

DOWN BUT NOT OUT / Sunday, August 17, 2014

Unifying Topic: TREASURE IN CLAY JARS

Lesson Text

I. **The Light Of The Gospel** (2 Corinthians 4:2-6)

II. **Treasure In Clay Jars** (2 Corinthians 4:7-10)

III. **A Gospel Of Resurrection** (2 Corinthians 4:11-15)

The Main Thought: Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body (2 Corinthians 4:8-9, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Communities rely on one another for protection and continuity of life. Where does the ability to protect and continue the community come from? Paul reminded the Corinthians that the extraordinary power to proclaim Jesus in the face of adversity in a treasure that comes from God through Jesus Christ.

Lesson Aim: To encourage believers to live in a manner that reflects the death and resurrection of Christ and to share the Gospel with the world.

Life Aim: To embrace a Christian lifestyle that endures persecution, cherishes the Gospel, and displays the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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- 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, 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.
- 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:
- 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.
- 4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.
- 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.
- 4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;
- 4:9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
- 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.
- 4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.
- 4:12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.
- 4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;
- 4:14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.
- 4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

HISTORY:

Chapter 3:14-18 ¹When Moses came down Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments, his face glowed from being in God's presence (Exo.34:29-35). He put on a veil to keep the people from being terrified by the brightness of his face. Paul adds that his veil kept the fading of the old system and the veiling of the people's minds and hearts. The Jewish heritage was like a veil of pride that kept them from understanding the references to Christ in the Scriptures. When anyone becomes a Christian, Christ must remove his or her veil of pride (3:16). Don't let pride in your past keep you from eternity. When the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, He became life-giving Spirit (1 Cor.15:45). He entered into a new form of existence when He was glorified. As such, He can live in heaven and in the hearts of the believers at the same time. This is a mystery, but those who know that Christ lives within them appreciate the reality of His presence. The glory that the Spirit imparts to the believer is greater both in quality and longevity than that which Moses experienced. The glory gradually transforms the believer into Christlikeness. Becoming Christlike is a progressive experience. The more closely we relate to Him, the more we will be like Him.

4:1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;— This ministry refers to the great task God had given him. The task of proclaiming the *New Covenant*, the message that man can now have a glorious relationship with God through the Spirit of God; the ministry of the glorious gospel; the Good News about Jesus Christ—that men can now be saved and forgiven of their sins and be redeemed to live forever in the glory of God.

¹ The life Application Bible pg.1772

Because of this great task, Paul did not faint; he did not quit no matter the demands or circumstances. The minister does not quit because he has received mercy. Paul had personally received the mercy of God.

- God's mercy had forgiven his sins and given him life forever with Christ.
- God's mercy had given him his great task: to be a minister and to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Neither weariness nor opposition is to drive the minister to quit. He must not shrink from the ministry for any reason. His task is too great and God's mercy has done too much for him and will continue to sustain him. Faint not, regardless of circumstances.

LESSON:

2 Corinthians 4:2-6 The Light Of The Gospel

4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, 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.

Continuing from the first verse, Paul lets us know what a minister is to do:

1. **He has to renounce** (relinquish, forsake) **the hidden things of dishonesty** (things that cause disgrace, shame, scandal; greed, covetousness). The minister is to live an open and above-board life; a life of honesty and integrity.
2. **He has to not walk in craftiness** (trickery, cunning, cleverness, shrewdness, evil design; a man who will do anything to get what he wants). He is not to walk that way. The minister of God is to walk as Jesus walked.
3. **He is to not handle the Word of God deceitfully** (falsify, corrupt, deceive, ensnare, pollute). The Word of God comes from God; He is the Authority, not man. The minister is only the spokesman for God. He is not to add the ideas of traditions, philosophies, or speculations of men to the Word of God. Neither is he to take away portions of Scripture: denying that they are the Word of God. Nor neglect, ignore, keep silent about some part of God's Word, and he is not to distort the Word of God in any form or fashion.
4. **But the minister is to proclaim the truth honestly, openly, and purely.** He is to be both humble and receptive before God in his study and prayer life. He is not to be wise in his own conceits. And when he goes before people, he is to proclaim and teach the truth as God reveals it.

There were some in the church accusing Paul of four things:

1. Being sometimes faint-hearted.
2. Doing some shameful, disgraceful, and scandalous things.
3. Walking about deceiving people.
4. Mishandling the Word of God.

Rather, Paul and the others kept everything they did or said out in the open; the whole truth on display for all to see and judge for themselves in the presence of God.

4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:– The ministry demands openness, never hiding. Paul openly proclaimed the gospel in all its purity. Paul says that the gospel was and is hid to men for two terrible reasons:

1. **The gospel is hid to men because they are lost** (perishing; have turned away from God and are traveling in the opposite direction along the road that leads to perdition). "*The road that leads to perdition*" means that one is traveling away from God; deliberately separated himself from God and severed all ties with God. Therefore, he cannot see God, or the things of God. His face and eyes are not turned toward the gospel, but toward the world that perishes.

It simply means that the gospel was preached to men who would not believe. The false teachers accused Paul of preaching an antiquated message. So, Paul showed that the problem was not with the message or the messenger, but with the hearers headed for hell. The preacher cannot persuade people to believe; only God can do that.

4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, –

2. **The gospel is hid to men because the "god of this world"** has blinded the minds of those who do not believe.
 - a. The "*god of this world*" is Satan. It means his evil nature and ways rule throughout the world –selfishness and pride, lust and greed, anger and murder, lies and deception.
 - b. Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers, lest they should believe the gospel. That's his purpose. He blinds them by appealing to their flesh, enticing them with the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. If Satan can get a person to focus his life upon himself and the world, the person will become enslaved to his flesh (sensual appetites) and the things of the world.
 - i. Possessing more and more
 - ii. drinking more and more
 - iii. eating more and more
 - iv. smoking more and more
 - v. lusting more and more
 - vi. cursing more and more
 - vii. seeking more and more
 - viii. indulging more and more

Well, the more he becomes hooked, the blinder and harder he becomes to the gospel.

4:4 b ...lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. They are stone blind to the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. Jesus Christ is the image of God. When Jesus Christ came to earth, men were able to see God; to see exactly what God is like:

- Loving, compassionate, caring, healing, restoring, saving, correcting, disciplining, holy, righteous, just.

The light of the glorious gospel of Christ could not shine in their hearts. The image of God could not shine unto them. This is similar to a camera lens being covered so that the light cannot shine into the camera to bring the image. It is also like a blind man or a man with his eyes veiled, into whom the light of the sun is unable to shine.

4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. Two things to look at:

1. **The minister must preach Christ, not self.**

- a. He does not preach to build himself up in the eyes of people.
- b. He does not preach his own ideas, notions, thoughts, opinions, or philosophy.
- c. He does not preach to impress people with his charisma, ability, influence, speech, or leadership. The message is to be about Christ alone.

2. **The minister must serve men, not self.** "Servant" means bond-slave; to be devoted to people as a slave is to his master. It is all for Jesus' sake. Jesus became our servant or slave. He sacrificed Himself every day and He did it for us. He suffered to overcome the world and the flesh for our sake; to conquer sin and lust for us; to gain freedom from the enslaving bondages and habits of life for us. Jesus Christ suffered daily and then sacrificed Himself in the "ultimate" sense by dying and bearing our punishment for us. He gave Himself for our sakes, became a slave to us in order to save us. Therefore, ministers are to become servants to men, sacrifice themselves in serving men for the sake of Jesus Christ—because Jesus Christ did it for the minister. No higher service can be done than to serve others for the sake of Christ.

Paul and the others only preached Christ and served the people as servants or slaves for the sake of Christ. First, dethrone self (preach not self); second, enthrone Christ (place Christ as Lord); and third, serve others (for the sake of Christ).

4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The reason Paul preached Christ is that God had shined in his heart, that is, God had actually entered his heart and converted him. The same God, the Creator of the universe had commanded physical light into existence is the same God who creates supernatural light in the soul and ushers believers from the kingdom of darkness to His kingdom of light (Col.1:13). The light is expressed as "*the knowledge of the glory of God.*" That means, to know that Christ is God Incarnate. And one must understand that the glory of God was shone in Jesus Christ. Now, His light shines out of darkness into our hearts, bringing us to know God's glory.

2 Corinthians 4:7-10 Treasure In Clay Jars

4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. A priceless treasure is contained in worthless vessels. God's shining in our hearts brings into us a treasure, the Christ of glory, who is the embodiment of God. The believer is simply the fragile clay jar. It is the treasure within the vessel that gives the vessel its value. When God called Paul, an earthen vessel, He knew his humanity in its weakness. Acts 9:15-16: "*But the Lord said unto him (Ananias), Go thy way: for he (Saul at that time) is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*" The important thing about a vessel is that it has to be clean, empty, set-apart, and available for God's service. The treasure, the indwelling Christ, in earthen vessels, is the divine source of the supply for the Christian life. It is by the excellent power of this treasure that the apostles as ministers of the New Covenant were capable of living a crucified life; that the resurrection life of Christ that they ministered might be manifested. Thus, they manifested the truth for the shining of the gospel.

The supremely valuable message of salvation in Jesus Christ is part of that treasure that has been entrusted by God to frail and fallible human beings (earthen vessels or jars of clay). The gospel is not a product of human genius or clever intellect. Yet it resides in men of clay. Why? - "*...that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*" God does so much for us, and it is all wrought by Him. Therefore, God and God alone get all the credit, and He is thereby praised; "*that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*" No man can dispute His morality, for no man can convert and transform himself into an eternal being. His power converts and transforms us into new creatures; new men; having His divine nature in us; give us life both abundantly and eternally. Only the presence of God,

this glorious treasure can enter our lives and change us into eternal beings; God and God alone! The presence of God sustains the minister. In the wilderness under the Old Covenant God dwelt in a tent; today He dwells in the believer's heart.

4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;— The diligent minister faces trial after trial. He experiences fatigue and weariness, strain and pressure, trouble and doubt, criticism and opposition, conflict and persecution, and the list goes on.

- "Troubled" means to be pressed, squeezed, oppressed, hedged in; pressured.
- "Distressed" means to be kept in a narrow, cramped place; to be crushed.
- "On every side" means in every imaginable way and place and occasion.
- "Perplexed" means to be at a loss, to be doubting, not knowing, questioning, wondering which way to go, what to do, what to say; unable to find an answer.
- "Despair" means to be hopeless, to have no confidence or assurance; to be without any sense of security.

Although these things occurred, Paul lets us know he was troubled on every side, yet not distressed; he was perplexed, but not in despair. The power of God sustains the minister; steps in and saves him. God gives him hope and stirs his confidence and shows him the way out. God never allows him to be overcome by trouble or be perplexed in any way if he is truly connected and relies faithfully and wholly on God! With each difficulty, God is there to help.

4:9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;— Ministers are sometimes opposed and sometimes the opposition is hot and severe. The persecution may be behind his back or to his face. It may take the form of:

• ridicule • criticism • slander • mockery • imprisonment • confrontation • threats • jokes • martyrdom etc. However, God never forsakes, abandons, or deserts his dear servant. Wait on Him, God never fails. God never leaves him alone. His presence and power is always with you.

- "Cast down" means to be smitten down, struck down, or knocked down.
- "Destroyed" means to perish, to die, to strike out.

"The supreme characteristic of the Christian is not that he does not fall, but that every time he falls he rises again. It is not that he is never beaten, but he is never ultimately defeated. He may lose a battle, but he knows that in the end he can never lose the campaign" (crusade or promotion). (The Letters to the Corinthians, p.223).

4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest

in our body. "Always bearing" indicates that the suffering Paul experienced was endless. Those that hated Jesus took out their vengeance on those who represented Him. This does not refer to sufferings and troubles that are common to all human beings, such as, illness or calamity, or correction, discipline suffered because of sin, mistakes, or failure to fulfill one's responsibility. This "bearing about in the body is the dying of the Lord Jesus." It happened continuously, where Paul was expected to lay down his life like Christ in all points; having his body exposed to being put to death in the cause of Jesus; or an image of the suffering Saviour in his own person. Carrying the death of Jesus consumes our natural man, our outward man, our flesh, thereby we enter into the process of dying of the Lord Jesus, so that our inward man may have the opportunity to develop and be renewed; that self may die to manifest the life of Jesus in his bodies. "Dying" means the sense in which Jesus was dying every day. Jesus had to come against sin every day; deny His own desires and live for God; come against daily temptations which men faced and He had to conquer them all. The minister is to die to self so that Christ might be seen in his body. Paul died to self. He used this analogy: Gal.2:20 says "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." When Paul disciplined his body and kept it under control—when he put his urges and desires to death; when he denied his will and did God's will—he demonstrated that Jesus Christ lived within his body

2 Corinthians 4:11-15 A Gospel Of Resurrection

4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. Although we live, we live in a state to die. Continuously, while in human flesh, we are "delivered" meaning surrendered unto the hands of death for Jesus' sake. Paul was daily given over to death for the sake of Christ. "In our body" (v.10) and "in our mortal flesh" (v.11) are interchangeable and both are done now, not when we get to heaven; not in our immortal body, but now in our human body.

- We take up the cross of Christ (willing to die to follow Christ; absolute surrender).
- We die to self, that is, our own desires and wishes.
- We deny ourselves in order to live for Christ.

We do all of this for one purpose: that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest now in our human bodies.

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.htm>

4:12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you. Paul lets the Corinthians know that because he and others die daily; because they daily lay down their lives as Christ; because of having their bodies exposed daily to death, the Corinthian believers receive life in them; they reap the benefits; they gain life in them. ²When Paul and others preached the Gospel, they were reproached, persecuted, had sorrow, trouble, affliction and death itself. This Gospel preached at such an expense is the savior of life in the lives of others, and is the means of maintaining spiritual life in souls, and nourishment unto eternal life. The continual "*perishing of our outward man*" works "*spiritual life in our inward man*" so that others "*reap the fruit of the sufferer.*"

4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;— Faith will sustain you! In the minister, faith will not allow you to become discouraged to such a point that you would leave the ministry and fall into the depths of despair. Having the same spirit of faith; the same attitude or outlook of faith binds you to others of the same attitude—both believing on the same thing. What are you believing? — We believe in the truths of the gospel; we believe in God, in the Savior, in the atonement, in the resurrection, etc., as it is written. What Paul believed, he preached and by them believing they also spoke. Therefore, no one should tempt to preach the gospel unless he has a firm spirit of faith; belief of the truth, and in having such a conviction, preach it.

4:14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

Knowing what? This refers to the literal bodily Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has conquered death, the last enemy. Therefore, the One who raised Christ from the dead, we in that glorious redemption day will raise us up from the dead also by Jesus. Until a person is prepared to die, he is not prepared to live. The minister suffers and bears all; continues to preach and teach to serve and meet the needs of people—all because he knows that the day of resurrection is coming. The hope of being resurrected sustains the minister.

4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. If we die to self, it is so that the life of Christ might be revealed in us for others' sake. If we go through trials, it is so that Christ might be glorified. The need of others and the glory of God sustains the minister. The minister refuses to be defeated, because people need the grace of God and because God needs to be glorified. And the only way people will glorify God is for them to experience the grace and blessings of God.

SUMMARY:

Paul has renounced the hidden things of shame (2a). He does not walk in craftiness. He does not handle the Word of God deceitfully, but with open presentation of the truth he commends himself before all and before God (2b). If the gospel seems veiled, it is only the perishing who think it so (3). For their unbelieving minds have been blinded by the "*god of this age*"(4a), so that the light of gospel of the glorious Christ does not shine on them (4b). They preached not themselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord and themselves as their servants for Jesus' sake (5). It is God who has shone in their hearts so that they might spread the light of the knowledge of God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ (6).

The treasure of the gospel is in "*earthen vessels*", but this is so the excellence of God's power might be demonstrated in them (7). Examples of overcoming suffering (8-9)

- Hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed
- Perplexed, but not in despair
- Persecuted, but not forsaken
- Struck down, but not destroyed

In this way, "*dying for Jesus*" gives them the opportunity to demonstrate the "*life of Jesus*", which in turn blesses others (10-12).

Confident of the resurrection and ultimate glorification, Paul knows that all things can be to their benefit, resulting in thanksgiving and glory to God (13-15). Their suffering was permitted to demonstrate the life of Jesus (7-15).

APPLICATION:

Knowing who lives within us, the God who sustains, will cause us to not be destroyed!

² http://biblehub.com/2_corinthians/4-12.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.htm>