

## 2Corinthians – Week 12

### I. Review (2Cor. 4:3-6)

- A. The gospel is veiled to the perishing!
  - i. Satan blinds the minds of those who are perishing!
- B. Christ is the image of God
  - i. We come to know the Father's character through the life and teachings of Christ.
- C. Paul did not preach himself but Christ as Lord!
  - i. His message was to bring men and women under the lordship of Christ!
- D. He viewed himself and his companions as merely servants of Christ!
  - i. They were called to spread the light of the gospel to all! (cf. 2Cor. 2:14)
- E. Paul now addresses the sufferings that come with this glorious ministry of the Spirit...

### II. Continuation: 2Cor. 4:7-12

#### A. 2Cor. 4:7 (ESV), *“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”*

- i. In chapter 5:1, Paul mentions a time will come when we will have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.
- ii. But until that time, now is the time for...
  - 1. Jars of clay (v. 7).
    - a. That are subject to afflictions (v. 17)
    - b. And are currently away from the presence of the Lord (5:6)
  - iii. What treasure is Paul referring to?
    - 1. *“the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”* (v. 4)
    - 2. *“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (v. 6)
    - 3. That brings forgiveness, justification, life, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit...
  - iv. Jars of clay...
    - 1. Such jars are fragile, cheap, inferior, unattractive and disposable!
    - 2. Paul sees himself as an ordinary, everyday utensil conveying an invaluable treasure!
    - 3. The image of *“jars of clay”* expresses the wisdom of God, who chooses the foolish things of this world to shame the wise and chooses the weak things of this world to shame the strong and chooses the ‘nobodies’ of this world to nullify the ‘somebodies’ of this world
      - a. *“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”* (1Cor. 1:27-29 ESV).
    - 4. Why does God put treasure in a clay jar?
      - a. To show that the treasure has NOTHING to do with the jar!
      - b. *“To show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not us!”* (v. 7b)
        - i. God does not want anyone to boast in men but rather with His own power and greatness!
        - ii. So He deliberately commits the gospel message to weak, lowly human beings.
      - c. As a result, no one, including Paul, may boast before God (cf. 1Cor. 1:29).
    - 5. Now Paul shows the Corinthians how the power of God has given him and his companions (that is, the jars of clay) strength and endurance to never lose heart...

- B. 2Cor. 4:8-9 (ESV), “*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;*”
- i. Paul explains the trials he and his companions faced while spreading the gospel...
    1. *Afflicted in every way, but not crushed!*
      - a. Paul and his companions had enemies who tried to silence the message, oh yes, they were being persecuted, but the enemies did not succeed in silencing the message!
      - b. What kept these “*jars of clay*” from being “*crushed*” was the power of God!
    2. *Perplexed but not driven to despair*
      - a. This word “*perplexed*” means to know not what to do; to be at a loss mentally.
      - b. Paul was not emotionally stoical when it came to afflictions.
        - i. He admits to being discouraged at times (2Cor. 1:8; Gal. 4:20)
        - ii. But divine power prevents him from being driven to despair (deep depression).
        - iii. In other words, the “*jars of clay*” were stressed but the divine power kept them from being stressed out or busted wide opened!
    3. *Persecuted but not forsaken*
      - a. Afflictions have the tendency to tempt one into thinking that God has abandoned him/her; but Paul and his companions knew that God never left them for one moment!
      - b. It is God who sustains the “*jars of clay*” through all the afflictions and enables them to continue to speak the word of God!
    4. *Struck down but not destroyed*
      - a. In his persecutions, Paul suffered many physical violence many times.
        - i. For example: In Acts14:19-20
          1. Paul was nearly stoned to death.
          2. But he got up and went back into the city.
      - b. In other words, when the “*jars of clay*” were knocked down, God’s power kept them being knocked out!
    5. Put these words together:
      - a. Afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down = Paul’s weakness!
      - b. Not crushed, not driven to despair, not forsaken, not destroyed = God’s power!
  - ii. What Paul has described in physical and emotional terms he now describes in spiritual terms...

- C. 2Cor. 4:10-11 (ESV), “*always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.*”<sup>11</sup> *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.*”
- i. What is the “*the death of Jesus*” all about?
    1. Suffering for His name’s sake!
      - a. Again, let’s put the terms found in vv. 8-9 together:
        - i. Afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down marks the death of Jesus in their bodies (i.e., the jars of clay)!
        - ii. Not crushed, not driven to despair, not forsaken and not destroyed marks the life of Jesus in their bodies.
- D. 2Cor. 4:12 (ESV), “*So death is at work in us, but life in you.*”
- i. Paul, as a minister of the new covenant, knew that the preaching of the gospel would expose him to various trials, which he calls “*death*” in this verse or “*the death of Jesus*” in the previous verse.
    1. Jesus said Paul would suffer for His name’s sake (cf. Acts 9:16).
  - ii. But through the power of God, the “*jars of clay*” that carried the treasure of the gospel were not crushed, nor driven to despair, nor forsaken, nor destroyed!
    1. The “*jars*” made it to Corinth, giving life to those who believed the gospel and were baptized (cf. Acts 18:8)!