Well, this was supposed to be a week where Carol and I took some time off to recharge our batteries through a short retreat. God had other plans. It turned out that my sciatic nerve issues have gotten steadily worse to the point that I was no longer able to sleep at night. I needed to be here to consult with Doctors and start to process of fixing the problem. The Lord was able to open doors for me to see a neurosurgeon today. The doctor showed me the serious problem I have with my spine and has started the process for me to be able to have surgery to take care of the issue. As I was standing there one verse went through my mind. Paul's statement that he was ...wasting away outwardly but being renewed inwardly. I came home and read through that passage. Here are some thoughts on what we can learn from Paul about the physical things we go through.

Because God's grace is growing and increasing Paul says...

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV) ...we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. [17] For our <u>light and momentary troubles</u> 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.

The *light and momentary troubles* Paul was referring to are found in 2 Cor. 11:23-29 and they include among other things being ship wrecked, beaten, stoned and left for dead, and going hungry. I can think of a lot of things I would call those things, but *light and momentary* troubles would not be in my chosen vocabulary. Paul also says that outwardly he was *wasting away* but that he was being *inwardly renewed* every day. How? How was he able to be renewed inwardly while going through so much suffering? He tells us that he focuses on what is *unseen*. Is this more than just refusing to think about it? In Colossians 3 Paul said it this way ...*set your minds on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God*. So no matter what is going on Paul says he focuses on Jesus Christ. Paul is simply saying he chooses to trust God and the fact that God sees thing from the perspective of Eternity rather than through the limitations of humanity. Is it easy to go through painful things? NO. But if we trust the God of the Universe and the fact that He has a plan and everything happens according to His plan, then we can focus on Him instead of the hardship.

PRAYER: Lord God, help me to see all that come in my life as an opportunity to offer you a sacrifice of praise. Whether it is the difficulty of finances, or physical limitations that come from pain. Please help me to remember that I can receive Your strength day by day to live in a way that will honor You.

Pastor Mark Kieft