

## Blinded by the Sight

2 Cor 5:1-10



I want to set you a challenge. That is, to see if you can look at this photo without salivating. Quite a challenge I think. As you can see, you're looking at a block of Cadbury dairy milk chocolate. Can't quite see what size it is. But it's the plain milk chocolate variety. A glass and a half of full cream Cadbury goodness.

And it looks great doesn't it. You can just about taste it in your mouth. The smooth creamy chocolate. It's opened up. All you have to do is reach out and break off a row. Unless you're lactose intolerant....it's very attractive isn't it. And maybe you're salivating now.

But let me ask you. If you had to choose between that image on the wall. And the real thing. What would you go for? Would you go for the six foot high, beautiful LOOKING... picture..or would you go for the real glass and a half? I guess it's a strange sort of question to ask isn't it. It's a no brainer really. Why would anyone go for the picture, when the real thing's on offer?

If I hold it up you can see there is a bit of a similarity between the two, but the point is. One's got a whole lot more SUBSTANCE than the other. And that makes a lot of sense doesn't it. To go for the thing that's the most real. It's not that the picture's not real

The picture on the wall. I can tell you. Is precisely 171600 PIXELS. Might be a lot of PIXELS...but not a lot of SUBSTANCE.

The one in my hand. 1050 CALORIES.

That's what I'm talking about. That's the real thing. Right there.

If we're talking chocolate. That's what I'm going for every time.

And Paul says when it comes to what you're LIVING FOR. If we're just living by SIGHT. Then it's like we're going for the picture on the wall. Rather than the real thing. And that might sound a bit strange to you. But as Paul compares living by FAITH and living by SIGHT. What he's saying is this. He's saying. If you live by SIGHT. In other words. If you only take stock of what you can see and touch and hear and smell and taste....then. You're actually living for the thing of LESS SUBSTANCE. Than if you live by faith. Verse 7's a great little summary. Paul says we live by FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT.

And as he says that.... he's just making something explicit there, that he's been saying implicitly since chapter 4.

If you remember last week. You remember he said. Talking about himself. He said. Our glory's not one you can see on the outside. It's an inner glory. In fact he says on the outside..... to look at...if you're going to go on what you can see.....we're like jars of clay

But we don't lose heart he says from verse 16 there. Because it's not so much the outward that's important.

Verse 16

We don't 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.

Verse 18

18 So we fix our eyes not on what is SEEN, but on what is UNSEEN. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Do you see what he's getting at there?

We normally think the things that are the MOST CONCRETE are those outward things. The things we can see. The things we can hold and do scientific tests on. THAT'S what we think is real. To us, other things are LESS REAL.

But Paul's saying it's actually the other way around. He's saying those things you can SEE..... are actually less real than the things that are UNSEEN.

In fact if you're living that way.... If you're only living, hoping, trusting in the things you can see as if that's all that's real.....then you're really fixing your eyes on the TEMPORARY.

it's a bit like you're living for the picture on the wall...instead of the thing with real substance.

For what is seen is temporary, but what is UNSEEN is eternal.

Have you ever looked. At people like Paul. And wondered. How could they do it?

How could they be so spiritual? How could they be so committed? How could they be so self sacrificial?

Well if you look at verse 13 there of chapter 4. You actually get a pretty good insight. Paul spells it out there. The rationale behind why he does what he does. Why he lives the way he does. It's because of his perspective on reality.

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.

We don't just live for the things we can see.

It's out of that conviction of what we believe to be true. That we do what we do.

If we were living just by sight we'd probably shut our mouths and go back to the farm.

It's not that Paul or other people like him are intrinsically more spiritual than anybody else. They're not super heroes because of some secret inner power. Paul's saying...it's just that they've got this grip of reality. And they live in accordance with it.

We believe, and therefore speak.

One follows the other. It's like when the hero's interviewed after they just saved someone's life. They've pulled someone out of the water who was drowning. Have you ever seen one of those interviews. They're interviewing the hero. They say That was amazing. What prompted you to do such an amazing thing.

The person usually looks a bit surprised. And they say. Well, I saw someone drowning in the water. So I pulled them out.

IT's just what anyone would do in response to the reality of the situation.

Matter of fact. ....the amazing thing to do. In that circumstance....would be to do NOTHING. To take NO NOTICE. That would have been surprising.

It's not rocket science is it? IT's just the right reaction to the presenting reality.

If your pants are on fire. There's a right and proper response.

Paul's not just driven by an innate sense of call. He's driven by the reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus. verse 14 he spells that out

This is what's driving Paul. This is what compels him to keep going. It's this reality. Over and above what he can see.

... we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.

We believe and therefore speak. There's the concrete reality. There's the reason Paul hasn't settled down on the farm. There's the reason he keeps on speaking when he knows he's going to get a smack on the mouth. There's the reason he keeps picking himself up out of the dust. To keep going. We fix our eyes not on what is SEEN but on what is UNSEEN.

If you want 20/20 vision.....you need to look back. And understand that in 33AD Jesus Christ died on the cross.....and three days later he rose again.

If you want 20/20 vision you need to look FORWARD and understand that God will raise his people with Jesus.... in the future.

You need to look BACK and see what God's done. And you need to look FORWARD. See what he will do.

If you're going to live rightly in the present, you need to anchor those two points of reality into your make up. You have to HARD WIRE those realities into your brain. You need to fix your eyes on that and you need to live by that reality.

I just want to take you quickly down to the second half of chapter 5. Paul expands a bit on that. We're going to read from verse 16 of chapter 5. And Paul's pointing out that it's a new perspective. Which makes a huge difference to how you see yourself and others and the world.

Verse 16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! Exclamation mark.

IT's not something you can see. Apart from hopefully a change in attitude and behavior. But being in Christ. Someone who's turned to him. Who calls Jesus Lord. Means such a significant change that Paul can say you're actually a new creation. And the old's gone.

He goes on to talk about the ministry of reconciliation. That God's doing in Christ. He says in verse 20 it's as though God's making his appeal through us.

And here's the appeal. Two words. Be reconciled.

It's like the shout from the lifesaver at the tower. As he looks through his binoculars. And sees the white pointer. Two words..... Get out.

In the light of the message about Jesus. Paul says - BE RECONCILED. Verse 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The reality is we've all sinned. And rightly face God's judgment with no confidence at all. But God made him who had NO SIN. Who had no need to face judgment. God made HIM To BE SIN. So we could be reconciled. And be in Christ, a new creation. With a new hope as we look forward to being raised with him.

Which changes everything.

If you're just going to live by what you can see. If you're going to say - this is all there is. It's pretty natural to say well I'm going to make the most of it. It's pretty natural to say I'm going to wring the neck out of every day I have and make the best of it. I remember Grant Denyer the channel 7 presenter. He had an accident in a monster truck. He damaged his neck and he couldn't move his legs. HE recovered but when he was interviewed he talked about those days when he thought he wouldn't be able to walk again. HE was beside himself with fear...he said. I don't

want to live half a life. Because that's what a life in a wheelchair is....if this is the only shot you get. That's what life is...when you get dealt a tough hand, or your dreams don't come true or things don't work out how you planned. Bad luck. That's a difficult reality to live with.

And on top of that.....what do you do about death? I guess you just don't talk about it. Or you say there's nothing afterwards, or you console yourself that at least it's the end of the pain.

Back to the start of chapter 5.

With his anchor points in place Paul says this about death.

He says we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

If you're in Christ death isn't the end of the real. It's the start of the REALLY REAL. Even in death, which looks like the end....You move from the less permanent to the more permanent. You go from the tent which if you've been camping much you know is pretty temporary. And pretty WET...if it rains.....you go from that....To the house built by God.

Which doesn't necessarily make death itself less scary. But it does change your attitude towards it, and to the way you live.

There's a story of a bishop in South America. He's approached by some thugs who point a gun at his head and tell him he needs to leave. And he says "what are you threatening me with heaven?"

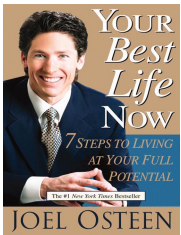
Paul says we're not looking forward to death itself necessarily but for Jesus followers. it's an upgrade And I know some of you and I know as your body wears out you're saying amen to that.

In the meantime he says we groan. Longing to be clothed with our heavenly body.

One of the things that keeps coming through to me. Is that the Christian world view. Seems to keep on aligning you with the way things really are. For me as I read the bible - what it says keeps ringing true of life. That's why illustrations are so helpful in sermons because so often what is true of life. Is true of the gospel.

When the bible talks about the creator. You look around and you say yep that's right. And when it points out my sin I can deny it. But if I'm honest . I have to say yes that's right too. That's me.

And it doesn't try to mask the terror of death or even the pain of life. And it doesn't answer every question I have. But what it does. ...is it makes a great deal of sense, which makes sense if it's pointing me to the ultimate truth of the way things really are.



Joel Olsteen is an American pastor at Lakewood church in Houston in Texas who's written a book called **your best life now**.

It's a best seller. 45000 people attend his church each week. Joel Olsteen says...you can have health now. And wealth. There for the taking if you can change the way you think - about yourself and about God.

And millions of people want to hear that message. Because it gives me a hope in this life...the life I can see.

But that's not faith based on reality. And it doesn't ring true, and it doesn't prove true either.

I play a game each week with my grade sixers. It's called who am I. They've each written down five things about themselves. I read them out and everyone has to guess who it is from the answers. Clue number five is something that's your secret. This is what one eleven year old girl wrote. This is her secret. I wish I could be an animal, because being a human is too cruel.

Grade sixer...far closer to what Paul's saying. Than Joel Olsteen.

Paul says in this life we groan not because we're only living half a life. Not because we don't have enough money ...but because we're in the tent in this life

4 while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed.

IN other words - we're not all that fussed about dying. We're not just wanting to ditch this body. We're looking for that permanent residence.

We don't wish to be unclothed but but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

We weren't made for mortality. We were made in God's image. Which means we were made for eternity and permanence. It's stamped into your dna.

Now it is god who has made us for this very purpose, and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

One critic reviewed Joel Olsteen's book and described it this way. He said it's all about discontentment. It arises out of discontent with the way life is. And it can't produce contentment because this life is mortal, and we groan Like if you have to live in a tent for a month.

So Paul says sure there's a groaning. But it's the groaning of looking forward to the permanent. It's the groaning of separation from being with God the way we will be.

Verse 6

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.

Rather than despairing because we don't have our best life now.

We live by faith, not by sight.

So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

And here's extra little kicker of reality to motivate you. You can close your eyes and pretend. You can deny. You can shout and scream. But Paul says we've all got to appear before the judgment seat.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

So we live to please him. Because we live by faith. Not by sight.

Why would you - over your lifetime - give 50000 dollars of your hard earned money to church. Rather than put it in your back pocket?

Because we live by faith, not by sight.

Why would you work so hard at living with self control, instead of doing what ever you please? Because we live by faith, not by sight.

Why would you stand up and be counted as a Christian. Why would you forgive someone who's hurt you deeply. Why would you put up with constant criticism?

Why would you put your fear aside and invite someone to church? Why would you bother praying, or reading your bible?

If you lived by sight, you wouldn't. But we live by faith Paul says.

So we're confident. In this life, no matter how it looks outwardly. And as we look forward to the next one. We live to please God. Because Jesus Christ died and rose again. Because we'll be raised with him. Because you're a new creation in him. We live by faith, not by sight.

