

Pentecost 2B (Epistle 3B)

June 14, 2009

Hymns: 223 - 747 - 457 - 218

II CORINTHIANS 4:13-18
FIX YOUR EYES OF FAITH ON THINGS ETERNAL!

When You Do, You Will.....

***Believe and Speak About Things Eternal.**

***Work Though Troubles To Eternal Life.**

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise! Amen!

By God's grace in Christ, dear fellow citizens of heaven -

(slide 1) He is so heavenly minded that he is of no earthly good! Have you ever heard such a remark, much less made of someone you actually know? I have heard that statement a number of times, with no particular person in mind. But as a pastor, I would take my chances with a whole congregation of such minded people – when contrasted over against: *(slide 2) He is so earthly minded that he is no good to heaven.* How are you “minded?!”

Do you think about heaven every day? Several times a day? Or are you caught up in the here and now? It's easy to do, isn't it? You have a job to get done, your home to take care of, maybe children or parents – even a spouse - demanding your care and attention. All of this is against the backdrop of a multiple of other demands upon your time, a flailing economy, and a deep felt need for some quality time to yourself. Who has the time or energy to think about things eternal?

Well, the Apostle Paul right here in our text does. In fact, Paul made the eternal his life. As a bright, talented, energetic young man, Paul had great potential for any number of life pursuits he may have followed. What did he spend his life doing? He became an itinerant evangelist. Most everywhere he went, he did not allow himself to be a financial burden to anyone. He often supported himself tent making by candle light to free himself during normal hours to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And what did he get for his efforts? Almost without exception, he was thrown out of town after town on his ear. Usually his landing outside the city gates wasn't the first physical abuse he endured at the hands of its citizens. Eventually, he paid the ultimate price of martyrdom for his efforts to share his faith with others.

Is that a life you want for yourself? Should you want such a life for yourself? Not necessarily. Paul was specially chosen by God to be His instrument to carry His name before the Gentiles and their kings. Paul was called to be the 13th apostle. He hasn't called you or even me as a pastor to such an office. But God has called each of us to faith! As Christians, we set our eyes upon that which is unseen, but revealed in the Bible: A Triune God, a Savior Who died and rose again 2,000 years ago, a life after death for you and me.

Now, the Apostle exhorts you and me - in whatever calling in life – **(slide 3)** to fix our eyes on the eternal: our eternal God, His eternal salvation, the eternal home in heaven He is even now preparing for us. AND - the Apostle says, if we do that, we are going to be people who look for opportunities to share our faith with others in whatever state He has called us to in life. Paul may have been unique in the way he witnessed. But he was not alone. Consider all the Apostles of old. Think about the Biblical witness of countless others. Recall Christians of the ages and confessors of the faith in your lifetime who have been brought to your attention.

It is the same for believers of every age. Paul quotes King David from 1,000 years before his time: *It is written (in Psalm 116:10) “I believed; therefore I have spoken!”* Paul goes on to say, *With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.....!* Are you one who speaks what’s on your mind? We all have different levels of comfort with that sort of thing. But as Christians, we all should be speaking our minds about God’s plan of salvation. (slide 4) You would tell a friend about finding gas \$.10 cheaper at one service station. You might speak to a party looking into the dairy case: “Wow! When was the last time we saw milk at \$1.59 a gallon?!”

Friends, that gallon of gas quickly gets burned up in your vehicle. That gallon of milk the kids’ go through in a day or so – or it all too soon spoils in your frig. Ah! But things eternal last forever! That goes for hell, as well as heaven! How can we not be mindful of that in our being, toward the eternal well-being of our family and friends, regarding the eternal destiny of the stranger living next door or on the other side of the globe?!

I believed; therefore I have spoken! Let it be said of you and me – often! Speaking the faith is a fruit of faith that we should expect from ourselves and other Christians. Elsewhere, Paul wrote to the Romans: *If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord!” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10).* Confessing one’s faith flows as naturally from a Christian as apples abound on a fruitful apple tree. We don’t save ourselves by working in the Church and supporting it financially. We don’t gain heaven by witnessing to others in our daily life or by going door knocking. Our motivation to share the Gospel says Paul, is *that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.*

Your witnessing isn’t going to add the least bit to your salvation, which is all grace. Work righteousness can’t be your motivation. God willing, your sharing the means of grace in Word and Sacrament with the world is going to save some souls from eternal destruction. But here Paul reminds us of the highest motivation yet for our witnessing: *Thanksgiving to overflow TO THE GLORY OF GOD!* What a wonderful God you and I have come to know and love! We want others to come to the same appreciation of Him – all to His glory!

Do you feel pretty good about your faith? How have you been doing on confessing it? Some of us could even be doing a much better job of joining fellow Christians Sunday by Sunday to let the world know Whose side we are on. But even the best Christian sitting in these pews, along with the pastor standing before you in the pulpit, needs to confess allowing the devil, an unbelieving world, and our own sinful flesh to make us tongue tied and denying of our faith in word and deed. For these sins too the Lord Jesus died. And we know that *the One raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence.* To His own glory, God will be able to present us to Himself as holy and blameless – all because of the merits and for the sake of Jesus.

Hold on to your most precious faith! (slide 5) Don’t lose heart, because you fail in your Christian walk in so many ways, or because your life of Christian witness won’t win many popularity contests in 21st Century America. Have faith that God the Holy Spirit is at His work renewing the New Man of faith in you day by day as you spend time in the Word and regularly receive the Sacrament with your fellow saints.

It’s true that our outward man – the temple of our bodies – is wasting away. Scientists tell us that the aging process begins already before birth! Even young bodies get nicked and compromised as part of living in a sin damaged world. As the years add up, physical troubles seem to mount. But we live in the knowledge of a better life where there will be no sickness, weakness, disease, or death. Other troubles too come our way time and again. The Apostle exhorts us in all these trying things to remember how they weigh over against heaven.

As a matter of fact, by their regular reminders they can be of real service to us in helping to keep our eyes fixed on the life to come. Paul puts all trials and tribulations in the proper perspective with his statement: ***Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all!***

So, fellow Christian – Fix your eyes of faith on things eternal! And when you do, you will believe and speak about things eternal...even as you work through troubles on your way to eternal life. Amen.

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, Who loved us and by His has given us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word! Amen.

CHILDREN’S SERMON (visual – promo for Valley Fair Amusement Park)

Good morning! How many of you have ever been to Valley Fair? How many of you have heard of it? There are lots of fun rides to go on and good fun food to eat there. How many of you would like to go there?! Now suppose your mom and dad said, “If you help around the house this summer, we’ll go there before school starts in September.” Would that make summer happier and more fun, knowing that you had Valley Fair to look forward to later on?

In much the same way, we all (jester to congregation) have God’s promise of heaven. We believe that He will come one day and take all of us who believe to live with Him there FOREVER! Does that make the sad things that we have to put up in our short life here not seem so bad? I hope so! Paul in God’s Word for us this morning encourages all of us – young and old alike – to not lose heart with life or God. Hang on to your faith! Keep your eyes fixed on heaven and soon we will be there – forever! Let’s pray:

Jesus, thank You taking our biggest trouble – our sins – upon Yourself. Because they are gone and You now live with and in us, we can be happy and look forward to seeing You and all the wonderful things in heaven one day. Keep us in our faith and help us to share this good news with others too, so that they can go with us to heaven. Amen.