

VESSELS OF CLAY

2 Corinthians 4:7-18

INTRODUCTION: The Christian life is filled with hope and love for Jesus. We may be old jars of clay now, but God has something glorious waiting for us in heaven.

I. TREASURE IN OUR EARTHLY VESSELS

A. CHRIST IS THE TREASURE OF GOD.

Our bodies are referred to as earthen vessels in the Bible. Some Bible teachers refer to our bodies as jars of clay. We know that Jesus is the true treasure in our lives. Jesus is Christ, the Son of God. He is the glorious light of God shining in our hearts. Jesus gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. Jesus said in John 12:46, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

B. CHRISTIANS ARE THE VESSELS.

Christians are of the dust and are spoken of in the Bible as earthen vessels. The Bible says that humans are made from the earth and are weak, frail, and imperfect because of sin. As I already said, some speak of the vessels as being jars of clay. These jars are cracked and imperfect. Sinners must be converted and filled with the Holy Spirit. God can redeem sinners, and the light of God's glory can shine as a witness of God's saving grace. The darkness of sin is replaced with the glorious light of His salvation.

In Colossians 1:13-14, Paul said that the sinner is redeemed through the blood of Christ. He has been forgiven of sins. Believers are delivered from the power of darkness, and God has translated them unto the kingdom of his dear Son.

II. TROUBLES IN OUR EARTHLY VESSELS

A. CONFLICTS IN THE MINISTRY. (v.8-12)

In verse 8, Paul referred to himself and those who were his companions in the missionary work. Paul wrote of the hardships and trials they experienced. In 2 Corinthians 4:5, Paul said, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

In their life and ministry, God caused the light to shine in their hearts so they could know the glory of God as seen in the face of Jesus Christ. Paul and the others were light bearers who reflected the glory of God.

B. CONFIDENCE IN THE MINISTRY.

Paul and the others had confidence in God and His salvation. The gospel was their life. This is true of every saved Christian. In their humanness, they were like all humans being weak and frail. However, in the power of the Holy Spirit, they declared the gospel of Christ while enduring persecution and troubles. They continued on in their ministry, having confidence in the treasure God had given them and the power to deliver the gospel. Their confidence was in God, so they persevered through trials on every side.

III. TRANSFORMATION OF OUR EARTHLY VESSELS

A. PROMISE OF BELIEVERS' RESURRECTION. (v. 14)

Notice verse 14. Paul wrote, "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the believers' strong assurance that God will also raise them from the dead. Redeemed by Christ and washed in His blood, believers have eternal life. The resurrection is the believers' greatest assurance and enduring hope that death only leads them to glory. Our hope of glory is provided by the Lord.

B. PROMISE OF BELIEVERS' RENEWAL. (v.16-18)

The word of Paul gives believers hope and renewed assurance of life. The "outward man may perish yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

Job said in Job 14:1, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." In the New Testament, James wrote in James 4:14, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Life is like a flash of lightning in the sky. Paul described our time on earth as a light affliction. Hardships and pain may be our lot on earth, but heaven is our eternal home.

Those hardships in life "work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Paul reminds us to stay focused on Jesus and have faith in Him who promises, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5)

In 2 Corinthians 4:18, Paul wrote, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

We may be flawed and weak human beings with the sentence of death upon us. These jars of clay are cracked and flawed, being imperfect, but God is not finished with us yet. The light of Christ shines through the cracks when we are filled with the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:27, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:22, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

LESSONS FOR LIFE:

1. If you are a Christian, you are a chosen vessel of God.
2. Christ in ordinary people makes them extraordinary.
3. God uses the weak and broken lives of people to display His love and grace.