

GLANCING BACK WHILE PRESSING ON

I. 2 Corinthians 4:6-18

A. Before we cross the threshold into the New Year, let's remember those we've lost. Nearly everyone in this room and in ear shot of this message had a loved one pass away. Gary, Doug, and Vince lost their mothers, several of you lost grandparents, aunts & uncles, colleagues and friends. As we prepare to close out this year and enter the next, it's good for us to pause and reflect. This list isn't exhaustive--some important names may have been left out, but let's remember the following: Dorothy Matheny, Joanne Price, Mary Popo, Betty Dorn, Esther Loughman, Mary Arnold, Elsie Cassarino, Carol Price, Karen Kaminsky, Porky Kellner, Madeline Utley, Tom Nebbergall, Mike Warthman, Rebecca Petrie, Bernice Mingo, John Dyer, Roger Montgomery, Fred Jenkins, Dick Fairall, Mike Schoop, Johnny Ryan, Jim Wenner, Janice Palmer, John White, Kenny Milliser, Joanne Benner, Carl Williamson, Gary Mack, David Calhoun, Linda Middleton, Rita Russell, Larry Blade, Jean Spittler, Elizabeth Lewis, Fawn Jones.

B. If you drive past Fletcher Chapel, Fairfield Baptist, Oakthorpe Church, and many others in our area, you'll see church buildings that look like they've been built smack dab in the middle of a cemetery. This used to be common. There are several visual messages here and they aren't meant to be morbid. Gravestones remind us that our time here on terra firma is short. We've only been given a limited amount of time to glorify God with our allotment of talents, gifts, & graces before we take our place in the yard. The gravestones stand for loved ones who've merely transferred their church memberships to the Church Triumphant but one day there'll be a sweet reunion. And they remind us that the bones planted beneath those stones will rise again and inherit all that encompasses the New Heavens and New earth... The Bible tells us so...

C. 2 Corinthians 4:6-18 (NIV) is a suitable Benediction to close out 2014...

1) V8-9 *"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."*

2) Those verses are paradoxical reality of the normal Christian life...

3) V14 *"... we know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to Himself."* (Remember these words at every funeral, during every walk through a cemetery, and whenever grief tries to embitter your heart.)

4) V16-18 *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*

5) Jonathan Edwards said: *"The way to Heaven is ascending; we must be content to travel uphill, though it be hard and tiresome, and contrary to the natural bias of our flesh."*

D. We really are fragile earthen vessels but if Christ, the Hope of Glory, dwells in us, we can look back with tears co-mingled with smiles and press onward and upward in like manner. We can lock arms, limp forward, and share Good News with anyone who'll listen even while we continue to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. Each new morning we can collect, like manna, a fresh supply of mercies and ask for daily bread that will sustain us in doing our Father's will and accomplishing His work. Anyone want to come with me?

* Close with Hebrews 12:1-3 and Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

2 Corinthians 4:6-18 (NIV)

6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. **7** But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. **8** We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; **9** persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. **10** We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. **11** For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may also be revealed in our mortal body. **12** So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. **13** It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, **14** because we know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to Himself. **15** All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. **16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. **17** For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. **18** So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Quote by Jonathan Edwards

"The way to Heaven is ascending; we must be content to travel uphill, though it be hard and tiresome, and contrary to the natural bias of our flesh."

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **2** fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Film Clips & Other Links

"Winter Snow Song" - Audrey Assad with Chris Tomlin

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpHiAmL8-b0>

Perseverance is a Sign of Being Born Again

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZGTPd1x0Bk>

Questions for Sleepy and Nominal Christians - Tim Keller

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsStN5kKfX4>

Invite Someone to Church (Very Funny!) :-)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18CF7bPKi_o

Bonus Stuff

Romans 5:3-5 (ESV)

3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Quote by Oswald Chambers

"Perseverance is more than endurance. It is endurance combined with absolute assurance and certainty that what we are looking for is going to happen. Perseverance means more than just hanging on, which may only be exposing our fear of letting go and falling. Perseverance is our supreme effort of refusing to believe that our hero is going to be conquered."

- Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*.

Quote by Jacob Riis

"I look at a stone cutter hammering away at a rock a hundred times without so much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the 101st blow it splits in two. I know it was not the one blow that did it, but all that had gone before."

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"By perseverance the snail reached the ark."

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"We all want progress, but if you're on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive."

Quote by George Washington

"To persevere in one's duty and be silent, is the best answer to calumny."

From the Diary of John Wesley

Sunday, A.M., May 5

Preached in St. Anne's. Was asked not to come back anymore.

Sunday, P.M., May 5

Preached in St. John's. Deacons said, "Get out and stay out."

Sunday, A.M., May 12
Preached in St. Jude's. Can't go back there, either.

Sunday, A.M., May 19
Preached in St. Somebody Else's.
Deacons called special meeting and said I couldn't return.

Sunday, P.M., May 19
Preached on street. Kicked off street.

Sunday, A.M., May 26
Preached in meadow. Chased out of meadow as bull was turned loose during service.

Sunday, A.M., June 2
Preached out at the edge of town. Kicked off the highway.

Sunday, P.M., June 2
Afternoon, preached in a pasture. Ten thousand people came out to hear me.

George Mueller Prayed For Five Friends
By Basil Miller

George Muller a man of prayer and man of faith. A definite prayer of importunity follows:

"In November, 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land or on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted."

"The man to whom God in the riches of His grace has given tens of thousands of answers to prayer in the self-same hour or day in which they were offered has been praying day by day for nearly 36 years for the conversion of these individuals, and yet they remain unconverted. But I hope in God, I pray on, and look yet for the answer. They are not converted yet, but they will be."

This was the faith that carried him through every straitened place. He met emergencies by asking and in due time God supplied whatever the need might be.

Those prayers? You ask. In 1897, those two men, sons of a friend of Mr. Muller's youth, were not converted, after he had entreated God in their behalf for 52 years daily. But after his death God brought them in the fold.

- George Muller by Basil Miller p. 146