

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" Volume V Number 3

BAD NEWS? YES, BUT DON'T GIVE UP! THERE'S GOOD NEWS!

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

This "Ministers' Minute" is the 3rd email of 2006 in a series of messages that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. It is a two-part message with the second installment coming next month, Lord willing. I prepared this message hoping that it will encourage those in Christ Jesus to focus on the "unseen" evidence that the best is yet to come! It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach.

May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

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2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

A business man parks his brand new red sports car on the 7th floor of a parking garage. He tells the attendant to take VERY good care of it. When he returns a few hours later he sees emergency vehicles gathered around a smashed mass of metal -- HIS CAR! He rushes up to the attendant and says, "What happened?"

"Well," says the boy, "I have good news and bad news."

"Give me the bad news first."

"OK. It was YOUR car."

"That's horrible! What is the good news?"

"It got the best gas mileage EVER on the way down!"

Life is full of mixed blessings ... No event is so good that it doesn't have its drawbacks ... No situation is so bad that it doesn't have at least some blessing or advantage tucked inside somewhere. It's not easy, but we ought to be like

the attendant who saw a silver lining in the cloud when that new sports car crashed to the street... It did get the best gas mileage ever on the way down!

In our text today, Paul is giving us a good news/bad news message.

2 Cor 4:16-18 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. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (NIV)

1. BAD NEWS: YOUR BODY IS DYING. But don't give up, there's GOOD NEWS: YOUR REAL SELF IS ALIVE FOREVER. 16

- Are people today pre-occupied with their physical bodies? Some seem to be totally obsessed with their external appearance, while others are concerned about their organs' health. Still others are at the other end of the spectrum: they don't seem to care about their appearance or health! The Christian view is to be a good steward of what god has given without being overly concerned about fads, fashions, or failed follicles. (That is a fancy way of saying hair loss shouldn't be considered tragic.)

- Non-Christians typically today are unduly concerned with their physical appearance and health while not nearly concerned enough with where their spirit will spend eternity! They're tanning to correct the color of their skin when the *color of their heart is what really counts*. They're shaping their muscles when the shape of their loyalty to the creator is what really counts.

- Physically, we are all dying. Good stewardship demands we do not unjustifiably hasten the process by careless habits and omissions. But our only hope is in the spirit realm, in the next world. Every muscle man of the 18th century is now dead. The most beautiful women of the roaring 20's are either dead or very wrinkled. Physically, we are dying. But we do not lose heart. We do not faint. We do not lose our courage, our drive, and our motivation to live. Why? Good news! The good news is this: In Christ, our spirits will live, thrive, and flourish forever!

Luke 12:15-31

15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop.

17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'

19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." ' "

20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.

23 Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.

24 Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!

25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

27 "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

28 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it.

30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.

31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Seeking his kingdom first is investing primarily in the relationship with the creator. The things that God will add are the things we need for the short time we are on earth. Bad news, good news.

16 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."

2. BAD NEWS: CURRENT SUFFERING, but don't give up, there's GOOD NEWS: COMING GLORY! 17

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

• Paul makes it clear that it not only pays to serve Jesus. It hurts! Current suffering! Some think the Christian life is the road to avoid suffering. We do avoid some kinds of pain. I have never known the pain of a hangover nor the pain of watching my kids go hungry because I gambled all my paycheck away. But there is suffering in this life for the believer.

Jesus warned us about 'current suffering.'

Matt 13:20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. **21** But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. (NIV)

Matt 24:9 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. **10** At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Paul warned us about 'current suffering.'

Acts 14:22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

Acts 20:23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me-- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. (NIV)

Peter warned us about 'current suffering.'

1 Pet 4:12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. **13** But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. **14** If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. **15** If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. **16** However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

Paul speaks of our 'light and momentary' affliction. "Momentary" is the key. Of course, our 21st century 'momentary' is microwave style. Someone said that impatience is standing in front of the microwave set on 30 seconds and shouting 'Hurry up, hurry up!'

In the perspective of all eternity, our troubles here are short in duration. It doesn't seem like it. I know. But this is where faith kicks in and gives us staying power because we know that while the bad news is *current suffering*, the good news is *coming glory*.

Robert Kearns had staying power. In 1962, Kearns was tinkering in his shop and in the process invented a phased windshield wiper that was just the ticket for intermittent light rain. You probably enjoy his invention in your car today. Kearns, a Detroit native, was sure that the "Motor City's" Big Three would be ecstatic over his find. But to his surprise, American cars began appearing on sales floors with his device, without his permission. Gaining no satisfaction from auto executives, in 1978 he decided to take his case to court. Twelve years later, Kearns' patience paid off

when a court ruled in his favor to the tune of \$10 million (and that was just from one of the Big Three). He was finally vindicated.

A prolonged ordeal is enough to test anyone's patience. However, the Christian enjoys the guarantee that one day God will not only make all things right, but also deliver an eternal payoff. Meanwhile, the Bible suggests that we: "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (Rom. 12:12 NIV). That Big Three is a key to your earthly peace of mind.

Rom 8:17-18

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.