

2 Corinthians: Encouragement in Troubling Times
"Lessons from the Vessel" # 10
2 Cor. 4:7-12
6-26-16 Sun AM

The context of 4:1-5:8 is suffering and hardship in the ministry. The apostle Paul tells us that we are entrusted with the message of vs. 5-6. To you and me has been committed the glorious gospel.

In order for that light to shine out of a vessel it has to be broken. The reason many never witness is that we have not been broken.

Vessel here speaks of our bodies and is used several ways in Scripture:
Rom. 9:23 "Vessels of Mercy"
2 Tim. 2:2-21 "Vessels of honor and sanctification"
Acts 9:15 "Chosen vessel"
1 Peter 3:7 "Weaker vessel"

We are nothing more than earthen vessels or clay pots. The treasure within is what gives the vessel its value. The Greek word means "baked clay," and refers to clay pots. They were cheap, breakable, and replaceable, but they served necessary household functions.

TT- I want to share several lessons we can learn from the vessel.

I. God made us like we are so He can use us (v. 7).

In **Acts 9:15** God told Paul, "You are a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles."

We should never question how God made us because of our lack of abilities, gifts, or handicaps.

Ps. 139:13-16, "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. (14) I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. (15) My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. (16) Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

God made you and can use you the way he made you!

I. The vessel is made so God can use us (v. 7).

II. The vessel must be clean, empty, and available (v. 7b).

According to **2 Tim. 2:21**, "we must become a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

We are vessels so God can use us and we are earthen vessels so that we might depend on God's power and not on us. The focus must be on the treasure and not on the vessel, on the master not the servant.

III. The vessel must be weak so God can use it and be glorified (vs. 8-11).

God will guard the believer in suffering or trial as he guards the treasure.

1 Tim. 1:11, "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

1 Tim. 6:20, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

God permits trials, God controls trials, and God uses trials for his own glory. God permits the vessel to be broken so the treasure will spill out and bless others.

Note the paradoxes in this passage-

v. 7- earthen vessel-power of God.

v. 10-- the dying of Jesus-the life of Jesus.

v. 12- Death working-life working.

2 Cor. 12:9-10, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

IV. The vessel suffers for the master (vs. 10-11).

If we suffer it is for the sake of Jesus.

- If we die to self, it is so that the life of Christ might be revealed in us.
- If we go thru trials, it is so that Christ might be glorified.
- All of this is for the sake of others. As we serve Christ, death works in us but life works in those to whom we minister.
- Those who hate Jesus took will take their vengeance on those who represented Him

Q- Why did Paul say all this?

- The Judaizers did not suffer. They stole converts from Paul's churches.
- They made the people sacrifice for them.
- They did not have a treasure to share.

What has it cost you to be faithful to the Lord and the gospel? The test of a true ministry is not stars, but scars. We are to busy handing how stars that we can't receive scars!

I can't believe God put such a valuable treasure in clay pots. I guess it's so He gets the glory and others get blessed!