

Treasure in Clay Jars

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II Corinthians 4: 5 – 12

1. Container: Pot of Clay

Treasure boxes are ornate to reflect the worth of what is inside. They are very durable to preserve the riches within.

Clay jars: unimportant, insignificant and inadequate, not valuable, made of common material, cheapest storage container used to store trash or refuse, expendable, easily discarded and replaced if broken.

Jar of clay: Human beings, lives of Paul and his team – Jesus' choice of disciples – This is to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to humans.

“For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” (Gal. 6: 3)

2. Content: Inestimable Treasure

'Vessels' are made to contain something, the sole purpose of the container. The vessel is not much in itself, but by what it holds, an inestimable treasure.

If the substance is not there, it is an empty vessel experiencing 'neurosis of emptiness', leading to loss of goal, meaning, purpose, life goes dead, leading to restlessness and rebellion.

Content or treasure is of a pearl of great price that a person would be willing to sell everything he had in order to obtain it. (Mt. 13:44): Jesus, the Gospel, Salvation – without this treasure, human life is empty.

The focus would be on the beauty of the treasure and not on the container. We are to draw attention to Jesus, not to ourselves. We have to glorify God and not get credit to ourselves: 'we proclaim Jesus as Lord and ourselves as slaves'; Baptist: "He must increase and I must decrease."

We are called to preserve the treasure: our relationship to Jesus becomes precious and of priority.

We are called to pass it on to others, that others might have this treasure of their own. We have to tell others about the glorious things that we saw and experienced.

3. Conserving Power: Transcendent Power

It speaks of the persecution genuine believers face when they tell people about Jesus, facing the same type of attacks that Jesus did, which resulted in His death (John 15: 28-20; Luke 9:23). Speaking the truth and standing on God's word may be costly.

Peter: 'Do not be surprised at the fiery trial... But rejoice and be glad ... For suffering results in glory. (I Peter 4:12-14)

The secret of experiencing the life of Jesus is an attitude which welcomes the cross and gladly consents to having the ego crucified within us, as in the story of Gideon (Jud. 7:20-22). The vessel must be broken in order that the torches in the pots may shine forth. Our lives are hidden so that Christ is on display.

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." There is a power within, a transcendent power, which keeps pushing back with equal pressure against whatever comes from without." A person who depends on his own strength would be shattered by these things as an earthen pot. God gives supernatural and sustaining

strength. God gives strength to get through and still reach people for Christ.

Suffering always reveals the weakness of the humans and greatness of God. God's power is on its greatest display when it transforms a weak, selfish, fragile, broken human as a strong believer in Christ.

'Death is at work in us but life in you': In facing physical death and persecution, they brought spiritual and eternal life. Jesus: 'the grain of wheat bears much fruit when it dies.'

Celebration of the Lord's Table: It is the death of Jesus, producing the life of Jesus to be manifest within us, in order to be shared with others.