

Title: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS, 2 CORINTHIANS 4:13 – 5:5
(Chatham, NJ; 06/07/15, AM) [Pc – Comparison and Contrast]

Theme: As Christians we live with a lot of contrasts, but Paul encourages us by a vision of what is to come.

Purpose: To clarify the conflicts we experience here with the glory to be given us in the next life.

Introduction:

1. In this letter Paul spends a lot of time describing and defending his work.
2. As he does this he illustrates things that we all share as Christians.
3. He compares his faith to those of old, contrasts numerous things that give us reasons not to lose heart, and finishes by reminding us of our heavenly home.

I. Believe and Speak, 13

A. Spirit of faith from Psalm 116

1. A comparison with the faithful of old: a remnant, not a majority
2. He identifies with the sentiment expressed in this Psalm: a living voice of faith
3. The psalmist even speaks out of affliction (116:10) as Paul did (1:8) (“I had faith, even when I declared, ‘I am suffering acutely.’”)
4. The psalmist asserts his faith despite suffering (3-7); he renders to God whatever vows he has made (14, 18) as a demonstration of his faith, and he continues to call on him (17)

B. The shock of a faithful man

1. All men are liars (11)
2. This stunning revelation not only alarmed him but it set him at odds with others
3. He finds his rest in God (7)

C. “And so we speak” (2 Cor. 4:13)

1. Probably a reference to Paul’s work
2. Yet still an expression of those faithful to God in any age
3. We speak and proclaim his name
4. We give thanks (Ps. 116:17 and 2 Cor. 4:15)
5. Because we are confident of the presence of God
 - The psalmist is confident for those who die in the Lord, 116:15
 - Paul is confident in Christ’s resurrection and ours

II. We Do Not Lose Heart, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (a series of contrasts)

A. Outer vs. inner (16)

1. The outer nature is wasting away (nature groans, Romans 8:22)
2. Our bodies will die, yet be transformed (clothed with immortality)
3. Thus, our inner nature is being renewed day by day: the shepherd of our souls heals us

B. Momentary vs. eternal (17)

1. The contrast isn’t even between our entire lifespan but between a moment and eternity: a much more dramatic contrast, and more realistic
2. There is no real comparison to timelessness
3. He contrasts our afflictions with the glory we’ll receive
4. Even that glory has no comparison!!

C. Things seen vs. things unseen (18)

1. A strictly materialist view can’t get beyond the first

2. Though most people who claim there is nothing more can't fully live like it
3. Things like love, kindness, justice, and mercy aren't material things
4. Seen transient things vs. unseen eternal things (love endures)

D. Tent vs. building from God, 5:1

1. We live in a tent
2. But we have a dwelling in heaven made by God
3. We know it by faith and by the promises made by Christ: I go to prepare a place for you

III. A Vision of a Heavenly Dwelling

- We long for it
- We groan until we can receive it
- We long for mortality to be swallowed up by life, 5:4
- Perhaps this is the greatest contrast between people of faith and those who don't believe
- We have a vision of what will be

Conclusions:

1. Though we live with all these contrasts, we have hope.
2. Like Paul our faith prompts us to give thanks and to speak.
3. Do not lose heart: the afflictions of this life cannot be compared to the glory that we will receive.
4. Eternity awaits: keep your faith.