

**“Eternal Treasure in Temporary Compartments”**  
**“Eternal Vessels and The Eternal Treasure”**  
**2 Corinthians 4:7-15**  
**Message 9 Part 2**

**Introduction Reminder:** Two things that I want you to remember as we start the chapter 4. First, I want you to remember that we are still in what we call the “*Great Digression.*” We will be in this first section until 7:4. Second, don’t forget that Paul is pouring out his heart to us and that this 2<sup>nd</sup> book is extremely personal to Paul. *Paul is in defense of his apostleship.* Paul is revealing his heart to us.

Paul is contrasting the weakness of our bodies and the power of the spirit. So we have come to chapter 4 where Paul speaks of the preciousness of the gospel and the value of it. God has chosen not to sequester the gospel but to put it in jars of clay.

The gospel of Jesus Christ rests within his people.

**Part One Recap: Honoring The Message in Jars of Clay**

1. We never give up
2. We disown secret and shameful ways
3. We do not use deception
4. We do not distort the truth
5. We set forth the truth plainly
6. We remember the condition of the lost
7. We remember the essence of the message
8. We present God as sovereign, creator, and eternal

**How To Prepare The Messenger:** We move now from the **message** to the **messenger.**

**II. How God Prepares The Messenger vv. 7-15**

Verse 7 speaks of earthen jars. Most jars are used for storage. The jars about which Paul speaks are for distribution.

- The contents of these jars is extremely valuable and is not for being cooped up. Treasure (**theesauros**, wealth, treasure trove, a deposit)

Among all the different translations, this verse has the intimation of showing the excellency of God's all-surpassing power. It is from Him and not from us. The power of God is seen in that the most excellent message has been placed in these frail bodies of ours to demonstrate the power of God.

The excuses that people use for not sharing the gospel all rest in the fact that they're not capable, they're not holy, they're not equipped, or even trained. They are too weak, fearful, and frail. That's what men say. But what does God say?

We can't use these excuses because God knew that we would use those excuses, and He put the gospel in the most vulnerable place that He ever could have put it. God knew that we were weak, frail, and incapable. God did this so that, all the world will know that it's his power that is producing salvation and not ours. But you say, "Brother Jerry, you don't know how hard it is?" Maybe not, but Paul does.

Friends, we have this treasure in jars of clay (**ostrakinos**, from **ostrakon**-oyster, earthen, terra cotta, frail, weak, breakable, so that the (pearl) extraordinary power of God can be displayed from clay vessels. If it were me, I would have put the message in a place where it would be safe and protected. Good knows better than we. He infused us, changed us, and gave us the responsibility to share the greatest truth in all of history. O, How God must trust us. Do you realize the power that lies dormant in your heart? The excellency (**huperbole**, beyond measure or

excellent) of God's power is in us. He is awesome; we are not awesome.

**How does God prepare and use the Messenger:** If you were going to prepare a man to do a job and he were weak and frail, how would you go about helping him? Well, I can assure you that we would not go about it like God. Here's what God does to prepare the messenger. God does the exact opposite of what we would do.

### **Verse 8: How does God Get the glory?**

- Hard pressed or pressured- The word **θλιβο**– **thlibo** is the word for pressured-ppptc. This is to narrow, afflict, crowd, a throng, suffer, tribulation, or trouble. Gee Thanks! God brings about the pressure to change us (In every way). He forces us through the narrow holes of spiritual growth.
- But we are not crushed, distressed- (**Stenochoreo, (ia) root word refers to calamity, Stenosis**) These words refer to a crushing due to cramping. We are not hemmed in so tightly that we perish. In other words, God knows our limits. He knows when to cease. He allows just the right pressure. We will always think it's too much. He knows what trouble and pressure to apply to get the right shaped spiritual diamond out of us.

**Illustration:** I liken this to being put in a situation that you didn't ask for (passive verbs). You don't get to choose your trials, you know. We were forced into a tight spot. Tight spots can be financial, marital, health situations, kids, parents, jobs, the economy, and many other problems that just come from nowhere.

Do you remember what happened to Paul and Silas and acts 16:16ff. Do you remember they were on their way to pray and Paul

was being hounded by demonic slave girl who predicted the future? Here's the story

### **Acts 16:16-28**

16 Once when we were *going to the place of prayer*, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." 18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

*19 When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.* 20 They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar 21 by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

*22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.* 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the

prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

NIV

**Here is the best part:**

**Acts 16:29-34**

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God — he and his whole family.

NIV

Paul and Silas were put in a tight spot for the sake of the gospel. They were hard pressed but not crushed.

- Perplexed but not in despair- **απορευω, aporeo**: This word means, “no way out.” This is to be at all loss, to doubt. This is a pmptc. I may have caused the confusion with my doubt. This is to be without resources or without help. Not knowing how to proceed or determine what course to take. We do not know what to speak or how to act. We hesitate or get stopped in our tracks. Yes we are perplexed.
- However, we are not **exasperated** or in despair- **εξαπορευομαι, exaporeomai**. We are not at an utter loss. Again, God knows the limits of our strength. This does not mean He will not put more on you than you can stand. He

will put more on you than you can stand and then raise you up. Note verse 7. So that we may know that the all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

We do not **despond**. To be at an utter loss, ex-out, we are not left with a way out or through. I may not be able to figure a way out or there may really not be a way out, but if I belong to God, He will make a way out.

**John 5:1-9**  
**(No way out)**

5 Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie — the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. 5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" 7 "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

**(God makes a way)**

8 Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." 9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

NIV

**Verse 9: We continue with the comparisons:**

- **Persecuted-** διωκω, **dioko**: ensue, follow after, persecute by implication. To put to the flight. To drive away with hardship, To hunt down like an animal or prey.

### **Matt 5:10-12**

10 **Blessed** are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "**Blessed** are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

NIV

- Not forsaken- **εγκαταλειπω, egkataleipo**: To leave behind in some place, To abandon or desert. To forsake. The promise of God is to never leave us or forsake us.

### **Persecuted**

#### **Acts 14:19-23**

19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. 20 But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

### **Not Forsaken**

21 They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

NIV

Men hunted Paul down from Iconium and Antioch. They followed him to Lystra to cause trouble for him. However, Paul was not forsaken and you also will not be forsaken! God will not leave you behind- I promise!

### **John 14:15-18**

15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

NIV

To be an abandoned person is an awful experience. Do you really think that God would redeem you from your sins and do that to you and me?

### **Josh 1:5**

5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

NIV

- Struck down- **καταβαλλω, kataballo**: To be cast down or thrown down. To lay down.
- Not destroyed- **απολλυμι, apollumi**: To be fully destroyed. To lose or perish, To die or be destroyed.

I have been knocked down spiritually a few times in my walk with the Lord. I have lost a few battles. Some of you, right now, are on the mat. Listen, more than one boxer has gotten off the mat and won the fight. In fact, for three days, Jesus Christ was on the mat, but early on the Lord's day he proved he was not destroyed. In 2 Timothy chapter 4, Paul uses terms of warfare to describe his experiences. He used words like... poured out, fight the good fight, Demus deserted me, Alexander the metal worker did me great harm, the Lord will repay, opposition, I had no support, but God stood with me. I'm being poured out like a drink offering. My time



is at hand. I'm going to get my crown of righteousness and my rewards. Paul makes it clear that he had been knocked down, but he says, "I can't be destroyed." Even when we die we win. We will not die at all!

**Verse 10:** In 1 Corinthians 15:31, Paul says that he dies daily for the cause of Christ. In verses 8-9 Paul is really describing the death of Jesus.

**1 Cor 15:31-32**

31 I die every day — I mean that, brothers — just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,

NIV

***This is a great spiritual mystery.*** We die in body, in will, and in selfishness. The world hates us and presses us, crushes us, confuses us, persecutes us, strikes us down, yet, all this equals life in Jesus Christ. The death of Christ brought life. Our death in Christ manifest the life and the all surpassing power of God.

As we endure, continue on, and live for Christ in these bodies, we manifest victory and salvation in the power of God. The power of God is manifested in the frail and sick earthen vessels of life. These tents we live in are not capable of accomplishing anything without Christ.

**2 Cor 4:10**

10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

NIV

**Verse 11:** We are alive but are given over to death. Is there anyone else that thinks that is strange? We manifest the resurrection power of God in our mortal bodies every day that we live.

Every time you choose to live for Christ daily, you prove Jesus is alive. The mortal flesh is the best backdrop for the immortal gospel message.

***Always given over to death: Paradidomi**, surrendered, yielded up, entrusted, to betray, cast forth. Given over. **The term delivered over is the same word used to describe Jesus being delivered over to the crucifixion in Matthew 17:22.***

**The contrast:**

Heb 6:6 says the apostate falls away and can't be brought back to repentance because to their loss they crucify the son of God all over again.

- The apostate will manifest death by not taking life.
- The Christian will manifest life because he has taken death.
- How glorious for us to manifest the life of Christ in frailty.

**Verse 12:** Here is the last of the paradoxical statements in this section.

Paul has been speaking two ways- spiritually and physically. We die to self in order to live spiritually.

Here in verse 12, Paul brings home again the second aspect. He literally has faced physical death to bring the truth of Jesus to the Corinthians.

He told the Philippians in Philippians 2:17, *that he was being poured out like a drink offering but was rejoicing that he could share with them.*

To the Colossians Paul said, *I rejoice in my suffering so as to do my part for the body of Christ.*

To Timothy, Paul says, **for this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen.**

Death may work in us but life in those around us. God prepares the messengers in the crucible of suffering for the sake of the gospel. This is the crux of the message. This is a hard word, but we lose many young Christians because they're not expecting that they will have to suffer.

We are not crushed, we are not in despair, not abandoned, and not destroyed.

We experience pain but are not crushed. In brokenness, the gospel is manifested. In persecution, the gospel is spread like a wildfire. In confusion, the gospel brings clarity. In death we see life.

### Am I A Soldier Of The Cross

1. Am I a soldier of the cross,  
A follow'r of the Lamb?  
And shall I fear to own His cause,  
Or blush to speak His name?
2. Must I be carried to the skies  
On flow'ry beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?
3. Are there no foes for me to face?  
Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace,  
To help me on to God?
4. Sure I must fight if I would reign;  
Increase my courage, Lord;  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,  
Supported by Thy Word.
5. Thy saints in all this glorious war  
Shall conquer, though they die;

They see the triumph from afar,  
By faith's discerning eye.

6. When that illustrious day shall rise,  
And all Thy armies shine  
In robes of vict'ry through the skies,  
The glory shall be Thine.