

I'm thrilled to be filling in for Jim this morning he and Barb are in Florida visiting their son. Let's open in prayer and then we will begin our study this morning.

Please open your Bible to 2 Corinthians 4

This is one of my favorite passages in all of scripture, it gives us a great visual picture of who we are as believers and then shows us how that truth changes our view point on how we should view the challenges in life.

Before we jump into the passage we must understand Paul's background with the Corinthian church

Paul has a love for these believers but the church is probably most famous for its variety of problems.

Between First and Second Corinthians Paul wrote 29 chapters to them

In these chapters he address everything from

- Divisions in the church
- spiritual gifts- they were misusing them
- immorality within the church- they were approving of it
- how to take communion-some were doing incorrectly
- warns against false teachers- false teaching was seeping in
- defend his own ministry to them-some were doubting

This is the immediate context in chapter 3

Some were doubting if they should follow Paul's leadership or not because from the outside Paul wasn't much to look at.

### 2Corinthians 3:1-8 ESV

- (1) Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you?

Some of the false teachers had good credentials, letters of recommendation  
They had asked Paul what his credentials were

What qualified him to address all of these various issues, who gave him the authority?

- (2) You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.
- (3) And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Paul's answer is that the Corinthian believers are his letter of recommendation

The message he delivered to them, saved them

He basically says remember the message I told you saved you

Now he is not being prideful when he says this, and makes that clear in the next verses

(4) Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God.

Paul makes clear that by himself he is not qualified, he doesn't have anything to offer. His confidence in the Gospel is not based on how he presents it, or in himself, but is based on who Christ is.

(5) Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God,

(6) who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Paul is clear that his sufficiency is from God, that is the only thing that enables him to preach the gospel to the Corinthians or at all he then goes on for the rest of chapter 3 to explain the incredible glory that goes with the true gospel

This leads us to our passage in chapter 4

## 2 Corinthians 4:1-4 ESV

(1) Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

This incredible opportunity to share the gospel, which is only by God's mercy

It is one thing for God to offer us salvation, it is another thing entirely for God then to use us to spread that salvation

(2) But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

We don't need to dress up the gospel, we don't need to be back handed, deceitful or use trickery, the gospel needs to be presented in an open, clear, and simple manner

I can resonate with this because of all the design classes I took in college

In design what is said can be less important than how you say it, the delivery is the key, the gospel doesn't need this

- (3) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.
- (4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Even if people can't understand God's truth it is not because it is complicated, but because their heart is veiled, they cannot understand it,

They do not want to understand it John 3:18-20 makes this clear

John 3:18-20 ESV

- (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
- (19) And this is the judgment: **the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.**
- (20) For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

The world, sinners, you and me before Christ wanted nothing to do with the truth that was offered in the light, we hated the light,

This is why the gospel is not understood the world hates God's truth

Paul then continues to point out the truth in the gospel

2 Corinthians 4:5-7 ESV

- (5) For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.
- (6) For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

We have nothing to boast in, we should not commend or promote ourselves, but Jesus Christ it is His gospel and He is the one to be praised

We were in that darkness and His truth is what gave us light

- (7) But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

Verse 7 shows us a tremendous truth about who we are as believers

In this verse we see what our true identity is, there is 2 parts to it

The first part is that we have a great treasure

As believers we have been entrusted with an incredible gift ...

**Define what the treasure is:**

- The Gospel
  - having the Holy Spirit in us
  - receiving God's grace
  - our new life in Christ

The treasure is anything that accompanies the glorious truth of the gospel, Jesus Christ dying on the cross to save sinners, and offering them a new life

Don't think of this treasure in a narrow sense, it is all the blessings of being a believer

Listen to Ephesians 2's description of our treasure

**Ephesians 2:1-7 ESV**

- (1) And you **were dead** in the trespasses and sins
- (2) in which you once walked, **following the course of this world**, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—
- (3) among whom we all **once lived in the passions of our flesh**, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were **by nature children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind.

We have a greater appreciation for the gospel, for our salvation when we better understand what we were saved from

We have to see the hopelessness that we had, being dead, being children of wrath

- (4) **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,
- (5) even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ**—by grace you have been saved—

But God, It was secured by God we have nothing to boast about

We have been made alive in Christ

- (6) and **raised us up with him** and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
- (7) so that in the coming ages he might show **the immeasurable riches of his grace** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

We have been saved and we will be exalted and be with Christ

This shows the **immeasurable riches of his grace**

Later in Ephesians Paul continues to marvel at this gospel

#### Ephesians 3:7-8 ESV

- (7) Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.  
 (8) To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ,**

Listen to the language he uses **the unsearchable riches of Christ**

He has not gotten comfortable with the truth of the gospel,  
 We shouldn't be either, it is too easy to take the gospel for granted

Then listen to his prayer a little later in Ephesians

#### Ephesians 3:14-19 ESV

- (14) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,  
 (15) from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,  
 (16) that according to the riches of his glory **he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,**  
 (17) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—**that you, being rooted and grounded in love,**  
 (18) **may have strength** to comprehend with all the saints **what is the breadth and length and height and depth,**  
 (19) **and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,** that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

He prays that we would be strengthened by God, through the Spirit

**To be able** to grasp the breadth, length, height, and depth  
 And to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge

The depths of Christ love for us, is so grand, so deep, that Paul prays that we might be strong enough to grasp a little more of it

This is the treasure that is mentioned back in 2 Corinthians (NP)

## 2 Corinthians 4:7 ESV

(7) But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

This treasure is:

- unsearchable
- immeasurable
- surpasses knowledge

It is easy to become comfortable with this truth and not marvel at it we have to understand how amazing it is or we can take it for granted

Antiques Roadshow

Man came in with a blanket that they kept draped over the back of a chair in his house

When the appraiser saw it he lost his breath for a second because it was a Navajo ute chiefs blanket one of the first of its kind

It appraised that day between 350,000 and half a million dollars

Do you think he went home and laid it back on that chair

If we understand the value of the treasure in us, the gospel, Jesus Christ it would change our daily lives and mindset

**Valuing the gospel is so much more than a onetime event it changes our day to day outlook on life**

We can ignore the great treasure that is in us and begin to focus on the second part of the verse,

**the second part of our identity; we are a common jar of clay**

## 2 Corinthians 4:7 ESV

(7) But we have this treasure **in jars of clay**, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

At the time Paul wrote this a jar clay or earthen vessel, a simple terracotta pot would be like their Tupperware

It was cheap, easily made, and easily broken

It wasn't a metal pot that could withstand a lot

It wasn't even fine china, or fine ceramics that were well polished and valuable

This type of jar would have been used for everyday task, collecting trash, waste

This is who we are, as believers

By ourselves we aren't worth much, we are a simple jar of clay

Genesis 3:19 ESV

(19) By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; **for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**"

But because of God's grace we have a tremendous treasure inside of us

So often we focus on the Jar instead of the treasure that is inside

Even preparing this lesson my natural tendency was to start talking about the jar, and who we are, before marveling at the treasure, the gospel, the Holy Spirit in us

Also notice that the treasure should not be in a jar like this, the container is too cheap and too simple compared to the greatness of what's in it

**The reason for this is given at the end of the verse**

2 Corinthians 4:7 ESV

(7) But we have this treasure in jars of clay, **to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.**

We are weak jars, to show how great God's power is

He entrusted the greatest truth the world has ever known into us weak jars, to show that He is the power not us.

The story of Gideon in the Old Testament is a perfect picture of this  
Gideon was raised up to be a judge and help deliver the Israelites out from the Midianites

NP

### Judges 7:1-9

- (1) Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod. And the camp of Midian was north of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

The stage is set, Gideon has raised up an army and they are across from the Midianite Army

- (2) The LORD said to Gideon, "The people with you are **too many** for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, '**My own hand has saved me.**'"

God tells Gideon that he has too many people in his army

Look at God's reasoning, He doesn't want Israel to be able to think even for a second that they were the ones that caused victory

God wants the victory to be so astounding that Israel won't be able to deny that it was a work of God

- (3) Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.'" Then 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained.

Simple math tells us that Gideon's army started with 32,000 men and now he is down to 10,000

More than half left, but God is still not done

- (4) And the LORD said to Gideon, "**The people are still too many.** Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' shall not go."
- (5) So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink."
- (6) And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water.
- (7) And the LORD said to Gideon, "**With the 300 men who lapped I will save you** and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home."

The Army started with 32,000 men and God has narrowed it down to 300

He doesn't want any doubt in their mind that it is His victory



- (8) So the people took provisions in their hands, and their trumpets. And he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.
- (9) That same night the LORD said to him, "**Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand.**"

The rest of the story continues and God did just that He gave the Midianites over, they were conquered and ran out of Israel

But listen to what happens when one of the tribes hears about the victory

#### Judges 8:1 ESV

- (1) Then the men of Ephraim said to him, "What is this that you have done to us, not to call us when you went to fight against Midian?" And they accused him fiercely.

Instead of rejoicing that the Midianites have been defeated the men of Ephraim complain that they weren't apart of the battle

God intentionally used a small army, and people still complained about wanting a part

This is exactly what we do when we try to add something to salvation

**We take something that should leave us marveling about God, and try to add a part or role for us to play**

#### 2 Corinthians 4:7 ESV

- (7) But we have this treasure in jars of clay, **to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.**

God is pleading with us to focus on the treasure He has given to us

Instead all we do is focus on us and how to make ourselves better

We tell ourselves if I'm going to be a clay jar then I want to be the best I can be

God wants us to focus on Him, His power and to glorify Him

**The outcome of focusing on God's power and the greatness of the treasure is found in verse 8-18**

**When we focus on the treasure our entire outlook of life changes, on a daily basis**

## 2 Corinthians 4:8-14 ESV

- (8) We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;  
 (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

We would be crushed, we would despair, we would be forsaken, and we would be destroyed if it wasn't for God's grace and His power

- (10) always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.  
 (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.  
 (12) So death is at work in us, but life in you.  
 (13) Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak,  
 (14) knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

Notice the connection between the death of Christ and the new life

The trials, persecution, suffering, despair everything he just mentioned  
 The weight that bears down on us in this world identifies us with the death of Christ, and then with the new resurrected life of Christ

## 1Peter 4:12-13 ESV

- (12) Beloved, **do not be surprised** at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.  
 (13) But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

Suffering for a believer should not surprise us, but notice the great reward, comes when He is revealed

The same idea is in 2 Corinthians 1:5

## 2 Corinthians 1:5

- (5) For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

It is because of the great treasure, the grace of God that we can survive these trials, and sufferings and then rejoice in the glory that is to follow

## 2 Corinthians 4:15-18 ESV

- (15) For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.
- (16) So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

Our jar is wasting away, this body will fail, but our treasure, the Holy Spirit in us, is renewed daily

- (17) For this **light momentary affliction** is preparing for us an **eternal weight of glory** beyond all comparison,

Notice the comparison  
Light vs. weight

Momentary vs. eternal

Affliction vs. glory

What is waiting for us as believers is **beyond all comparison**, to what we go through now

This is easy to say but the pain and suffering in this life hurts, listen to the start of 2 Corinthians to the pain that Paul went through

## 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 ESV

- (8) For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.
- (9) Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. **But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.**

Again the pressure, the suffering taught Paul to rely on God, to rely on the treasure within and not on himself, the broken pot

He finishes the chapter telling us how focusing on Christ in us, will change our focus

## 2 Corinthians 4: 18 ESV

- (18) as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Verse 18 should be our goal, to focus on the eternal, the things unseen, and not on the seen

If we do this our priorities are in order, we view life through God's eyes, valuing the things He values and focusing on the things He focuses on, this is a part of the life of faith Jim has been teaching about it is focusing on the eternal, the things unseen and not becoming consumed with all the seen, transient, perishing things that are all around us

#### Psalm 27:1-14 ESV

- (1) **Of David.** The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- (2) When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.
- (3) Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, **yet I will be confident.**

#### Pro 3:19-26 ESV

- (19) The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens;
- (20) by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.
- (21) **My son, do not lose sight of these— keep sound wisdom and discretion,**
- (22) and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck.
- (23) Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble.
- (24) **If you lie down, you will not be afraid;** when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
- (25) **Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked,** when it comes,
- (26) **for the LORD will be your confidence** and will keep your foot from being caught.