

Treasure in jars of clay * 2 Corinthians 4:6-9
May 3, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

You know that saying “it’s what’s inside that counts?”

Well, when you’re talking about Christians that’s 100% true.

See at this point in Paul’s letter he’s trying to explain something that even today’s prosperity gospel preachers have a hard time understanding. Sometimes Christian life is hard. Sometimes Christian life is a struggle. In Christ, we are always victorious, but in everyday details of life, it can be a slog. We run short on money. Our bodies fail us. People look at us funny for sharing Christ. From the outside looking in, it may not seem like us Christians are all that impressive.

But you know what Paul says? It’s what’s inside that counts.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:6:

The God who said ‘let light shine in the darkness’ made his light to shine in our hearts to give us the light of knowing the glory of God through His Son Jesus. (The Creator of all things shone His light on our hearts so that we would know Him and His glory)...

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

We are but jars of clay, but what’s inside is a treasure.

When I was growing up, one of my favourite bands was ‘Jars of Clay’ and this is where their name is from. And it’s a great name. It’s a reminder that says ‘I may not be that impressive and my body may fail me but that’s ok, because it’s what’s inside that counts. The all-surpassing power of God is at work in me, in this fragile, unimpressive clay pot.

Think about that for a minute. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in you, right now. The bright-shining glory of God calls your heart home. We are but jars of clay but we carry in us the treasure which is God Himself.

And what’s the outcome of that? Well, the treasure we carry carries us through trying times.

Look at what Paul says in verse 8 –

8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;
9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

We are fragile jars of clay but the power of God-in-us preserves us in every situation. The glory of God shining in our hearts reminds us of our ultimate home and the power of God preserves us in every way.

Sure, we are jars of clay and we will face pressure in our lives, but God is at work even in that, making diamonds out of coal. We have this treasure in jars of clay and the treasure preserves us in every way.

So let's take a minute to apply this to our current circumstances.

COVID-19 is challenging isn't it? It's changed the way we live and it's put an enormous amount of pressure on us. Our knees may buckle under the pressure but God's never will.

We are stuck inside but not immobilized, isolated but not alone, masked but not silent and tried but never broken. We might get knocked down but we'll never get knocked out.

If you are feeling overwhelmed – know this – God will never fail you. Hebrews 13:5, God says – I will never fail you nor forsake you. We are jars of clay – weak and vulnerable – but God in us will bring us through. Let this pressure drive you to God, to rely on Him, to find strength and courage in the shadow of His powerful wings.

And let the glory of God in you shine forth to the world to give them hope. They're clay pots too, trying to fill themselves with something, anything to get them through. Let your light shine in their hearts so that they can be filled with God too. And don't worry if you're hair's disheveled and your eyelids droop – we don't have to be impressive to be an encouragement – God already is. We are but jars of clay but it's what's inside that counts.

5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;

9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

(2Co 4:5-9 NIV).