



2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-12

Christ's power put on display in weak vessels

GOSPEL GRACE FILLS WEAKNESSES WITH THE POWER OF GOD (4:7)

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay,

- Who is the "*we*" that has the treasure?
 - Paul certainly applies this truth to himself and his associates
 - But the "*we*" applies to all those who know Jesus as Savior and Lord
- What is the "*treasure*" to which Paul is referring?
 - The "*treasure*" refers to the New Covenant gospel grace in Jesus Christ
 - 2 Corinthians 4:4&6
 - "*treasure*" – New Covenant followers of Jesus contain the light of the life of Jesus
- "*jars of clay*" – earthenware vessels
 - The use of the description "*jars of clay*" indicates the weakness and insignificance of the jar that holds the treasure
 - The attention of people is not fixed on the jars of clay but on the glorious treasure that is in them
 - 1 Corinthians 1:28-29

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to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

- That which is insignificant and weak is filled with something glorious and powerful – the gospel of the light and life of Jesus
 - Jesus didn't come to make people look slick and polished
 - We are the most powerful when we aren't relying on our own human resources but relying on the power and sufficiency of Jesus and His gospel grace
 - The fixation of our hearts and the focus of those coming in contact with us should be the light and life of Jesus in us, not the fissures and brokenness in our lives
- When we are focused on the power of Christ, we are not content with mediocracy
 - Half-heartedness is faithlessness
 - We are to trust that the power of Christ will shine through our weaknesses, displaying His glory

JESUS ALONE KEEPS HIS PEOPLE GOING (4:8-9)

⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;

- The vessel of Paul's earthly existence feels the constant pressure of opposition crowding in and growing stronger
- The gospel treasure is the power, not the vessel, and the Lord makes sure that is evident
 - 2 Corinthians 11:24-30
- Our strength is Jesus Christ and His gospel life and light
- We provide nothing
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
- Gospel grace gives the support necessary to keep us from being crushed and destroyed
- No one is too weak for the Lord's purposes to be fulfilled

JESUS ALONE KEEPS HIS PEOPLE GOING (4:8-9)

persecuted, but not forsaken;

- Living in the light and life of Jesus brings us into direct disagreement with the people of the world and at times, disobedient Christians
- Living under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and promoting His authority in all aspects of life brings us into conflict with, and affliction from, the people of the world
- Our view of support may initially be bleak, but dependable gospel grace arrives, and the Lord puts His arm around us to carry us on
 - 2 Timothy 4:16-18
- We will suffer persecution and affliction, but we will never be forsaken

struck down, but not destroyed;

- Paul was no stranger to hostility and physical violence
- Many today experience it because they walk with Jesus in Spirit and in truth
- The power of the treasure of gospel grace will keep our lives with Jesus intact
 - 1 Peter 5:8-11
- Even if physical life is taken from us, we can rest assured we will be eternally with our Lord

CONTINUALLY DYING TO SELF AND LIVING FOR JESUS (4:10-12)

¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

- Followers of Jesus are called to die to the flesh, trusting that the life of Jesus is much more satisfying
 - Luke 9:23-26
 - Taking up our cross means dying to all forms of sinful self-centeredness
 - When we nurture self-centeredness in any form, we will not experience the fullness of life in Jesus that He promised
 - Galatians 2:20
- We are not simply called to walk in the truth but to walk with Jesus in His truth

CONTINUALLY DYING TO SELF AND LIVING FOR JESUS (4:10-12)

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.

- The purpose of suffering is not to make much of our weak and needy vessel but to make much of the sufficiency and glory of the life of Jesus we are blessed to possess
- Suffering and hardship in life are the means the Lord uses to diminish us and exalt Jesus
 - We are not called to make much of our suffering and thereby deflect attention from the sufficiency of Jesus
 - We supernaturally turn from self-reliance and embrace the life and love of Jesus
- If God deems the fire of trials be our lot, it is not the flames but our Savior that is to be our fixation
 - Affliction and suffering are not ours by happenstance
 - Our encounters of suffering and affliction become a backdrop for sharing the gospel

CONTINUALLY DYING TO SELF AND LIVING FOR JESUS (4:10-12)

¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

- Paul willingly embraces a life of trial and hardship because of the joy he finds in bringing the life of Jesus to others
 - Living and sharing the gospel brings affliction and opposition
 - Christ-centered and others-oriented suffering for the gospel brings life and hope to others
- We need to ask God to open our eyes to the life and light of Jesus and the gospel needs of people around us

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- In what ways are Jesus and His gospel grace treasured by you?
- Are you more captivated by the damage to your vessel or by the presence of Jesus?
- How has the surpassing power of God been on display in your life?
- How has Jesus kept you and your brothers and sisters in Christ faithful?
- How do you desire to see the death of Jesus and the life of Jesus known in and through you?



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