

God's Power: Revealing His Glory, In Powerless but Glorious Pots!

2 Corinthians 4:1-7

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We come to a little section of text we have purposefully left for tonight.

We have looked into the face of Christ, remembered that the glory of the gospel depends on who he is – Image of God and Lord.

We have examined the key to Paul's endurance in ministry, believing that we also can be encouraged to endure.

Now in between is a little section we often quote and talk about and study – treasure in earthen vessels, clay pots, peanut butter jars, plastic Walmart bags.

Jars of Clay

We know the reality – whatever it is, of value or not, it gets put in the bag. So with the pots of the first century. Some held treasures, but not know by looking at the outside. Can't tell what is in the jar Mary broke? An entire year's wages?! So the jars look the same, but what is inside varies. In the gospel, in the ministry of Paul, in the message he proclaims, in the Holy Spirit, we have a treasure that gets put into clay pots (something he will expand early in chapter 5 when he refers to our bodies of clay). We know this text, could spend much more time on it, but the real question of the text, which we sometimes never get to is, Why?

Why put the treasure in clay pots?

To Show the Power that Is of God

It shows that the power is not from us. The glory is not in us humans. We are not the key, we are not the source of power, we are not the motivation, and we are not the glory. The surpassing glory and the all-sufficient power is of God.

This becomes obvious only when we live our lives in a certain way, 4:7-15.

In our Christian Lives

We can understand this by looking at five summarizing characteristics of the life of Paul, characteristics that we want to incorporate in our own lives.

Resilient: v. 8, hard pressed but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair.

The bounce back quality. The comeback kids.

When the power is God's and not ours, we can always come back.

We can change, return, be restored.

It is true – life is difficult (Scott Peck). Life is not easy. Life overwhelms. Life almost drowns. But it does not depend on us.

We can keep on, when hope is all but gone.

Paul: stoned and left for dead, he goes on. Beaten, ridiculed, rejected... Perhaps all of these and more are in view.

Not easy to live such a life, but it demonstrates that the power is from God.

Invincible: v. 9, persecuted but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed.

Second, there is in the life of a Christian always the sense of inevitable victory. The end is not yet. God is on his throne. He will never leave us or forsake us.

We are down but not out. We are knocked down, but life persists.

Not easy to live life with such an attitude, but it demonstrates that the power is from God.

Sacrificial: v. 10-12

Paul is talking about his sufferings, what he has endured for the sake of the gospel. His has been a life of sacrifice, not literal death but figurative, to know genuine life. And this sacrificial spirit leads to life for others.

It is always so—even in our own lives. Why are not more souls being won, more visitors coming, why is more growth not experienced? The key is sacrificial lives. Lives that demonstrate that the death of Jesus is always carried about in the body. We live not until ourselves. We have been crucified with Christ. He/she gave his/her life for Christ! That is the epitaph.

Sacrifice of time, priorities, resources, commitments, self.

What sacrifice have you made for Jesus? What is the greatest sacrifice you have made for Jesus?

Sacrifice is just another word for cross-bearing. It is the same as in Romans 12:1-2, present your bodies....

Faithful (hopeful): v. 13-14

Genuine belief leads to testimony. The testimony of confident, hopeful people who “know” the power of God. We believe; therefore, we speak.

What shall we conclude when we do not speak?

Fruitful: v. 15

We live for others, not for self.

Living for others brings glory to God.

Conclusion

Treasure in earth vessels...

So that the power of God is seen....

By the lives we live.