

PRECIOUS TREASURE IN PERISHABLE POTTERY

2 Corinthians 4

Know who experiences highest rates of depression?

Housewives lead the list.

Close behind: ministers!

How can it be that people who have privilege of repre-senting **God** are among most discouraged & defeated?!!

In 2 Cor. 4 Paul shows understanding of how that happens

Paul's aware of stress & frustration of ministry.

He's experienced it! But he wants us to understand...

Privilege of ministry 4:1-6

God-given ministry of proclaiming truth 1-2

*"Since through God's mercy we have this ministry, **we don't lose heart**.² Rather, we have renounced secret & shameful ways; we don't use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."*

He's been entrusted with ministry by God

2 Xs he assures us that in spite of obstacles he faces, he doesn't lose heart. He doesn't give up

When he thinks of privi-lege God's given him...

When he sees what God's doing through him...

He's not about to give up or throw in the towel!

Since he represents God,

he must represent God's character faithfully. (2)

He's accused of deception, manipulation, & distorting the truth.

Paul is committed to proclaim the truth.

Since Paul knows what a glorious message he's received, & knows where it comes from, he won't throw in the towel to avoid the struggle.

False teachers deceive &

distort God's Word to tell people what they want to hear.

He must **tell the truth**; let God handle results.

We tell **truth**, so people will be drawn to the light.

God can make light of gos-pel shine in dark hearts

Satan's opposition to revelation of truth 3-4

"Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

People refuse truth because Satan blinds their minds.

Veil still covers their eyes –they can't see the glory.

SATAN is committed to blinding people so they can't under-stand the truth.

It shouldn't surprise us that people don't accept truth!

Jesus is the light people need to see.

He's the perfect, visible representation of the invisible God.

If people can't see the truth, problem isn't the light!

He's the glorious image of God Himself.

God-given opportunity to turn on the light 5-6

"For we don't preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, & ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For 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".

Paul is committed to preach the truth concerning Christ, however people respond.

Paul can't preach himself & he can't pervert truth to promote self.

Paul labors to advance the cause of **Christ**,
Jesus is Lord; we are but His servants.

God makes His light shine in our hearts so we can see His glory revealed in Christ.

In creation God brought light out of darkness.

In spiritual creation God brings light to the heart of people living in darkness.

The light he brings is the knowledge of salvation,
which focuses on God's glory revealed in Christ.
It may *look* like Satan is winning.

People appear blinded by the god of this age.
But GOD who brought light out of darkness is able to make His
light shine in the dark & cause people to see His glory,
revealed in Christ.

God can use US to turn on the lights!

Precious Treasure Stored in Clay Jars

4:7 *"We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this
all-surpassing power is from God & not from us."*

The ministry we've been given is a valuable treasure, but God's
treasure is carried in fragile clay pots.

Clay pots were forerunners of "throw-away" society

They cracked easily, so they would throw them out

Archaeologists find remnants everywhere they dig!

***God has given us a glorious treasure;
he has given it to us in fragile clay pots.***

So that it's obvious that God has done it—not us!

Not container that counts; it's ***the contents!***

God uses clay pots, chipped & cracked, to display HIS
power in us.

Pressures Godly Ministers Face 4:8-12

*"We're hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but
not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but
not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of
Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*

*¹¹For we who're alive are always being given over to death for
Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.*

¹²So then, death's at work in us, but life's at work in you."

We live in a perishable body, so God deserves the glory for our
ministry; not us.

Paul lived under terrible pressures.

1 Cor. compares it to men condemned to die in arena.

Here he contrasts our human helplessness with God's enablement to survive:

Pressures include physical & psychological pressures.

He's "troubled on every side, yet not distressed."

–pressed as grapes in a winepress

He's "perplexed, but not in despair."

Often confused but didn't lose sight of God's care.

He's hunted down; but God never abandoned him

He's "cast down, but not destroyed."

He suffers intensely & has physical scars to prove it.

Paul constantly faces death for Jesus' sake,

–3 Xs times he refers to thought of dying

but the threat of physical death reminds him of reality of spiritual life & promise of resurrection. (10-11)

–3 Xs he refers to the thought of living

–*his* dying leads to *Christ* living in him & in them–

He's confident **his suffering will lead to their transformation.**

Christ's death produces life in others.

He's convinced *his* suffering will lead to life in others

This confidence motivates Paul to trust God when he can't see what God's doing.

CONFIDENCE IN MIDST OF SUFFERING 13-18

He speaks with faith & confidence. **13** *"It's written: 'I believed; therefore I have spoken.' With that same spirit of faith, we also believe & therefore speak."*

14-15 *"We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus & present us with you in his presence. ¹⁵All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more & more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God."*

He knows that **God** *“Who raised Jesus from the dead will raise us with Him & present us together in His presence.”*

The One who raised Jesus' dead body works in us.

As Paul's ministry grows & grace extends to more people, God is increasingly glorified through growing gratitude of increasing numbers of people.

Therefore, we don't lose heart. 16 *“We don't lose heart. Though outwardly we're wasting away, yet inwardly we're being renewed day by day.”*

Since we anticipate sharing in Christ's resurrection...

Since we anticipate watching you develop in grace...

We don't lose heart; we don't throw in the towel.

Watching what God is doing “recharges our batteries.”

Our bodies are wearing out.

When we focus on the outside, it gets discouraging!

These old bodies aren't what they used to be!

The old body is wasting away.

But when we focus on the inside, we're refreshed by watching God work and by our hope of what God is still going to do.

When we focus on what God's doing, it keeps getting better!

Though we suffer now, we'll receive greater glory in future. 17-18 *“For our light & momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

¹⁸*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*

He doesn't belittle sufferings; they are severe.

Sometimes they seem hard; they go on so long!

He contrasts them to greatness of coming glory.

5 contrasts presented:

Light weight vs. heavy

Troubles vs. glory

Momentary vs. eternal

Seen vs. unseen

Temporary vs. eternal

Comparison makes suffering seem insignificant.

The greater the affliction;

the greater the glory that follows.

Paul focuses on un-seen, eternal goals.

He *chooses* to look through eyes of faith

& see the unseeable.

Afflictions of this life can't hold a candle

to glory which will be ours when Christ

comes. therefore, we don't give up!

This is reason we keep on fighting.

There's more to come!

Lessons for us:

We may not be able to see what God's doing,

but we can trust Him for what we can't see!

That's what faith is—trusting God for what we *can't* see

What we can see is tempo-rary—it WILL change!

Look around you.

Everything we see is temporary.

Older I get, the more I see things that used to seem permanent, wearing out.

They're being torn down.

The ultimate realities are things only *GOD* can see.

We can trust Him for those—but we can't see them!

One of hardest lessons of life: to learn that most important issues center on things we can't see.

We may not look like much on outside.

We're just old, breakable, clay pots.

Look at us, & we don't amount to much!

But it's not what we see that matters!

What's important is what God is doing on the inside.

Our light, temporary troubles work together to achieve an eternal glory that brings praise to God.

Whatever we see happening, what's important is what GOD is doing. We may not *SEE* it, but we can trust Him to make something beautiful.

**We may not be able to see what God is doing,
but we can trust Him for things we can't see!**