

Jars of Clay; 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

- I. Treasure
 - a. Gold doubloons, pieces of eight, gems, jewelry
 - b. We have a very narrow concept of the idea of treasure
 - c. We mostly think of material wealth
 - d. We need to let go of that definition and pick up God's definition – 'design your mind'
- II. Power and Honor
 - a. 2 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV); But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.
 - b. "The thought of this verse is that God entrusted the gospel to people who had none of the trappings of earthly power and honor, in order that the great success of the gospel would not be accredited to its messengers as men, but unto the eternal God who inspired them."¹
 - c. The apostles were, for the most part, not well educated, wealthy, or powerful men
 - d. Paul was an exception, but he had a 'thorn in the side' that may have put him in the 'lowly' category
 - i. 2 Corinthians 10:10 (ESV); For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."
 - ii. 2 Corinthians 12:8–10 (ESV);⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
 - iii. Similar to our narrow view of treasure we have a narrow view of strength
 - iv. We have this idea that if we show any weakness we become prey for those who are strong
 - v. This is a Darwinian idea (and another false one as well) – 'only the strong survive' or 'survival of the fittest'
 - vi. That may work in the animal kingdom, but that does not work in God's Kingdom!
 - e. The main idea here is humility
 - i. 2 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV);⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.
 - ii. Paul lets us know that God recognizes the danger of being conceited or proud

¹ Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on 2 Corinthians 4:7". "Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament". <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/2-corinthians-4.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

- iii. 1 Peter 5:5 (ESV); Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
 - iv. Humble – undistinguished, of no account, unpretentious, a servant
 - f. We must recognize and embrace our weakness so that God’s strength shines through

III. Jesus Manifested in Us

- a. 2 Corinthians 4:8–10 (ESV); ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.
- b. Afflicted – troubled, injured (BDAG and Merriam Webster’s)
 - i. I would bet every person listening to this has been injured (not physically) and troubled
 - ii. Some people view these (whether self-inflicted or not) and think they cannot ever get past them, there is no way out and they become hopeless (crushed)
 - iii. But we know that all things are possible with God
- c. Perplexed – a confused state of mind, to be at a loss or in doubt, uncertain
 - i. There is no reason for us to ever be confused about the things that happen in our lives
 - ii. We often hear people ask “Why, God?”
 - iii. 2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV); Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,
 - iv. But we are never driven to despair (an utter loss of hope) because we know where our hope lies
- d. Persecuted – to harass someone because of their beliefs (specifically our faith in Jesus)
 - i. It is prevalent in society today
 - ii. There are many scientists who are Christians, but we don’t hear much from them
 - iii. Bill Nye is a very popular mechanical engineer who used to be known as ‘the science guy’ – he has some very disparaging things to say about religion and those who teach their children about Jesus
 - iv. But we know we are not forsaken – we know the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, our hope
 - v. Hebrews 13:5 (ESV); Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
- e. Struck down – the idea here is that someone has hit you with enough force to knock you down
 - i. I’m sure we have all felt that way
 - ii. “There is nowhere to go but up”
 - iii. But no matter what happens to us, struck down and even killed, we are not destroyed
 - iv. Our lives (souls) are eternal and will continue on outside the flesh

- v. We have an immortal body which we get to put on
- vi. Destruction is for those without faith in Jesus – eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:9)
- f. No matter what happens to us we know we have Jesus as our advocate, the Spirit dwelling in us, and God who will never forsake us

IV. The Death of Jesus

- a. We are “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus”
 - i. We have given up our own wants and desires for God’s
 - ii. We have crucified ourselves – we are carrying our cross – we have died to ourselves and we are living for Jesus
- b. We have to recognize that we no longer live – that it is Jesus who lives in us
- c. Our will no longer affects us – It is God’s will that we carry out
- d. Matthew 5:14–16 (ESV); ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.
- e. We are the light of the world – we are supposed to be reflecting Jesus in everything we do so that in all our ‘works’ people see and glorify God

V. Jars of Clay

- a. This is why God chose the ‘lowly,’ the “jars of clay” to carry His message to a world hurting and lost
- b. We (Christians) are those jars of clay – those lowly, humble in spirit, children of God who allow God’s strength to shine through their (our) weaknesses
- c. This is why we must change our understanding of these key concepts (we don’t glorify sin or put on a sense of false humility)
- d. Treasure is not something that provides wealth – it is something that provides eternal life
- e. Weakness is not something we sweep under the rug and hide – it is something that people can see in us and how that allows God’s strength to manifest itself in us
- f. We are the jars of clay that present the treasure of the Gospel to a world without hope