

“Treasure In Earthen Vessel”
2 Corinthians 4:1-7
10/10/21
Message 5

Introduction

- Title of the Message is: “Treasure In Earthen Vessel”

• Review

- **We’re in the middle of a study in the book of 2 Corinthians**
 - Paul has written this letter
 - After Receiving word from Titus that the Corinthians had responded to 1 Corinthians
 - Remember 1 Corinthians was a corrective letter –
 - They did not like being corrected – But of course who does...
 - But the Good News – Many did respond and REPENT
 - Paul is very happy to hear that many of the Corinthians have repented
 - Even though Paul still has some Nay Sayers in Corinth
 - Paul Writes this letter to encourage the ones that have repented to stay the course
 - His Encouragement
 - Life and ministry will be hard – BUT in Christ everything will be GREAT
 - **1st The God Of ALL Comfort**

- **2nd All The Promises Of God**
 - All the Promises of God are YES and AMEN
- **3rd The Fragrance of Christ**
- **4th From Glory To Glory**
- **So if your keeping track...**
 - So Far GOD through Paul has said about US - believers
 - 2 Cor. 2:15 - FRAGRANCE
 - 2 Cor. 3:3 – An EPISTLE of Christ
 - 2 Cor. 3:18 – We REFLECT the GLORY of Christ
 - Today - 2 Cor 4:7 TREASURE in EARTHEN Vessel
 - God Dwells in US
 - By His Spirit, God places the Treasure of His Son into the clay pots of our lives!

• **Now this morning in chapter 4 – Treasure in Earthen Vessels**

- **Have wondered how Paul did what he did?**
 - Why he didn't give up
 - We will see the...
 - Character of Paul in the Ministry
 - Commitment of Paul in Ministry
 - Courage of Paul in Ministry
- **7 POWERFUL TRUTHS in SERVING Jesus**

- REFUSE to GIVE UP v. 1
- RENOUNCE all Deceitful Practices v. 2
- RECOGNIZE We have a REAL Enemy vs. 3-4
- REALIZE the MESSAGE we preach is Jesus Christ v. 5a
- REFLECT a HUMBLE ATTITUDE v. 5b
- REJOICE in What God has done in OUR HEARTS v. 6
- RELY Upon the Power of God v. 7

- **NOW before we begin**

- **2 Corinthians 4 – DISPELS a LOT of Errors in The Modern Churches Thinking**

- The Prosperity Teaching – (You're Best Life NOW)
- If you're going through Struggles, Suffering – (TRIALS)
 - You're Outside of God's Will –
- If you're in God's Will –
 - You will be BLESSED = (Easy Life)
- That People are Basically Good – vs. 3-4
 - NO they aren't
- That we can win the LOST with Carnal means
 - Paul would not water down the Truth v. 2
- Burn Out IN Ministry – Paul says NEVER Quit
 - I know this can be controversial
 - BUT if your BURT OUT in Ministry Consider
 - You're NOT serving GOD
 - You're Serving yourself or man

- You may have wondered from the Lord
- Self Help Teaching
 - To MUCH SELF in the church is the problem
 - We need more Jesus less self
- We believe our Struggles are hard – BUT Paul calls them LIGHT

REFUSE to GIVE UP v. 1

• First: REFUSE to give up v. 1

- **1st Therefore...v. 1a**

2 Corinthians 4:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, *since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.*

- Always Ask - What's it there for?...
- Chapter 3 - The Law could not SAVE – the Law is ONLY a teacher –
 - Teaches us that God is HOLY and these are His Standards
 - That We can NEVER meet HIS HOLY Standards
- But Thanks be to Jesus who Fulfilled the LAW – took the veil off
 - Bought us SALVATION

2 Corinthians 3:16–18 (NKJV)

16 *Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*

17 *Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

○ **2nd Since We Have this Ministry v. 1b**

2 Corinthians 4:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, **since we have this ministry**, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

▪ **The Ministry**

- Comes from God
- Preaching Christ – with boldness

2 Corinthians 3:12 (NKJV)

12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—

▪ **WE HAVE ALL BEEN CALLED to the MINISTRY**

- All have been called to serve

▪ **Some like Pastor – have received another call –**

- That is to serve with their WHOLE lives
- There is a sense that we can do NOTHING else
- Once you see the call – you can't unsee it – it burns in your heart forever

○ **3rd We have Received MERCY v. 1c**

2 Corinthians 4:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, **as we have received mercy**, we do not lose heart.

▪ **Paul preached the gospel humbly**

- Remember Paul's PAST

- He knew his glorious calling to ministry was not due to his own works but by mercy.
- Mercy = Undeserved.

▪ Lesson – Mercy in Ministry

- Paul has had people in Corinth challenging his authority
- Whenever you step up to serve the Lord in some capacity, you are going to face challenges.
 - Some people may say...
 - You Have a PAST
 - You don't have the education
 - You are not experienced enough
 - You are NOT worthy
- Paul served the LORD by MERCY
- We TOO serve the LORD by MERCY
- **4th We Do NOT LOSE HEART v. 1d**

2 Corinthians 4:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

▪ 1st We Do NOT LOSE HEART

- AKA = NEVER QUIT
- The idea behind the ancient Greek word for “lose heart”
 - **Is of the “faint-hearted coward.”**

- The ancient Greek word has the meaning of not only a lack of courage but of bad behavior and evil conduct.
- Paul say we DON'T LOSE HEART we don't QUIT
- Illustration –
 - Mike Telling me when I came here that I could never quit
 - Now that does not mean I will be in this pulpit forever – the Lord may move me – to another pulpit or their may be a change in ministry as I get older – it means don't bail on ministry
- **2nd NOW Paul Suffered**
 - Paul knew a thing or two about suffering
 - Not Only did the Corinthian attempt to undermine God's work through Paul but he suffered
 - **Turn to 2 Corinthians 11:22-28**

2 Corinthians 11:22–28 (NKJV)

22 *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.*

23 *Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.*

24 *From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.*

25 *Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

26 *in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

27 *in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—*

28 *besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.*

- YET he would NOT lose HEART – Quit

- **3rd Lessons**

- **1st Ministry is HARD**

- It is NOT for the Weak or Faint Hearted
- Maybe you have felt like quitting
 - Life would be so much easier...
- Sadly many Pastor have felt this way
- WHY PASTORS LEAVE THE MINISTRY
 - <https://shepherdswatchmen.com/browse-all-posts/why-pastors-leave-the-ministry/>
 - 1,500 clergy leaving pastoral ministry each month. - The Barna Research Group
 - 61% of congregations have forced a pastor to leave. - Christianity Today
 - 83% of clergy spouses want their spouse to leave pastoral ministry. - Hartford Institute for Religious Research
 - 90% of clergy in all denominations will not stay in ministry long enough to reach the age of retirement. - U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics
 - 50% of pastors indicated that they would leave the ministry if they had another way of making a living. - Hartford Institute for Religious Research

- 90% of the pastors report working between 55 to 75 hours per week
- 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families. Many pastor's children do not attend church now because of what the church has done to their parents.
- 33% state that being in the ministry is an outright hazard to their family.
- 75% report significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.
- 90% feel they are inadequately trained to cope with the ministry demands.
- 50% feel unable to meet the demands of the job.
- 70% say they have a lower self-image now than when they first started.
- 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.
- 40% report serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.
- 50% have considered leaving the ministry in the last month.
- 50% of the ministers starting out will not last 5 years.
- 94% of clergy families feel the pressures of the pastor's ministry.

- The profession of "Pastor" is near the bottom of a survey of the most-respected professions, just above "car salesman".
- Over 4,000 churches closed in America last year.
- Over 1,300 pastors were terminated by the local church each month, many without cause.
- Over 3,500 people a day left the church last year.
- Many denominations report an "empty pulpit crisis". They cannot find ministers willing to fill positions.
- #1 Reason pastors leave the ministry - Church people are not willing to go the same direction and goal of the pastor. Pastor's believe God wants them to go in one direction but the people are not willing to follow or change.

- **2nd How to have courage to Continue**

- Stay Close to the Lord
 - He will give us the MERCY we need
- Remember
 - Burn out comes when your serving others or yourself
 - We are serving Jesus, not the people who are critical of us.

RENOUNCE ALL Deceitful Practices v. 2

- **First: Corruption v. 2a**

2 Corinthians 4:2 (NKJV)

2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

- **1st Renounced The hidden things of Dishonesty – SHAME -**

- Renounced = To turn away from or - To REPENT
- Shame = Ugly or Disgraceful
- The phrase “hidden things of shame”
 - Refers to secret immoralities, hypocrisies, and the sins hidden deep in the darkness of one's life.
 - AKA = Paul came clean – He was NOT hiding any SINS from God
- Paul preached the gospel honestly
 - Paul was HONEST to the CORE

- **2nd Lesson –**

- **DON'T hide SIN – REPENT**

Ephesians 5:3–14 (NKJV)

3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;

4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),
10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

- **Second: Craftiness v. 2b**

2 Corinthians 4:2 (NKJV)

2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, **not walking in craftiness** nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

- **1st Craftiness = Greek: Panourgia –**
 - Meaning = Speaks of a cunning readiness to adopt any device or trickery for the achievement of ends which are anything but unselfish.
- **2nd Paul would Not Prostitute the Gospel – To win a crowd**
 - He would not serve for his own gain
 - He knows the message will not be popular
 - He will speak the TRUTH in LOVE and leave the results to GOD

- **Third: Confusion v. 2c**

2 Corinthians 4:2 (NKJV)

2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness **nor handling the word of God deceitfully**, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

- **1st Handling the word of God deceitfully**

- The Greek word translated to Deceitfully
 - **Used here is a verb and it is only found here in the New Testament**
 - **Meaning “to dilute or adulterate - literally adulterously**
 - **Confusing God’s people, twisting or distorting it**
 - It was a word used of a merchant who would water down the wine in order to make more money.
 - Paul would say we are not diluting the word – we are not watering down the message.
- **Paul would NEVER water down the message**
- **2nd Many preachers fail on this exact point**
 - *Unknown Quote; “They have the true gospel, but they add to it things of human ingenuity and wisdom. Often, they add these corrupting or diluting things to the gospel because they think adding them will make the gospel more effective or give it a greater hearing. They are still doing what Paul insisted he would never do, handling the word of God deceitfully.”*
 - *Spurgeon; “Certain divines tell us that they must adapt truth to the advance of the age, which means that they must murder it and fling its dead body to the dogs... which simply means that a popular lie shall take the place of an offensive truth.”*
- Example
 - Willow Creek
 - Rick Warren
 - **Show Picture Relaunch church Photo**

○ **3rd Do we Trust the Power of God's Word?**

- There was that temptation in Paul's day as we are seeing in our day:
 - Try to make the message more palatable - Lighten it up – go soft on sin!
 - There is too much at stake to do that – SOULS
 - Paul believed in the Power of the message.

Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

- Illustration
 - You wouldn't like a doctor who told you – you only had a cold when in reality you have cancer
 - So why DO CHURCHES DO THIS
- At Calvary CP
 - We Believe in the POWER of God's Word to change lives
 - That is why it NUMBER ONE priority
 - That is why I spend so much time on Prayer and Prep To Teach the Word
 - WHY - To Equip the saints for the work of the ministry
 - Verse by Verse Chapter by Chapter Book by Book
 - Alistair Begg message – to encourage us – STAY FOCUSED ON THE WORD

- **Fourth: By manifestation of the truth v. 2d**

2 Corinthians 4:2 (NKJV)

*2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, **but by manifestation of the truth** commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

- **1st Manifestation of the truth may take two forms.**
 - We manifest the truth when we speak it in a plain, understandable manner.
 - But we also manifest it when we live it in our lives before others so that they can see it by our example
 - Paul used both of these methods.
 - He preached the gospel, and he obeyed the gospel in his own life. In doing so, he sought to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

- **Fifth: Commending ourselves to every man's conscience v. 2e**

2 Corinthians 4:2 (NKJV)

*2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth **commending ourselves to every man's conscience** in the sight of God.*

- **Paul preached a gospel of integrity.**
 - Anyone could look at Paul's gospel and ministry, then judge it by his or her own conscience and see that it was full of integrity.

- **Sixth: In the sight of God v. 2f**

2 Corinthians 4:2 (NKJV)

*2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience **in the sight of God.***

- **Paul preached his gospel before God.**

- He NEVER forgot who it was ALL for and WHO is watching!!!

RECOGNIZE We have a REAL Enemy vs. 3-4

2 Corinthians 4:3–4 (NKJV)

*3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,
4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

- **First: Even if our gospel is veiled – The “lost” – v. 3-4**

2 Corinthians 4:3 (NKJV)

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

- **1st Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing:**

- If people do not respond to this glorious gospel –
 - It isn't Paul's fault or his gospel's fault
 - Only those who are perishing miss the message!!!

- **Show Color Blind PIC**

- They Just Cant See it – Show Picture Color Bling
 - Deutan color blindness = Cant see RED
 - Protan color blindness is a type of red-green color blindness
 - Achromatopsia = full color bind
- A Person can be “mentally” color blind!!
 - Blind to the things of the Spirit

- We NEED TO PRAY that their eye will be open

- **Second: Whose minds the god of this age has blinded v. 4a**

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NKJV)

4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

- **They have been blinded by Satan, the god of this age.**
 - Satan has a hold on them -

- **Third: The god of this age**

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NKJV)

4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

- **1st The title god of this age is not used of Satan anywhere else in Scripture**

John 12:31 (NKJV)

31 *Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*

John 14:30 (NKJV)

30 *I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.*

Ephesians 2:2 (NKJV)

2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

1 John 5:19 (NKJV)

19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

○ **2nd How Does Satan have control of this world**

▪ Garden –

- God gave earth to man – Man sinned and gave it over to Satan
- Jesus did not agree

Luke 4:5–8 (NKJV)

5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

7 Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”

8 And Jesus answered and said to him, “*Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’*”

○ **3rd God Purchased this World Back**

▪ Full Redemption (Revelation 5)

• **Fourth: Lesson - We NEED to PRAY for Those Who do not believe**

- 1st Pray for the LOST
- 2nd Always Remember

Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places

REALIZE the MESSAGE we preach is Jesus Christ v. 5a

• **First: For we do not preach ourselves:**

2 Corinthians 4:5 (NKJV)

5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

○ **1st Jesus is the FOCUS – NOT SELF**

- Paul didn't climb into the pulpit or stand before an audience to preach himself.
- He wasn't important and he wasn't the focus - Jesus was the focus
- Christ is PREACHED

● **Second: Lesson – Self is SEEN in**

○ **1st Self HELP messages**

- How to be a better....
- Now please note nothing wrong with that desire
- BUT the TRUTH is that if you want to be a better – whatever – Open the Word and LEARN to Die to YOURSELF and live for Him

○ **2nd Celebrity Pastors**

- A very REAL issue in our DAY
- Too Much focus on them
- Even When they say – the reason for the focus on themselves is to point people to Christ
- **Wiersbe "The test of a true ministry is not stars, but scars."**
- **Focus on CONTENT – NOT Charismatic Personality**

REFLECT a HUMBLE ATTITUDE v. 5b

2 Corinthians 4:5 (NKJV)

5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

• **First: Ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake**

○ **1st Bondservant**

- Greek: doulos – used 127 times – “bond-slave”
- History of Bondservant
- When Paul did present himself, this is how he did it.
- Not as a lord, not as a master, but simply as your bondservants for Jesus' sake.
- Paul had NO LIFE of his OWN – everything he did was for Jesus

○ **2nd Lesson – We're ALL Bondservants**

1 Corinthians 6:20 (NKJV)

20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

- Learn to say I am just reporting for duty

REJOICE in What God has done in OUR HEARTS v. 6

2 Corinthians 4:6 (NKJV)

6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

• **First: The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness:**

- Satan's work of blinding is great, but God's work of bringing light is greater.

• **Second: Who has shone in our hearts:**

- **1st This describes Paul's own conversion accurately (Acts 9:1-9).**
 - On his way to Damascus to persecute and kill Christians, suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.
 - This was the first encounter with Jesus in the life of Saul of Tarsus (also known later as the Apostle Paul).
- **2nd This should be a good way to describe every Christian:**
 - People with shining hearts. God shone in our hearts, and it should show in shining lives for Jesus Christ.

• **Third: To give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God:**

- **1st What exactly has God shone in our hearts?**
 - It is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God

• **Fourth To give us the light in the face of Jesus Christ:**

- **1st In the face of Jesus Christ:**
 - We come to the knowledge of the glory of God by seeing it in the face of Jesus.

RELY Upon the Power of God v. 7

2 Corinthians 4:7 (NKJV)

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

• **First: This treasure:**

- The Treasure = The Gospel of Jesus Christ -
 - It is the very light of God and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, reflected in the face of Jesus Christ.

- This is the greatest treasure in all creation!

- **Second: We have this treasure in Earthen Vessels:**

- **1st AKA = Jars of CLAY in some translations**
 - Frail – Weak - Insufficient
 - YET God has PUT HIS GLORY in US
- **2nd Illustration**
 - Putting the world's most expensive HOPE Diamond – in a TRASH bag

- **Third: That the excellence of the power may be of God and not of US:**

- **1st So that the greatness of the power may be of God and not of US.**
 - 3 things
 - It's ALL His POWER
 - Keeps US Humble
 - The Need for Brokenness
 - Illustration - Broken POTS
 - In the story of Gideon
 - Army of 300 "Mighty" men

Judges 7:20 (NKJV)

20 *Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"*

- it was the breaking of vessels that made the light shine forth and bring victory to God's people (Judges 7:20).
 - In the rest of the chapter, Paul will show how God "breaks" His clay pots so that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us
- SO WHO GETS THE GLORY?

Closing

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