

“We Do Not Give Up”

2 Corinthians 4:7-18

[Demonstration of jars] In this passage of scripture, the Apostle Paul used the metaphor of *“treasure in clay jars”* (v. 7a). In that time period, clay jars and pots were used for a variety of purposes. They were used for water, cooking, perfume, plants, coins, or waste. Each jar or pot had its purpose. Some were decorative and some were plain. Some were even damaged or cracked. But Paul said that each of the vessels had a purpose, whether one of greatness or simplicity. You and I are clay jars, fragile and mortal, but used of God to bring honor to Christ. What can we learn from this passage of scripture?

1. We do not give up because of the treasure within us (4:7-15)

“Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us. We are pressured in every way but not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair; we are persecuted but not abandoned; we are struck down but not destroyed. We always carry the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”

- Inside each of us is treasure—the treasure of the Gospel. The Good News of Jesus is within each believer, and though we may look different, each of us is precious to God our Maker, and precious to others. God’s love and power are demonstrated

through our lives, especially when we are experiencing great hardship. As Paul said: *“We are pressured in every way but not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair...”* (v. 8), and then he concludes: *“We always carry the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body”* (v. 10). When you are struggling or suffering, and you rely on your faith in God to sustain you, others are encouraged and inspired. They learn from your example of endurance.

- The treasure that we carry within us is the Gospel—the Good News that Jesus died for our sin, and came back to life to give us life. Are you *“pressured”* or *“perplexed”*? Do not give up. You are of great value to God and others. You are a vessel of joy and hope to others when you are living by faith, and doing what God wants you to do.
- Whatever your purpose, whatever your circumstances, do not give up in despair. These difficult times in your life will be used by God’s Spirit to encourage others in their faith, or be an example of those who are seeking Christ. Paul said: *“Indeed, everything is for your benefit, so that grace, extended through more and more people, may cause thanksgiving to increase to God’s glory”* (v. 15). Do not give up to despair or discouragement due to the treasure that is within you.

2. We do not give up because of the eternal reward **(4:16-18)**

“Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory.”

- You may feel that you are an inferior jar of clay or vessel that cannot be of use to anyone. That is a lie from the Enemy. With God’s Spirit in you, God can use you to accomplish any purpose as long as you are willing. Your body may be aging and breaking down, but inwardly you are *“being renewed day by day”* (16b). Paul had many afflictions and experienced great hardship, but God used him to proclaim the Good News all over the known world.
- Paul did not despair or give up. He looked from this world to the coming world, saying: *“...we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (v.18)*. There was war, slavery, disease, corruption, persecution, and immorality in Paul’s culture, but he focused on Christ and how He endured terrible suffering and death.
- Are you overwhelmed by the pandemic, racial tensions, corruption, and immorality in our culture? Be a jar or vessel that God can use to minister to others. Keep your focus on Christ and how He

suffered. Keep your focus on the eternal reward that awaits you. Paul said: *“We must all stand before Christ to be judged. Each of us will receive what we should get—good or bad—for the things we did in the earthly body”* (2 Cor. 5:10). Jesus, speaking to those who would be faithful, said: *“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”* (Matthew 25:21, 23). Keep your focus on Christ and the eternal reward that awaits you.

You are a vessel with great treasure, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not give up on your journey of faith. Paul told Timothy: *“If anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work”* (2 Timothy 2:21). Ask God to remove anything in your life that is hindering His Spirit from working in you and through you. Ask Him to accomplish His purpose in you. Focus on Christ and His love for you.