

# When Life Is Tough - Part 1

## Why Being Heavenly Minded Does A World Of Good

Romans 8:18

Well like most artists MC Escher the 20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch artist whose work hangs here over my shoulder reflects something of his life experience in his art work. He's known for his not quite right perspectives that he drew through out his career. And maybe something of his life will give you a reason as to why he produced that kind of work. He was an ambitious young kid and wanted to be architect, went to architectural school but unfortunately because of reoccurring and frequent illnesses he was unable to finish his course of study and had to abandon his chosen career. He decided then to raise a family; get married he moved to Rome in the 1920s and wanted to start a family just have the typical picture perfect life. Unfortunately with the rise of the factious regime of Mussolini he was chased out of town had to escape. He moved to Brussels hoping that might be a place where he could get his picket fence and do his thing with his family and live a tranquil life. Unfortunately World War 2 ramped up and he was also chased out of town looking for some kind of semblance of normalcy. He moved north to the Netherlands and settled in for the rest of his life there. Unfortunately the combination of his bad health with the bad weather made those final years quite difficult. From which most of his art work was produced and became known to the world. Perhaps it's no surprise with that thumb nail sketch of his life why his drawing reflect this "not how it ought to be" perspective. Things that should go up in his drawings end up going down. Things that should be connected in his paintings they're not, they're disjointed. Paths that should be straight in his artwork they're all crooked or twisted.

The reason we've chosen MC Escher is kind of the adornment for this series in the next seven weeks in Romans 8 is because he does graphically with his artwork what the prophets in the bible do verbally with their prophecies. They depict that when it comes to the present world, things are not as they ought to be. They are messed up. As Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 5 he said you know it's in this world there is this semblance idea of what is good but unfortunately people and society turn what is good into what is bad and they turn what's bad into what's good. They replace darkness for light and light for darkness. They put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. He later goes on to say there is no justice in our paths. There is roads but they've been made crooked. There's no one who treads on these crooked roads that even knows what peace is. Justice is far from us. Righteousness doesn't over take us. We hope for light and behold we get darkness. We hope for brightness and instead we walk in gloom.

We kind of appreciated that brevity of sin book that we've often recommended here by Plantinga, he says you know when it comes to what sin is, it is a good theological definition to simply say sin is just having things not how they ought to be. That's a good theological definition. And our world is saturated and laden and defined by sin and things aren't as they ought to be. Well we have a picture in our mind of how things ought to be and how we'd like them to be. But we never really see it played out that way. Only glimpses from a distance. As the Oxford professor C. S. Lewis said, you know if we have resident in our hearts a set of desires which no experience in this world can satisfy, he says, the most probable explanation then is that we were created for another world. Which by the way is the hope of the scriptures as Isaiah said as we often hear repeated in Handel's oratorio every Christmas as that refrain comes through and wafts into our heads and we start to picture that the hope of the Christian faith is that every valley will be raised up. Every mountain and hill made low the crooked paths made straight and the rough places plain. And that is the hope as the next verse says there in those verses lifted from Isaiah 40 it is when the glory of the Lord will be revealed. Assuming that now it's not because things aren't as they ought to be but one day as the last book of the bible says, the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever. To quote the most familiar lyrics from Handel Messiah.

See it is for us to recognize those two simple truths and when we do it'll transform everything about how we live. Those truths are that things are not how they ought to be and we ought to just come to grips with that and be honest with it. And secondly that they will be as they ought to be when the glory of the Lord is revealed. That our great hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ who will change everything. He'll turn the world right side up. I mean that's what it's all about. That's not what we hear from a lot of pulpits today. It's all about kind of improving the messes we have and rearranging the deck chairs on this sinking ship. That's what we often hear but that's not what the bible says. The bible says our hope is in the next life not in this one. But if we have those truths firmly in our minds it is the difference between hope and despair. It is the difference between courage and cowardice. It is the difference between us persevering through the difficulties of this life and giving up. And it really all comes down to what we are now entering into in the last 21 verses of Romans chapter 8 starting in verse number 18. And if you have your bibles I want you to open them and look there as we begin a seven week study of the last section of this great chapter. And I'm telling you if there are any verses that have been cherished and an encouragement to thousands of years of Christians it's been these 21 verses beginning with verse 18. Now verse 18 is all we'll have time to cover but that is enough. Because it is a lot it is the very thing that changes our perspective about how things are. It changes our hope from trying to make things what we somehow hope will be tolerable to putting our hope where it belongs.

Take a look at this in verse number 18 remembering a bit of the context when he says for I consider that the sufferings of this present time they're not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Read it again. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time they're not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Now number one on your outline jot this down it may sound redundant but I'm not going to apologize for that because we need to hear this again and again. It will change everything about how you live the next 10, 20, 30 years of your life. How ever much you've got left. You and I need to not be surprised by the pain. Number 1; don't be surprised by the pain because that is exactly what the bible promises.

### 1. Don't Be Surprised By The Pain

In this world we will have tribulation. It will be a difficult road. I promised you at Easter when we were at the Bren Center that we would come back to the last part of Romans chapter 8 and we would elaborate on this concept. Not for the sake of saying "Whoa is me how miserable is this earth" but finding through acknowledging and accepting the reality of the present suffering and looking beyond it with a set of eyes that can see beyond the horizon of this life. It will change everything about how we live. And I can't over emphasize this enough so let's be redundant because when it comes to the issue of you and I recognizing that in this Christian life or in life in general, I don't care if you're a Buddhist or an Atheist, we're going to experience pain, suffering and evil. It will put you on the path of security. Let me explain.

Laura Bush put out her autobiography this week. I mean it hit some headlines because there was some salacious details in there that were of interest to you know folks that are tracking all of this. And this section was quoted extensively from her book which officially comes out later this week. And that is that at 17 she blew through a stop sign careened her car into a classmate. A 17 year old boy and killed him. You heard that in the news this week, right? She says in her autobiography that it was such a devastating and painful season in her life. She says, here's her quote, that November she says I lost my faith, speaking of her faith in God. I lost my faith and I lost it, she said, for many many years. And I thought to myself that is precisely what we as pastors encounter constantly as we deal with people. Just this week I had a lady say to me, "Hey you know my mother she had cancer and she died. And we had prayed that she wouldn't die and when she died she said you know, "I think I'm losing my faith".

And when it comes to the issue of suffering. My response in that situation and every time this comes up, and we have these counseling appointments constantly, I tend to say, hey if the faith you had was a faith in a God who wasn't going to allow these things then I'm glad you lost that

faith let's replace it with biblical faith and biblical faith is a God who has promised that in this world we will have suffering, trials, pain, evil. That's the reality. And it's not just the moral evil of bad decisions even the Philosophers in Philosophy 101 at college they'll say, ok fine your Christian Faith gives us some kind of matrix to understand moral evil but you need to understand the scriptures there is a connection between moral evil and natural evil. Look at the next verse in context we need to realize that not being surprised by evil and pain and suffering isn't just in our moral decisions it extends to the creation itself. Verse 19 says, for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. Now creation itself is personified here. Verse 20, for the creation, the world the planet that we live on, now this would be a good line to underline, it was subjected to futility. Not willingly, right? It didn't want to be. But because of Him, that's God now, who subjected it in hope, that means it wasn't always going to be that way, that creation itself will be set free from it's, another phrase to underline, bondage to corruption. There's two words for you futility and corruption.

Now in the margin you should put Genesis chapter 3. You don't need to turn there because you've memorized that, right? Even if you didn't try to you know what's going on in Genesis 3. Genesis 2 don't eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Now here they did it. And in Genesis 3 God shows up and says penalty time. You've blown it, you've rebelled, you've made a moral decision that was wrong. Now he says to Adam this in Genesis 3:16, He says cursed is the ground because of you. Well, the ground didn't do anything wrong, what's that all about? See much of what we call the curse of Genesis 3 is focused at the inanimate object of creation. And here's the logic because the rebellion of the hearts of the individuals that God has made, He now put them in an environment on a planet in a frame on a canvas if you will that reflected the moral rebellion of their hearts. The frame then was going to match the picture and imperfect man was not going to live in a perfect creation. Imperfect man was now assigned judicially by God as a penalty to live in an imperfect world. So if you want to talk about volcanoes and tidal waves and earthquakes and fires and whatever it is that is natural evil in this world. You've got to recognize that was the judicial response of God in Genesis 3. It is exactly what God promised would happen.

Keep reading though in Romans chapter 8, I wish it stopped there but of course there was more to the curse than that. Not only was the creation subjected to futility verse 20 and corruption verse 21 but in verse number 22 it says it's like the groaning of childbirth which by the way accelerate and get worse. Don't need to tell you moms that. Verse 23 and not only the creation, oh no, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit, right? That's a good thing but we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons the redemption of our, underline it, bodies. See because it wasn't just the frame but now the container of the rebellious heart was going to be cursed if you will, right? What was the first thing? Ladies first. God comes on the scene and says, hey now you're going to have "blank" in childbirth. What is it? Pain. You ladies said it louder than men. The pain in childbirth. Now think about that. This is a moral decision it was rebellion morally in their hearts. Now they're going to live on a cursed planet and their bodies are going to experience pain. Then think about it, He turns to Adam and he says because the ground is cursed you're going to eat the bread after you toil in the ground by the sweat of your brow in painful toil you will eat your bread. So, now there's pain in my body. And it gets worse He says from dust you were created and to dust you'll return. Huh it's not going to end well for your body. So if you want to take some subnotes, let's see where we've been so far.

Don't be surprised by the pain, number one, in the planet because we live on a messed up planet. That was the promise of God. When there's an earthquake go it's exactly what God said. When buildings fall down on you it's exactly what God promised. When volcanoes take out cities or mess up your travel plans, right? Then say hey it's just exactly what God promised. When there's a typhoon, when there's a tsunami and then when the body that you live in hurts when you have pain when it doesn't work right. When the doctor says you have cancer which by the way let's just analyze this for a second is nothing more this sounds theological but it's biological your cells are rebelling against their proper domain. They're transgressing what they should do and now they're doing something else. They're rebellious cells. That's a theological description of a

biological reality. That's the problem. God says rebellious hearts, rebellious grandparents, rebellious mankind, rebellious planet, rebellious bodies. We live on a messed up planet in messed up bodies. So when the doctor says to you, you're not healthy or you have a chronic illness or you're going to die of some disease don't ask why, "oh why God?" And don't tell me you've lost your faith. If you've lost your faith it was the wrong faith to start with. Get the faith of the scriptures which was a promise that you live on a messed up planet in a messed up body. It's exactly what God said.

In the back of your worksheet I always try to give you some sermons that might cover this from different angle and I give you some books there at the bottom. If there's a topic that might be helpful to read on I mean it's this topic so any of those books might be helpful for you. But one of them that you want to star I'll give you one quote which is probably the best quote in one of the best books on the list this week by Carson. D. A. Carson, Don Carson, How Long Oh Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil. Here's a quote from near the beginning of the book, he says this, "When it comes to illness, disease, sickness or death" he says "it is nothing more than the measured judicial outworking of the promise of Genesis 2:17." Greatest line in the book. Disease, sickness, death whatever it is, it is nothing more than the measured outworking of the promise of God that He made in Genesis 2:17, which was in short, the day you eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in that day you will surely die. Now you're saying I'm so glad I came to church this morning. This is great. I'm so happy.

I just don't want you to have the spiritual stool kicked out from underneath you when you have a stillborn baby, when your spouse dies, when you're diagnosed with cancer. I want you to not be surprised by the pain. If you and I can know that the next set of years whatever we have left on this earth was promised by God to be characterized by that then you and I are not going to freak out and that is not common place among most Christians.

We live on a messed up planet we live in messed up bodies if you want to round this out because you're thinking of things that don't fit in those two categories how about this? We will have messed up experiences with people. Amen. You'll have messed up experiences with people. Even in the curse he gets into the marital relationship and he starts talking about the problems you're going to have in marriage. You're going to have relational problems and it may be you and your boss maybe you and your wife maybe you and your kid maybe you and your neighbor I don't know what it is could be us and that country over there but we're going to have conflict and there's going to be problems. We're going to have messed up experiences with people. By the way does our passage touch on that? Well it does drop down to verse number 35. I know it's stated as a positive but it's against the backdrop of a negative. Who's going to separate us from the love of Christ? This is Romans chapter 8 verse 35 and now you list some things, shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword. Now some of those are natural evil but a lot of those are messed up experiences with people who are wielding a sword at me or throwing rocks at me or as in Philippi stripping the clothes off of Paul and Silas before they beat them with sticks. That's not good and you're dealing with that in part because of verse 14 and verse 17 which says if you're lead by the spirit you're going to also necessarily encounter the suffering before we get to the glorification we're going to have a lot of opposition. And every non-Christian every Buddhist every you name it whatever their religious orientation is every Muslim they're all going to have suffering of messed up experience with people. But as Christians you're going to have even more the bible says.

Let me summarize with this statement you can just jot down the reference because you know these words. This is Mark 13 verses 7 and 8. Jesus said to us when you hear of wars and rumors of wars freak out because you should have no idea what's going on. Is that what Jesus said? When you hear of wars and rumors of wars do not be alarmed. This must take place. But the end is not yet, it hasn't come yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There's relational problems and messed up experiences with people. And there will be earthquakes in various places and there will be famines. But these are just the beginning of birth pangs. It will get worse. In your body it gets worse the closer we get to death, in the nations it

gets worse and the geo-realities of weather and earthquakes and seismic activity it going to get worse, it's going to get worse. So don't get knocked off your spiritual horse when something bad happens to you all that pain is right on schedule. Now you can believe the nut cases carrying bibles and giving us the nonsensical sermons about health, wealth, and prosperity. Good luck with that, right? Have fun with that. But come on man, really? People are really supporting that and watching that? That's I mean talk about Pollyanna there's some wishful thinking for you. But here's the thing and I know I over state this but I don't over state it I say it too much it's absolutely true and that is this. That every health, wealth, and prosperity preacher one to one every one of them dies. And that to me kind of defeats the message that you're preaching, right? I mean I don't want to go to 24 hour fitness, I want to get chiseled great, here's some 350 pound people to help you. No, I'd like somebody who is succeeding in the philosophies or theories they're trying to implement in my life. And the problem with all the health, wealth and prosperity preachers is they may have the wealth and prosperity for awhile because they're ripping people off because they're preaching the message of health, wealth and prosperity. But they all get sick and stinkin' die at the end, right? And they don't want to tell you that. By the way have you ever noticed how they kind of keep their cancer diagnosis secret for awhile? I don't want anyone to know. Then they die and it's like oh yeah he had cancer for the last 15 years but he's on the stage saying you got enough faith you'll get rid of your cancer. What? Not trying to make light of your suffering. I may not suffer like you suffer I don't know. Maybe I suffer more than you suffer I've had my fair share I mean I've been on the planet for awhile now and I'm telling you all I'm saying is I don't want to be surprised by the end of it. I don't want to write in my memoirs like Laura Bush, oh something bad happened to me it was terrible and it made me feel terrible and I lost my faith. Well if you lose your faith in the midst of suffering it was the wrong faith to start with.

Our passage though is not about understanding the suffering although the context is going to get into all that. Our passage which is simply one verse is to get it all in perspective is it not? Look at it verse number 18 and point number 2. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed to us. Let's jot that down number 2 you and I need to get the pain in perspective.

## 2. Get The Pain In Perspective

That's what we need to do. Get the pain in perspective. If we can understand as I said 2 observations that the pain is a reality but there's something better coming. Well then let's get that all in perspective. Let's at least understand that they're really not a one for one correspondence. I mean I've got 3 kids, I've got one in 6<sup>th</sup> grade one in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and I've got one in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Bit of a gap there. Now the 6<sup>th</sup> grader and the 7<sup>th</sup> grader they like to every now and then see who's taller, right? Because that 2<sup>nd</sup> born is always trying to catch the 1<sup>st</sup> born that's always how it seems to be, right? So there's the 2<sup>nd</sup> born every now and then going hey get over here and let's do the back to back thing and they try to stand up and see how tall and try to compare. You know what I've never seen happen ever, I've never seen the 6<sup>th</sup> grader or the 7<sup>th</sup> grader say hey Stephanie my first grader get over here let's see who's taller. No one stands back to back with her to see who's taller. Why? There's no comparison, right? I don't need to size them up because they're not even close to equal. Here's a line that'll be hard to quote perhaps but here it comes. The bad is bad but it's not bad as the future good is good. Untangle that one. Did you catch that? The bad is bad, I'm not trying to say you know that suffering isn't terrible and evil isn't awful. It is awful! Evil and bad is bad. But the bad is not as bad as our future good is good. The good is a whole lot more good then the bad is bad. Or in other words, the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. In other words the good is going to be so good that it's going to so over power the bad that when it gets to the experience of the good the pleasure, the excitement, the happiness, the joy of the good you're going to look back at your experience with the bad and go don't even try to get them in the same sentence there's no comparing them. This one is so much bigger see then the pain the glory to be revealed.

Now glory is one of those broadly used biblical words in the Old Testament the Hebrew word kabod it means weight. The weightiness the importance of the glory the importance of the future so much better than this experience with evil. Doxah the New Testament word often translates something beautiful or splendid. I mean you put human experience under that matrix or rubric it's fulfilling it's gratifying it's exciting. And I don't apologize for taking you back here if you've been under my teaching for a while we probably go to this passage twice a year but let me take you here for the first time this year. Revelation chapter 21 can you look at how this whole story ends? Because that's the point, you got to get the pain in perspective to where we're headed. And where we're headed is a little place called the New Jerusalem. Ever heard of it? That's where you are going if you are trusting in Jesus Christ. You've repented of your sins and He is your Lord and Savior. You are going to this place. And that place is going to change everything about how you view this place. As a matter of fact if you can start thinking of that now it'll change everything about your attitude now. You can move from despair to hope, you can go from cowardice to courage, you can move from wanting to give up to wanting to persevere.

Revelation 21 verse number 1 you see that there? Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth they had past away. There was no longer any sea. Now one thing that's helpful and Randy Alcorn did a good job in his book and we've recommended it a lot, I didn't put it on this week, but some of you have read that book but one of the helpful things about his book there is getting people to understand that heaven is a real place. Or actually I would have named it the new earth or the New Jerusalem and he calls it that because God's going to dwell among people. But the point is we're going to live in a real place that's not totally different then the old place. If I had an old motorcycle and I tell you this afternoon I'm going to buy a really great new motorcycle and then you went with me to see it and I said here it is and it's a 50 foot RV you wouldn't say well that's a really great new motorcycle because it's not a motorcycle. It's an RV. Some people think that our experience in this eternal home is going to be something radically different. We're going to be and I've heard it all and we've all sat through the bad flannel graph lessons. It's all cotton ball clouds and translucent bodies and harps that we strum on, eternal hymn sings and it's just like well whatever I guess it's better than the fiery place so we'll go there but I don't get it. It isn't going to be like that. That would be saying a new earth that has no correspondence to the old earth. There is a correspondence to the old earth. The correspondence to the old earth means that we're going to have experiences that are like the old experiences and we're going to have realities that are like the old realities but they're a whole lot better because all the pain evil and suffering are extracted. You're not going to be floating around on a cotton ball cloud with a translucent chubby invisible Casper the friendly ghost body, skitin' the hymn book going from 1 you to 950 and back to 1 again and some weird mystical smoky chapel in the sky. Stop with that nonsense. You're going to be in a place that's real having real experiences the way you were intended to live without any reference to pain evil.

Well don't take my word for it, here it is. It's like by the way how good is it? It's like he says I saw the holy city the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride beautifully adorned there for her husband. When ever we see the analogy of husband and bride we often quickly think well Christ is the groom and we are the bride. That's not it here; don't mix these metaphors in your mind. This is a whole different metaphor and whole different analogy. And the analogy here is that you and I are going to be the groom and coming down the aisle for us adorned for us is our new home. And it'll have a correspondence to the old home but it'll be so much better. And like at those weddings that we have where she's all decked out and she's coming down the aisle we all try to take a glimpse at the groom he's at the front and he's looking at her. Sometimes he's looks a little surprised like I haven't seen that one, you know, because she looks a lot different then she did the day before. Kind of hoping she'll stay like that. Oh wow look at that. And he's often taken by her because there she is in all her glory. Now you've lived on a planet that's pretty neat it has glimpses of the good and like an MC Escher there's a sense in which we know what beauty and good and pleasure and happiness is but we never quite fully get it. Well that day it'll be perfect. Why? Well in part because God and all of His goodness will be brought close. Verse 3 I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with men. And He will dwell with them and they will be His people and God himself will

be with them as their God and all the extraction of the bad stuff verse 4 best verse in the chapter. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes there will be no death, death will be no more, neither shall there be mourning or crying or pain anymore for the former things have past away. He who was seated at the throne said behold I am making all things new. And he said write this down for these words are trustworthy and true. And he said to me it is done. Look at this now, this is important, I am the alpha and the omega, first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. I am the A and the Z, the beginning and the end. See those are the book ends if you will. With God who is a perfect living and perfection creating perfect beings before sin and then sin this little excurses of sin and suffering and pain and evil and then He's going to wrap it all up. All you've got to do is read the chapters that precede chapter 21. He's going to wrap up all the evil and now book end. Now we're going to have again God in His perfection with holiness dealing with the creation that He made in holiness and perfection without reference to all these things. And we're going to have God in perfection with people again the way it ought to be. It was short lived I understand but God did create people to live on a real planet with real bodies and a real place and everything was perfect and that's how He wanted it to be we had this big excurses into sin. But one day it'll be over and the greatness of that greatness will be so much greater then the badness of bad that you and I experience that you won't even want to compare them.

The pain is gone on the new planet. We live on a messed up planet we're going to live on a planet that's not messed up, it's perfect. And by the way this is helpful too we're going to live not just on a perfect planet we're going to live in a perfect body. That sounds good. Turn to this passage with me if you haven't turned there lately 1 Corinthians chapter 15. I often bring this text to the fore in funerals and if you haven't been to a funeral lately that I preached you need to see this because this is the hope of our future resurrection. It is the promise predicated by the way of the veracity and the truthfulness of Christ's bodily resurrection and he says verse 42 this is how it's going to be with the resurrection of the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:42 now he makes 4 comparisons and they're all very important look at the first one what is sown perishable is raised imperishable. What is sown perishable it dies it was a body that was perishable it's going to be raised imperishable. There is something about that phrase that needs to get into your mind and encourage you and motivate you to power through all your sickness, weaknesses and pains in your life. Perishable. There are things in your cupboard that are not perishable like cans of SpaghettiOs. Those will last through the rapture and the tribulation. Then you got things there on your counter that are perishable and none more perishable then bananas. I don't care if you've got that thing with the hook that hangs them off the counter it doesn't matter they're good for about 3 hours. I mean you buy them they're not good, they're green and if you eat them you get sick and they snap like I don't know like you're eating something that snaps. And then you get that 3 hours on Thursday when they're just right. And then they start to spot on the peel. I know some of you like mushy bananas, I don't. I don't like banana pie, banana pudding. Give me a banana that's just right and I want the peel to look right before I open it because there's a good chance that if it looks right on the outside, it's not green it's not hard, it's going to be right on the inside and then it gets black. I don't know we buy lots of bananas and we eat very few bananas because there's such a small window of opportunity because they're going through this cycle kind of like you, right? I mean we were gangly and weird and goofy when we were in Jr. High and then we started to grow out of that and we were good for like 3 years. Then it turned and the downhill slid began and the spots appeared and things got mushy. And down it went. That's a perishable body. You get a body in the resurrection that is imperishable. You want a different word for that that maybe a little motivating and exciting to you how about this ageless. Give up on all this anti-aging commercial nonsense it doesn't work. You're body is going to age I don't care how much paint you put on it, it's going to age. But one day you're going to get a body that doesn't age and it'll be like in that 3 year period where bodies are what they're suppose to be. That'll be good. Picture that. Having the experience and knowledge and wisdom of life and you get to have it for more than 3 years, you get it for 30 years and then 33 years then 300 years then 3000 years and you still got a body that doesn't age. That's what the bible says your future body is all about. Your body was not intended by God initially to age but He made it so subjected it to futility and corruption but He's going to turn that all around for those who trust in Christ.

It was sown in dishonor verse 43 says but it is raised in glory. I told you that word glory is a broad word, well the word doxah here glory translated often in the New Testament as I said it represents the concept of beauty. As a matter of fact when Jesus is talking about the lilies of the field and he compares Solomon and all his kingly regalia and he says he tries to look really good and he looks pretty sharp for a human being but look at the flower of the field it's glory, it's splendor, it looks great, it looks so beautiful Solomon didn't even compare to that. The body that you have that same word and description that Jesus used to describe flowers is now describing you. It's not only an ageless body it is a beautiful body. I know a lot of people find pleasure happiness, beauty and all that, we Christians we shouldn't be all into that, I'm into that and I'm not going to get it until we get there. And when we get there we get to experience it forever ageless and beautiful bodies.

Thirdly, this is a good one, it says it was sown in weakness and is raised with power. I remember as a kid learning about the New Jerusalem and heaven and all that and it said that there wasn't any night there and it's kind of was really cool as a little kid but then I got older and I thought no I would like that night because it's good I like to sleep. Didn't like to sleep when I was little but I like to sleep now. I'd like there to be long nights there. That would be cool. But then I realized the only reason I like night is because I'm so chronically and perpetually tired. If I don't have that I don't care, let the sun shine forever and it will. Christ himself will be the sun and there will no longer be any night and we in our new bodies will never be tired. Let's call it tireless. You're going to have an ageless, beautiful, tireless body. I mean all in favor say Aye. That's a good thing. I'd like that. You don't have it now. Unless you're 23 and you're on the tail end of that 3 year span, you're almost done with that, because it's downhill. Ageless, beautiful, tireless.

Look at the last one, here's where people kind of careen into error, don't think wrongly about this comparison. It is sown a natural body and it is raised a spiritual body. That's where Casper the friendly ghost theology starts to creep in but that's not what that means. I guarantee you that's not what this means. They're not translucent see through bodies. Matters of fact Jesus wanted to prove what the resurrection body was about he sat and ate fish with the disciples when he came to see them. He sat and cooked a breakfast for Peter and sat down and ate with them in John 21. These are bodies that have intestinal tracts that work they're not ghosts. What does this mean, natural, especially in the book of 1 Corinthians has to do with the impulses of the body that are sinful. Spiritual, kind of like when you say Ted is a really spiritual guy, you don't mean he's translucent, right? You mean that he chooses to do godly things. That's exactly what this means. You're going to have a body because the problem with the body is that it does a lot of wrong things. You're going to have a body that never wants to do the wrong thing it wants to do the right thing. It'll be a godly body. Look at that, it'll be ageless, it'll be beautiful, it'll be tireless, and it'll be godly. That's what the bible promises. You live in a messed up body now, welcome to the club it only gets worse. But you're going to have a body one day when the trumpet sounds and the dead in Christ are raised. Yeah you'll have a short period of nakedness as 2 Corinthians 5 calls it. If you died today on the way home from church we're going to grieve, we'll have a funeral, we'll be sad but we know it's coming so we're not going to be knocked off our spiritual horse. We're still going to praise God that God is God and it's exactly what God planned. But you're going to be naked until the resurrection. And the resurrection is going to take place when the trumpet sounds and the dead in Christ rise. And what ever composite material is left he's going to reconstitute that from whatever DNA there he's going to fix it all up according to the manufactures specs and he's going to reunite your disembodied spirit with a body and there there's some things that play out depending on your eschatology. And then the New Jerusalem comes down and we get to live there. God designed you for a body a perfect body and He's going to give you a perfect planet to live with that perfect body. And by the way all the messed up experiences with people will be gone. Because he's not only going to give us new bodies but the bible says he's given us a new heart and without the problem of Satan and the flesh, you know the body that wants to do wrong, we're going to be in a good place with people that serve God. I know some people say He's going to be wiping my tears away everyday because all I'm going to think about is Uncle Joe he was a pagan and he's not going to be there and I can't imagine it. Fluffy my dog I'm not sure he's there so I'm going to cry because I don't have my dog there.



Whatever. Here, you won't be crying, I guarantee whatever you think you're going to miss in heaven you won't miss it. Jot this one down we don't have time to turn there but Isaiah 65 verses 17 and 18. Here's the promise of God, believe it or don't believe it. If you don't believe it I don't know why you're here. Isaiah 65:17-18 says behold I will create a new heavens and a new earth and the former things shall not be remembered nor shall they come to mind. So why are we so fixated on our pain? Can we just suck it up put our focus on the glory that is to be revealed to us and keep it there? Which by the way is what the first three English words translated one Greek word in Romans 8:18 means. It's translated this way "for I consider" it's the word *logizomai* and it means to set my mind's pattern of thinking on this. This is how I think. This is my pattern of thinking and the way that I think is that the present suffering is not worth comparing to the future glory. That means you've got to keep your mind there. I put it this way number 3 on your outline you need to keep focusing on the future. Keep your focus on the future.

### 3. Keep Your Focus On The Future

I mean I talk about the difference between hope and despair, courage and cowardice, perseverance and defeat. I'm telling you the difference is where you're mind dwells. I mean we're not Christian Scientists here we're not denying that evil exists. We're not saying let's pretend there is no suffering. There is suffering and we'll experience suffering but we got to get our chin up and our eyes at the horizon and we've got to say I can survive this, I can persevere this because it's not going to last very long and the eternal wait of the goodness, the pleasure, the happiness of eternity is going to so outweigh this I got to keep my mind on the next world.

Oliver Wendell Holmes the American jurist he said some people, you've heard this a million times, are so heavenly minded they're no earthly good. You've heard that? Well, it's just not true, it's just not true. I get to meet someone who is so heavenly minded they're no earthly good. And to quote Lewis one more time in response to that he said this continually looking to the future of the eternal world is not as some moderns think a form of escapism. As a matter of fact he says if you read history you'll find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were those who thought the most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they become so ineffective in this world. And I totally agree because you know what happens when your eyes are not fixed on the next life when you don't pray with Jesus, your kingdom come, when you don't say with the early church Maranatha, when you're not saying my treasure and my heart are there not here, you know what you're always looking down here and all you do is get consumed with the temporal stuff. It's the Christians that have their eyes set on the next world that are freed up to look past their pain to the prize and be useful on this planet.

Think of the apostle Paul I mean I reference briefly that beating in Philippi, remember he's in Philippi; he gets thrown in stocks in a dungeon. He's been beaten, he's naked. They tore his clothes off and beat him with rods the bible says. And now he's got his feet in stocks, he's likely bleeding and bruised and bumps on his body and here he is with Silas and the bible says around midnight he was sitting there complaining to the other inmates. Is that what it says? Saying oh man this is terrible, would you pray for me? Is that what he said? The bible says at around midnight he was praising God and singing. God can use folks like that. Those are people we admire and you know why Paul had that perspective because he said stuff like this. For me to live is Christ but to die that's gain. He said I recognize that the things in this world that cause me pain and distress and all the betrayal and the problems with people. All the sickness and all the persecution and evil is nothing compared to where we're headed.

One last passage on this before I let you go. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 obviously Paul is speaks from experience he knows what it is to have opposition and pain and bad things happen in his life. He realizes that it's not getting better, it's getting worse but it's like Jesus said the pangs of childbirth it's accelerating the world is going to get worse your body is going to get worse your relationship with people there's a lot of them that are just going to get worse. But he says we don't lose heart verse 16. 2 Corinthians 4:16 we don't lose heart though our outer self is wasting away. Our inner self is being renewed day by day. Now this is kind of a joke verse 17. I mean

you got to think that because this guy has been beaten and run out of town and had his life threatened, left for dead. He says, this light in momentary affliction, it's no biggie. It's preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. Can't even compare it. Now here's the key, three words underline these next three words in verse 18, they are critical, and it's what point three is all about on your outline right here. As we look, it's all about your perspective, it all about your focus your attitude is determined by what you are focusing on as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are, good one to box highlight circle, transient. You got pain in your life? Yeah, pain, suffering, evil bad stuff. Transient. And everything about this world and this life, transient. But the things that are unseen, like your future resurrected body, like the kingdoms of the world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, like the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven like a bride adorned those things, those are eternal, those will last forever. Your pain is temporary. Our future pleasure, happiness is eternal.

We'll see it later in our passage but I can't help but think of John 16 when Jesus said the same thing. He said you know the pain is a lot like childbirth. You got to look past labor to the delivery. You got look past the contractions you got to look to the baby. I mean think about this, ladies you don't throw labor showers? You throw baby showers. You don't have contraction games you have baby games. Because although you know basketball girls sitting there and every mom knows, pains coming for you, but we don't celebrate that, we don't even focus on that as a matter of fact you're telling her you just got to keep looking to when that baby comes. And you'll be holding that baby soon. Why do you talk like that? Because the joy of the baby is nothing compared to the pain of the labor. You got to look past the pain to the prize. Let me read those verses I was quoting. This is John 16:21-22, Jesus he says when a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come. It's painful. But when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish for the joy that a human being has been born into the world. So you too will have sorry now but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take that joy from you. The pain is temporary the joy is eternal. You got to lift your chin up get your eyes to the horizon and like Jesus said where your treasure is your heart will be also. Are you living for the next one or are you living for this one? I'm done with Christianity I'm tired of talking to would be Christians and so called Christians that are all about wanting Christianity to make everything great here. It's not about here, it's about there. I know Orange County Christianity, I'm sick of it. It's all about here, how can it be better here? Good luck with that. It's arranging the deck chairs on the sinking ship. What are you doing that for? We're not made for here, we're made for there. Let's get our hearts ready for there. Let us as Colossians 3 says seek those things which are above. Set your hearts on things above, not on things of the earth. Let's pray.

God we need our focus on the future, we've got to look past the pain we don't want it. We're not trying to mitigate it. God you know my heart we walk through a lot of tearful events here as pastors in the church. I know pain is real and pain hurts, loss is tough, suffering is bad, cancer is scary. God but we recognize that those things were promised. You said that was going to happen to all of us. We're all going to go through messed up experiences and messed up bodies on a messed up planet. But we're not living for this world. I pray this congregation isn't living for this world I pray we can get our sights on the next world and like Job or maybe like Spafford, the lawyer in Chicago who wrote this hymn that we're about to sing on the death of his four daughters. His four daughters drowned before that his son had died when his wife wired that the family was dead he sat down in his study and he wrote words it is well with my soul. Even when sorrows like sea billows roll. Pain is pain and it hurts but God we want to look beyond that we want to have in our hearts hope not despair, courage not cowardice, we want to have perseverance not defeat and to get that we've got to keep our eyes on the prize. Let us look beyond this life to the next get our hearts there God. We need it, we need a better perspective, we need a focus that's resolute and doesn't move. Looking forward to seeing you face to face. Maybe today is the day, maybe the trumpet sounds today. All of our dead Christian relative will rise and we're going to be in your presence you'll transform our bodies and then soon a New Jerusalem. That'll be great. I know a lot of people look at us, and say oh that's pie in the sky

you're just hoping against hope. But thanks to the resurrection of Christ from the dead the most detested historical event of all time we predicate our hope on historical fact. We thank you for that, we look forward God to the culmination of our faith when our faith will be sight. When that trumpet sounds we look forward to that God. Let us reflect on that even how as we sing. Receive our worship and encourage our hearts. In Jesus Name. Amen