

CRACKED POTS WITH TREASURE

I. 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

A. Last week we talked about Heralds. The Scripture we ended with was **Isaiah 40:9 (ESV)** "Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" This week we're going to talk about cracked pots with treasure. Back in ancient times, pottery jars were used for multiple purposes and sometimes people even hid their treasure in them to conceal their valuables from thieves. As believers, we've been given a treasure to share verses one to conceal.

B. First and foremost our Treasure is the Good News which is: God! He's the Maker and Creator of all things; despite our rebellion and enmity against Him, He's made a way for us to be reconciled through His Son's sacrifice on the cross--our sin became His and His righteousness became ours; He not only declares us emancipated and forgiven, but has adopted us as His very own children, and chosen us to dwell with Him and worship Him forever!

C. Paul & Co. were proclaimers of the Good News and suffered greatly for it. They also had to deal with false proclaimers, wolves in sheep's clothing, those who distorted the Word, those who pedaled the gospel in order to profit. Such was the case in Corinth.

D. 2 Corinthians 4:1-7 is about a glorious Treasure...

1) **V1-3** "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing." (**'Tamper'** was a wine merchant's term used by those who watered down their wine to cheat their customers.)

2) **V4** "In their case the god of this world (**Satan**) has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (**Jesus to Philip, Jn. 14:9: "If you have seen Me you have seen the Father!"** Heb. 1:3 says this about Jesus: "**He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.**" If that Light has not yet dawned on you or your loved ones, pray that it will, that the veil would be lifted, that the eyes of hearts will be opened. Pray that now!)

3) **V5-6** "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (**In Genesis, God spoke light into existence. "Let there be light!" began creation and in the same way, with the proclamation of the Light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, God causes new creation in dark hearts all over our dark world!**)

4) **V7** "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." (**The Treasure is the Light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ and it dwells in cracked pots like us!**) (**In Romans 1:16 Paul writes: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."**)

E. So we are jars of clay that contain the Gospel Treasure. We are heralds of the Good News. We are those commissioned by Christ to preach and make disciples. These are the minas we've been given by our Master to do business with. So are we?

F. But we are not the ones who open men's hearts to respond. We are not the ones who cause the lights to come on. We are not the ones who cleverly cause a heart to be cut to the quick. We are not called to be Sham-Wow salesmen. We are not called to flimflam or manipulate or bamboozle or falsely promise beyond the True Promises or scare souls into shallow decisions. But we do have our part in making Christ known throughout our respective worlds. Is there a cost? Usually, and sometimes it's huge!

G. 2 Corinthians 4:8-15 tells us it won't be easy...

1) **V8-12** "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you." (**This is the victorious Christian life and Paul showed us that the Gospel was worth it!**)

2) **V13-15** "Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, (**Psalm 116:10**) "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God." (**Paul has that sure and certain Hope of resurrection unto eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!**)

H. You might say, "I'm not good enough--there's too many cracks in my pot!" In other words, fear is not holding you back, it's a sense of unworthiness. But remember it's a former Jewish terrorist writing this! Remember Peter the denier's post-resurrection chat with Jesus on the beach. Remember Thomas the doubter who was killed for his faith. Likewise James, the brother of Jesus, who originally thought his older Brother was crazy. The former slave-ship captain, John Newton wrote: *"Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me; I once was lost but now I'm found, I was blind but now I see..."* (Seeing the Light trumps merely acknowledging a bunch of facts!)

I. The Light of the gospel of the glory of Christ is the celestial floodlight shining on the cross. There our destruction was stopped and God's love was awesomely displayed. This light is meant to shine forth from cracked pots like us. So let us all shine!

J. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 is the Word of the Lord going forth. No matter how much time we have left to shine... "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (Temporary lightweight affliction now vs tons of heavyweight glory to come and that throughout all eternity!)

* Close with Prayer...

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

[2 Corinthians 4:1-18 \(ESV\)](#)

1 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. **2** But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. **3** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **4** In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. **5** For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. **6** For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. **7** But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. **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. **11** For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. **12** So death is at work in us, but life in you. **13** Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, **14** knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence. **15** For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. **16** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. **17** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, **18** as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

[Romans 1:16 \(ESV\)](#)

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

[Isaiah 40:9 \(ESV\)](#)

9 Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

[Film Clips & Other Links](#)

Artist at Work - Ryan Delgado

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCWbfSx1K4>

We are a Church of Paper Plates - Kevin DeYoung

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTcoF5Vv70g>

"Four Seven" - Jars of Clay

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIGB3O819T8>

The Light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ - John Piper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfneYRkoWp8>

"Shine" - Newsboys (Oldie but a Goodie)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=givC1M9Rh0>

Bonus Stuff

2 Corinthians 4:7 (Amplified)

7 However, we possess this precious treasure [the divine Light of the Gospel] in [frail, human] vessels of earth, that the grandeur and exceeding greatness of the power may be shown to be from God and not from ourselves.

2 Corinthians 4:7 (Wuest Expanded Translation)

7 But we have this treasure [the reflection of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ] in earthenware containers, in order that the super-excellence of the power might be from God as a source and not from us.

Quote by William Barclay

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the power which surpasses all things may be seen to be of God and not of us."

Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

"There is nothing remarkable in us, we are in ourselves poor, frail fragile creatures, like earthen vessels of no particular value, yet this we do not regret, for there is a good reason for it: The most earnest and faithful minister of the gospel must ever remember that humbling truth. He has this precious treasure of the gospel entrusted to his charge; he knows he has it, and he means to keep it safely, but, still, he is nothing but an earthen vessel, easily broken, soon marred, a poor depository for such priceless truth. Yet God has a good reason for putting this treasure into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. If angels had been commissioned to preach the gospel, we might have attributed some of its power to their superior intelligence, and if only those had been called to preach the gospel who were men of great intellect and of profound learning, we might have considered that the talent of man was the essential qualification for a preacher. But when God selects, as He often does, nay, as He always does--earthen vessels, and some that seem more manifestly earthen than others, then the excellency of the power is unquestionably seen to be of God, and not of us."

- Charles H. Spurgeon, *Expositional Notes on 2 Corinthians 4*.

Quote by Oswald Chambers

"God can achieve his purpose either through the absence of human power and resources, or the abandonment of reliance on them. All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on Him made possible the unique display of His power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources."

Devotional by David C. Egner

Our Daily Bread

THESE bodies of ours truly are "earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4⁷). They are fragile and weak and susceptible to injury and disease. But physical limitations need not limit the spirit. Many believers have learned that to be "struck down" does not mean "destroyed."

Leon Wood exemplified this truth during the closing years of his life. While this brilliant Old Testament scholar was in his prime as an author and as the dean of a seminary, he contracted amyotrophic lateral sclerosis—Lou Gehrig's disease. Bit by bit, it struck down Wood's body. When he could no longer run, he had to give up tennis. Walking became difficult as he grew weaker and weaker. Finally he was confined to his bed. But as his body weakened, his faith and resolve strengthened. He continued to study, to teach, and to write. Some of his most significant books were written in the latter stages of his illness. The last seminary class he taught met at his bedside. His spirit remained strong to the end. He was not destroyed.

When we are struck down by disease or stopped by some serious setback, we need not allow it to destroy us. We can choose instead to hold fast to God's goodness. As we trust and obey Him through difficulty, we demonstrate the power of God and we encourage others. In so doing, we strengthen the very thing Satan is trying to destroy. - - D.C. Egner, Our Daily Bread Ministries. Author Bio: <http://odb.org/author/davidcegner/>

Quote by John Piper

"Too many people say, "I'm so ordinary, so average and undistinguished. I can't do anything significant." 2 Corinthians 4:7 shows that this argument is wrong and why. It says, "*We have this treasure in earthen vessels (or clay pots!) to show us that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us.*" God's concept of ministry is so different from the world's concept. The world stresses the classy container, not the glory of God in human weakness.
- John Piper, sermon titled, "*Calling All Clay Pots,*" September 12, 1982.

Quote by John MacArthur

"Very often when I sign a Bible this week or when I sign a book I put under my name "2 Corinthians 4:5-7" because this is a passage in which I really find my life defined and my ministry defined. Verse 5 says, "*For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For God who said light shall shine out of darkness is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, but we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.*" It is that really startling and extreme contrast that is the heart of this passage, the amazing contrast between the shining glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and the feeble imperfect fragile ugly containers by which this glorious gospel is carried and delivered to people.
- John MacArthur, sermon titled, "*Clay Pots and the Secret to Serving God,*" March 11, 2001.

Lyrics by Charles Wesley

[http://www.hymnary.org/text/and can it be that i should gain](http://www.hymnary.org/text/and_can_it_be_that_i_should_gain)

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
- From Charles Wesley's Hymn, "*And Can It Be That I Should Gain*" Circa 1738.

Theological Note on 2 Corinthians 4:18

NIV Study Bible

"So we fix our eyes on not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." - 2 Corinthians 4:18 (NIV)

4:18 *what is seen... what is unseen.* The experiences and circumstances of the present life, often painful and perplexing, are what is visible to the Christian; but these are merely phenomena in the passing parade of our fallen age and therefore temporary and fleeting. To fix our eyes on these visible things would cause us to lose heart (v.v 1,16). By contrast the unseen realities, which are no less real for being invisible (cf. Heb. 11:1,6, 26-27), are eternal and imperishable. Accordingly, we look up and away from impermanent appearances of this present world scene (see Php. 3:20; Heb. 12:2).

- Theological Note on 2 Corinthians 4:18, *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, p. 2241.

Glory on Display

Sermon Illustration by Greg Breazeale

On January 9th, 2007, Joshua Bell sold out Boston's Symphony Hall. Seats were nearly \$100 each. Bell plays a violin worth more than \$3 million and is one of the best musicians in the world. Three days later he entered a metro station in Washington, D.C. wearing casual clothing and a ball cap. He opened his case and played his violin for 45 minutes. Only six people stopped, 20 gave money (a total of \$32), but no one recognized him.

Today, when it comes to the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ, many are blind. They do not see His beauty and majesty, and therefore do not ascribe to Him the honor and worth He deserves. As Christians, we want to do all we can to spread Christ's glory in the world. In 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 the Apostle Paul addressed how difficult this can be. We may become discouraged and desire to quit (v.1), but we have good reasons to press on.

- Greg Breazeale, illustration from sermon titled, "*Glory on Display.*" To read the full sermon, go to:

[http://www.lifeway.com/Article/sermon-glory-on-display-2-jesus-light-corinthians-4#author bio 0](http://www.lifeway.com/Article/sermon-glory-on-display-2-jesus-light-corinthians-4#author_bio_0)