

## Introduction

We have an epidemic here in the United States. Yes, and epidemic. But the good news is that there is a cure. What's the epidemic? Anxiety...anxiety. And what's the cure? The Hope of the Gospel.

Today, we gather to explore a powerful theme that runs through the very heart of the Gospel: hope. In a world often filled with uncertainty and despair, the hope offered through Jesus Christ stands as a beacon of light, guiding us toward a future filled with God's promises. We have just heard the profound passage from 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, and we will delve into the nature of hope in the Gospel message.

**The message in 2 Corinthians 4 is one of resilience and hope amidst suffering.** Paul encourages believers not to lose heart despite outward hardships, because inwardly, they are being renewed day by day through the work of the Holy Spirit. He preaches that present troubles are temporary and light compared to the eternal glory they are producing. By focusing not on the visible and temporary but on the unseen and eternal, believers can maintain hope and persevere through their trials, knowing that their ultimate reward is eternal life with God.

**The Apostle Paul begins the 2 Corinthians 4 passage with a powerful declaration:** "Therefore we do not lose heart." In these few words, we find encouragement. Despite the many challenges and hardships we face, we are called not to give up, not to despair. The reason for this resilience lies in the hope we have in Christ.

Paul acknowledges the reality of our struggles by saying, "Though outwardly we are wasting away." We cannot deny that we experience disappointment, betrayal, pain and the suffering as human beings. Marriages don't work out. Jobs fall through. Our friends may betray us. We get older, our health may fail. Many circumstances can weigh heavily upon us in this life. Yet, Paul contrasts this outward decay and chaos with a powerful inner renewal: "Yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." How can that happen?

**This daily renewal is the Holy Spirit working within us.** As believers, through our faith, we are being transformed into the image of Christ, even

amidst all that may be distracting us or going wrong in our lives. This process, becoming more like Jesus, is the Gospel message, a source of hope. It means that our suffering is not meaningless and it is not hidden from God. And it is our hope, the promise of the Gospel, that each day, as we lean on God, He is renewing our spirits, giving us strength and grace to persevere.

Paul continues by putting our troubles in perspective: "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." What a radical way to view our difficulties! Paul describes our troubles as "light and momentary." This does not diminish the reality of our pain but places it within the context of eternity. Compared to the eternal glory that awaits us, our present sufferings are indeed light and brief.

I heard a very practical bit of wisdom recently. "Before you get angry at what is happening, ask yourself: 'will I even remember this five years from now?'" The message of hope in the Gospel lifts us up and carries us forward. It does not bring us down and force us to retreat. What does this do for our approach to life?

**Paul describes the hope we have in the Gospel like this:** "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." This is a profound shift in how we approach our lives. Remember...we have learned that the Gospel is transformative! The things we see around us—our struggles, our pain, the challenges of life—are temporary. They are transient and will one day pass away. But the unseen realities—God's love, His promises, the eternal life we have in Christ—these are eternal. This is the message of hope in the Gospel.

To fix our eyes on the unseen means to live with an eternal perspective. It means that we do not allow the temporary troubles of this world to overshadow the eternal glory that is to come. This is not a call to ignore our problems but to view them through the lens of eternity. It is to remember that our true home is not here, but in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

**"Ça va bien aller": "It's going to be fine."**

Rainbows... During the first weeks of social distancing and stay-at-home orders due to the COVID pandemic, there was a profusion of rainbows in Montreal. Many people began to attach meaning to all those rainbows, and a slogan emerged: "Ça

va bien aller," roughly, "It's going to be fine." This is a clear reflection of the Christian belief of hope during times of trial.

A News Article reported: "Montreal may be mostly shut down, but many of its children are keeping busy by getting out a message of hope and optimism.

Walk through the city's streets and many of the city's homes will have been decorated with a drawing of a rainbow in a window.

"The concept is a rainbow after a storm," said Fenia Ambeliotis, a mother of two children. "We tried explaining that to them to bring happiness to everyone and remind everyone it's a nice concept to hold on to for all of us."

And, of course, a rainbow holds a prominent place in the Bible!

## So, how do we live out this hope in our daily lives?

1. Trust in God's Sovereignty: Believing that God is in control and has a purpose for everything we experience transforms our perspective. This trust allows us to see challenges as opportunities for growth and blessings in disguise.
2. Focus on the Eternal: Prioritizing our spiritual growth, investing in relationships that encourage our faith, and serving others with the love of Christ keeps our hearts anchored in eternal truths. By doing so, we are not swayed by temporary circumstances.
3. Hold Firmly to Hope: Regularly reminding ourselves of God's promises through Scripture, prayer, and fellowship with other believers renews and strengthens our hope. As we immerse ourselves in God's Word and seek His presence, our hope is continually reinforced.
4. Encourage One Another: As members of the body of Christ, we are called to encourage and build each other up. Sharing testimonies of God's faithfulness, praying for one another, and offering support in times of need are vital ways we can help each other hold on to hope.

**The hope we are promised in the Gospel is a powerful, life-transforming force.** It is not a vague wish but a confident expectation rooted in the character and promises of God. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 calls us to an eternal perspective, anchoring us in the security of our relationship with God.

## The Message of Hope found in the Gospel – 8-18-2024

As we go forth today, let us embrace this hope fully. Let it shape our attitudes, guide our actions, and sustain us through every trial. May our lives be a testament to the hope we have in Christ, shining brightly in a world in desperate need of the Good News. May it be so. Amen.