

Renewing The Inner Man
II Corinthians 4:16

INTRODUCTION

Fainting is quite common when difficulties come. In the physical realm, fainting may be a response to a difficult circumstance. A person may faint at a funeral. It may be just an unconscious response to a situation that is more than they want to face. Or, a person may faint when some heart-breaking news comes. They just give way under the pressure of the moment. Such fainting is also a danger in the spiritual realm. The alert Apostle Paul recognized the danger and refers to it in our text. He declares, "For which cause we faint not."

This declaration may point back to the things he has just been discussing, or it may point forward to our text. It is probably intended to do both. The "faith" he has been discussing is surely one of the preventives for a fainting spell when difficulties come. However, the inner renewal and the view of suffering which he presents in the verses that follow are also a part of the preventive. For our study I want us to isolate just the inner renewal for this time. The secret of overcoming such fainting spells is to have good inner health, to be experiencing the inner renewal.

A Christian insight into the nature of man is presented by Paul in our text. He refers to the "outward man" and to the "inward man". While Paul would not divide man up into parts, he does recognize the complexity of human life. Man is more than just a physical being. He is more than a body. There is an inner,

spiritual side of man which is capable of knowing and responding to God. And it is possible for one of these sides of man to be decaying while the other is growing younger every day.

This is an appropriate text for us as we stand on the threshold of another reminder that we are decaying. It is so important that as we move onward in life that we be renewed in the inner man daily. Consider the truths that are before us in this familiar text.

I. THE RENEWAL OF THE INNER MAN OFFSETS THE DECAY OF THE OUTWARD MAN.

Being a Christian can be dangerous to your health. Instead of making him healthier, being a Christian had only hastened the decay of the outward man for Paul. The days in prison, the physical privation, the beatings, and the stoning had taken their toll on his physical well-being. But even if you have been allowed to live out your Christian life in physical comfort, the text is still applicable to you. "Though our outward man perish." It is a reference to the gradual disablement that comes to the human body as the years go by even under the best of circumstances.

Most of us are aware of this in our personal lives. We have turned the corner in the outward man., Our eyes are not as good as they once were. Our ears are not quite as sharp in hearing. Our hands don't move quite as fast. Our arms are not quite as strong. Our mind is surely a good bit slower in recalling names, dates,

and other important things. You may resist such a decline with great dedication, but it is inevitable. You may retard it a little, but such a decay will continue. An awareness of this can be discouraging in the Christian life.

However, such outward, physical decline need not affect your spiritual life. The inward man can be renewed day by day even as the outward is growing old. This is the point of the Apostle in our text. Such inner renewal can offset the outward decay.

Unfortunately, such is not always the case. So many people in our world never know any spiritual renewal. All of the focus of their lives is upon the mental, emotional, and the physical side of life. They become aware that they are decaying in each of these areas, and it leads to desperation and despair. They know that physical decline is ultimate decline for them, or mental decline is ultimate decline, for they have made that their lives. They have neglected the spiritual, or the inner man. They have ignored the fact that they have a capacity to be indwelt by God, and to know and worship God.

How is it in your life? Are you experiencing this inner renewal which offsets the physical decline?

II. THE RENEWAL OF THE INNER MAN IS A DIVINE WORK.

The verb in our text is passive as well as present tense. This indicates that the renewal is being done by Another. It also indicates that the renewal is a contin-

uing process in the life of the Christian. It is obvious that the Apostle intends for us to understand that this renewal is the work of God In our lives.

This divine work is carried on by the Holy Spirit, as the presence of God in us. He is the divine agent in the renewal. This is interesting since it is revealed in Scripture that He is also the agent of renewal in nature. As we watch the processes at work in nature which keep renewal going on, we are observing the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit exercises the same kind of renewing influence in the inner life of the Christian.

Jesus referred to this inner work of the Spirit in his discussion with the woman at the well. In offering her the gift of life eternal he said, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14) The woman wanted a drink, but Jesus offered her a well, He offered her a relationship with God that would not dry up. From other statements by our Lord we know that this was His way of describing what it would mean to have the Holy Spirit living in you. It would be like having a well in you. Think about the implications of this physical image for a moment. Can you just imagine what it would mean to never have to take a drink of water again? What it would mean to have a little well flowing with physical water inside of you which kept you from ever being thirsty again. What would be physically impossible is spiritually possible. When the Holy Spirit is received

at the moment of your entrance into the family of God you have an unceasing supply of inner spiritual satisfaction and renewal from that moment onward. Just as water makes physical renewal possible in nature, so the Holy Spirit makes inner spiritual renewal possible in man. He is always doing this work of renewal.

However, we must not assume that this work of the Holy Spirit is apart from human cooperation. There are certain things that we must do if this renewal is to be experienced. The Holy Spirit uses these means in carrying on this work of renewal.

The first of these means is the Word of God. Peter wrote, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." The Holy Spirit uses our use of the written Word of God to bring about growth and renewal within. So, if we want the inner renewal, we must be regularly biding the Word in our hearts through readings, study, meditation, and memorizing the Word. It is a vital part of this renewal.

The second of these means is that of prayer. David prayed, "Renew a right Spirit within me." He knew that the inner renewal he longed for was directly related to prayer. So he prayed. If we want to know spiritual renewal there must be a regular consistent time of prayer in our lives. We might consider the Word as being the food that is needed for renewal, and prayer to be the good, clean, air which is so needful.

Christian service must also be considered. The Holy Spirit has a way of using our experiences of Christian service to bring about inner renewal. So many times this happens in my Christian life. I will feel a certain amount of inner depletion, but then while I am seeking to serve others, sharing with others what the Lord has given to me, the Lord brings about a renewal in my own inner being. Times of inactivity for me bring about an inner dullness and stagnation. There must be the outlet if the spring of the Spirit is to continue to flow through us.

However, we need to keep things in perspective. The means do not bring about renewal by themselves. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Bible Study brings about spiritual death if it is not "in the Spirit." Prayer can become deadening if it is not "in the Spirit". The same is true of service. The whole of the Christian walk must be in the Spirit if there is to be this on-going experience of Christian renewal.

III. INNER RENEWAL IS A DAILY PROCESS.

Paul gives emphasis to this in two ways. First, the very tense of the verb indicates this. It is a present tense verb. "Is being renewed" is the best translation. There is not one experience that forever does this in your life. The Holy Spirit's renewing work comes as we "walk in the Spirit."

Then he adds the Hebraic expression "day by day". This gives us added insight to the divine method in renewal. It is a daily matter. The process will never be completed as long as we are in this world. Even while our bodies are slowly

moving toward death, our inner spirit is being prepared for participation in the glories of heaven through renewal.

The “day by day” process reminds us of the experience of the children of Israel in the wilderness. God sustained them by providing for them “day by day.” They went out morning by morning to pick up the manna that would sustain them through the day. The only day they could pick up enough for two days was the day before the Sabbath. Otherwise it was day by day. So it is in the Christian life. We cannot go from event to event and find inner renewal. We must find it day by day.

This will come as we meet with the Lord in our private time of devotion “day by day.”

It will come as we interact with Christian friends day by day. Christiana fellowship is a tremendous source of renewal.

It will come as we practice meditation on the Words of God day by day.

Even missing one day can have a negative effect upon the inner man.

Conclusion:

So there is hope as you get old. You cannot stop the decay of the body, but you can assure the renewal of the inner you. This is what is important. In spite of our best efforts the body will return to dust. But the inner person is destined for eternity. You want you inner spirit to enter the realm of eternal fresh and renewed.