

# 2 Corinthians 4:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

## Analysis

**While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen** (mē skopountōn hēmōn ta blepomena alla ta mē blepomena, μὴ σκοποῦντων ἡμῶν τὰ βλεπόμενα ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα)—skopeō (σκοπέω, 'to look at, fix one's gaze upon, consider') differs from blepō (βλέπω, 'to see'). We don't focus on what's visible but on what's invisible. This is the life of faith (Heb 11:1, 27)—present realities are judged by future, unseen realities.

**For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal** (ta gar blepomena proskaira, ta de mē blepomena aiōnia, τὰ γὰρ βλεπόμενα πρόσκαιρα, τὰ δὲ μὴ βλεπόμενα αἰώνια)—proskairos (πρόσκαιρος, 'temporary, transient, lasting only a while') describes all visible reality: pain, persecution, success, comfort—all temporary. Aiōnios (αἰώνιος, 'eternal, everlasting') describes the invisible: God's glory, resurrection bodies, eternal weight of glory (v. 17). Paul's entire value system is inverted: what seems real (visible) is fleeting; what seems unreal (invisible) is eternal. This is the epistemology of faith.

## Historical Context

This verse epitomizes Paul's 'already/not yet' eschatology: we live in the overlap of two ages. The visible, present age is passing away; the invisible, coming age has broken into the present through Christ. Christians live by the reality of the unseen

age while still inhabiting the seen age. This requires radical reorientation of values, perception, and hope—precisely what Paul models.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. What 'seen things' are you most tempted to fix your gaze upon—and how do they distract from unseen, eternal realities?
2. How do you practically 'look at things not seen'—what disciplines or practices help you focus on eternal realities?
3. In what ways does American Christianity prioritize temporary, visible things (buildings, numbers, success) over eternal, invisible realities?

## Interlinear Text

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μὴ	σκοποῦντων	ἡμῶν	τὰ	βλεπόμενα	ἀλλὰ	τὰ	μὴ
<b>not</b>	<b>While</b>	<b>we</b>	G3588	<b>at the things which are</b>	<b>but</b>	G3588	<b>not</b>
G3361	G4648	G2257		G991	G235		G3361

βλεπόμενα	τὰ	γὰρ	βλεπόμενα	πρόσκαιρα	τὰ
<b>at the things which are</b>	G3588	<b>for</b>	<b>at the things which are</b>	<b>are temporal</b>	G3588
G991		G1063	G991	G4340	

δὲ	μὴ	βλεπόμενα	αἰώνια
<b>but</b>	<b>not</b>	<b>at the things which are</b>	<b>are eternal</b>
G1161	G3361	G991	G166

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Corinthians 5:7** (Parallel theme): (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

**Hebrews 11:1** (Parallel theme): Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

**Hebrews 11:13** (Parallel theme): These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

**1 John 2:25** (Eternal Life): And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

**Matthew 25:46** (Eternal Life): And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

**2 Thessalonians 2:16** (Eternal Life): Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,