is in our future. It was secured for us by the resurrection of Jesus. That is what gives us hope for the future.

Read verse 14 again.

Jesus overcame so that we can have a place in heaven.

We live by faith and not by sight. We are already living in eternity. This eternal life began when we received Jesus' resurrection in faith.

- What do you consider eternal life to mean practically and personally?

Read chapter 5 verse 1 again

A hope for eternity. When our bodies die we transfer ownership from this world to the next. At the moment we live in the present but we hope in the future. The present is important as we make the best of the time we have. We live in Christ and allow Him to take us from one degree of glory to another, becoming more like Him.

The life of our outer self is temporary. We wear out physically. But inwardly we are being renewed day by day in the core of our being when we live a life that is immersed in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In our inner being.

Getting older is increasingly difficult.... we find we can't do things quite the way we once could and we certainly don't look as we did in our twenties. But God is working on our inner being. Our hearts belong to God and he is preparing us for where we will one day go. So, all the time we must continue to grow into the image of God.

- Can you share how you allow God to take you from one degree of His glory to another?

3. Hope gives us a different perspective to the one we had before we began to believe in Jesus. His resurrection living through us causes us to see things differently.

Have you noticed how slowly time goes when we are young and how it speeds up as we get older? But in this present timespan, in this physical present we can be comforted by knowing that our troubles are momentary. In the future we

have something about which we cannot imagine waiting for us because of our belief and trust in Jesus and His resurrection. We do not know what waits on the other side but we can be assured it will be wonderful. We need to keep that in our sights.

- Can you share how you keep going and don't flag or fall back when times are hard?

Verse 18 says that what we see is temporary, what is unseen is eternal. God's view of things is very different to ours. We need His view of life in our inner being. When we have that new view we receive a different perspective. One day we will be raised with Christ. This truth about our eternal future keeps us going in the present.

We are always looking for and wanting the best now but we only see part of the bigger picture. If we could see things from God's viewpoint we would see how wonderful the whole picture is and that it is for eternity. Knowing, believing, having faith deep into our inner being that Jesus rose from the dead can give us this new perspective.

Finally.... God's love is for everyone, both believer and pre-believer. He has sent Jesus for that very purpose and Jesus is The Only Way to this eternal life. So let us keep our eyes on what is unseen and eternal.

- We could each spend some time during the week allowing God to open up our minds to the bigger picture and to allow Him to increase the hope we have..... Christ in us the hope of glory.