

2 Corinthians Ch4v7-16a - Cracked Pots

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[0 : 00] 2 Corinthians chapter 4 from verse 17 to 16a.

! 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 hard-pressed on every side but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed.

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.

So then, death is at work in us but life is at work in you. It is written, I believed, therefore I have spoken. Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak.

[1 : 28] But because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. All this is for your benefit so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. Thank you. Thanks, A.V.E.N.

Very much. Just get myself adjusted here. In your new sheet, you will also see there's a notice there about Munster Bible College.

So just a heads up for that. You want to know and to learn more about how to read the Bible, how we should understand it. It's a very practical, very helpful course.

So that's next weekend. If you want to know more details, come and speak to me afterwards. We'd be delighted to chat to you. Well, our text this morning that we've just had read to us is a very heartfelt passage.

[2 : 59] It's one where Paul is pouring out his soul, his heart to encourage the church. So we're going to pray and ask that that's what the Lord would do for each one of us today, that he would encourage us in our walk and in our life with him.

So let's pray. Our Father God, we thank you that you know each one of us and you know us as a church.

You know our struggles. You know our fears. And you are able to build up and encourage us.

And so we ask that by the power of your spirit, you would take these words today and encourage our hearts for our good and for your glory.

Amen. Well, it's just too hard. I can't keep going.

[4 : 28] I try my best, but it seems I haven't got what it takes. Do you ever feel like that? Well, I do.

You know what it's like. You share the good news about Jesus with your friend or your neighbor, but they're just not interested. Or you pray for years for your son or your daughter to come to faith in Christ, but after all these years, there still seems to be no sign of any turning whatsoever.

You need to read and pray with a fellow believer. But it just seems they have no desire to change.

Embracing the gospel sharing life is really hard. It's tough.

It's tough. We ask ourselves the question, why are there not more people coming to faith in Christ? And if they do, then why does it seem to take so long?

[5 : 46] It's easy, isn't it, to become discouraged and disheartened. But God's word reminds us today that we do not need to lose heart.

Do you see it there in chapter 4, verse 1? Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, the ministry of sharing the good news about Jesus, we do not lose heart.

And then at verse 16, as he gets to the end, therefore, we do not lose heart.

So how do we not lose heart? That's the question we want to consider this morning. How do we keep faithfully serving?

How do we keep on going in our involvement in various ministries and walking the Christian life when everything says it's not working?

[6 : 59] Well, there's three means of encouragement today. Here's the first one. God's power is displayed in our weakness.

God's power is displayed in our weakness. Look at verse 7. But we have this treasure in jars of clay.

What's the treasure? Well, the treasure is the light-shining, life-transforming gospel of Christ.

It's there for us in verse 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 God's glory, which is displayed in the face of Christ.

Do you remember back in Genesis chapter 1? At the very beginning, as God created the world, he spoke light into the darkness.

[8 : 11] Well, that very same power that brought light into the darkness, that same God, that same power by the gospel speaks into the darkness of our life to bring light so that we can see and understand and know Jesus for ourselves.

So, verse 7, we have this treasure, this life-transforming gospel of Christ in strong servants. Is that what it says in your Bible?

No, it doesn't. We have this treasure in jars of clay. He's writing to us to tell us that we are to know our weaknesses.

You see, we're like a clay jar. It's the equivalent of our disposable cardboard cups. They don't last. They fall apart.

Drop or bang a clay jar and it shatters into a thousand pieces. And we are like jars of clay. We're fragile.

[9 : 28] We easily crack and we break. But God has chosen to put the treasure, the life-transforming gospel of Christ into weak vessels like us.

Now that seems absolutely crazy. It's like transporting water in a rusty bucket. or like being asked to carry a Ming Chinese vase in a wet brown paper bag.

Well, you know what's going to happen. It's going to end in a mess. Now, it's this weakness that we all feel that makes us want to give up.

Why would God entrust to people like us the glorious treasure? into cracked, broken people to carry his gospel.

Surely there are other people, better people than me. Well, he gives us the reason. The reason for our weakness is so that God's power would be displayed.

[10 : 49] Look again at verse 7. we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power, the power of the gospel that can transform lives, is from God and not from us.

God delights in taking weak people like us and through us to display to the world his glorious power. In other words, as we embrace our weaknesses, God's all-surpassing power is displayed through us.

So what's that going to look like for us on Monday morning? Well, verse 8 and verse 9 show us what God's power is like as it's displayed through our weak, broken lives.

look at verse 8. We are hard-pressed on every side. The pressures and the demands of life, of work, and of family, and neighbours, and everything else can squeeze us so much that we can hardly breathe.

But by God's all-surpassing power, verse 8, we are not crushed. we are perplexed, verse 8, we're overcome and we're overwhelmed with cares and concerns that we can do nothing about or we can't change.

[12 : 30] But by God's all-surpassing power, we are not in despair. Verse 9, we can be persecuted, isolated by colleagues, opposed by friends, misunderstood by family.

But by God's all-surpassing power, we are not abandoned. End of verse 9, we are struck down, we can go through seasons of darkness, we can face times of depression, destruction.

But by God's all-surpassing power, we are not destroyed. We are jars of clay.

We feel our weaknesses. We don't have the power to change our life, never mind anybody else's life, and we don't have the strength to change our circumstances, weaknesses.

But as we embrace our weaknesses, so God's power is put on display to a watching world. His greatness shines through our cracked and broken lives.

[13 : 56] Imagine we were cast back, living in the first century. It's a world of no electricity, at night, no switches to turn on, but you've got a candle, and you light the candle, but you don't put it into a solid container because to do that, there's nowhere for the light to shine.

Instead, you put the light into a fragile, cracked, clay jar, because it's through those very cracks that the light shines through and begins to take effect as it goes into the darkness.

Well, God fills fragile jars like us with his power, not to show how strong we are, but to shine the light of how powerful and glorious God is.

Embracing the gospel life is hard, but God's power is displayed through weak jars of clay like us so that we do not lose heart.

Be encouraged today. God's power is displayed through our weakness. Second, Christ's life is revealed in our suffering.

[15 : 34] His life is revealed in our suffering. Verse 10, we always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our bodies.

That little phrase there in verse 10, the death of Jesus, is a reference to all the sufferings of Jesus. So as Jesus walked this earth, he endured much suffering, but when he went to the cross, he faced the ultimate suffering.

And if we're followers of Jesus, we too are going to suffer. Just have a look back to chapter 1, verse 5.

It's spelt out to us very clearly, chapter 1, verse 5. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

see there the beginning, just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ. You see, it's a normal experience if we're Christians.

[17 : 00] We will face troubles and hardships. In fact, when Jesus said to his disciples, take up your cross and follow me, it was an invitation to say, come and suffer with me.

Come and die with me. So back in chapter 4, verse 10, it's true. If we are Christians, we always carry around in our body the sufferings of Jesus.

Now, it's this suffering, it's this struggle in the Christian life that makes us want to give up. when we suffer, we want to lose heart. But that's not the full story.

You see, God is at work, not just in our weaknesses, but in our sufferings, he reveals life. Christ is seen and life is given.

It's like being a blood donor or an organ donor. in some sense, the donor suffers. But through it, life is given to another.

[18 : 17] Or a mother who is giving birth to a child. It's agony. It's painful. But through it comes life. Isn't that what verse 11 is telling us?

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

So then death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. Isn't that what we see ultimately on the cross as Jesus dies?

Through the death of Jesus comes new and eternal life. death, his sufferings bring salvation. And so as we share the gospel, when we feel hard pressed and perplexed, and persecuted and struck down, as we suffer for Christ and his gospel, we too can say, verse 12, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

You see, ministry life, gospel embracing life, is hard. We give of ourselves, it takes life from us.

[19 : 52] it's like we die a little in all that we do, in order that life may come to others. Embracing the gospel sharing life is hard, but Christ's life is revealed through suffering jars of clay like us, so that we do not lose heart.

Be encouraged. Third then, Christ's power, Christ's life, and resurrection hope is proclaimed in our deaths.

Resurrection hope is proclaimed in our deaths. The reality is, is that we will all one day die.

Our fragile and weak bodies will give up. no matter how hard we fight against it, the sufferings we experience are going to end in death.

Look at verse 13. It is written, I believed, therefore I have spoken.

[21 : 13] Paul is quoting the experience of the writer of Psalm 116. So, if you'd keep your finger in 2nd Corinthians, let's go back to Psalm 116.

And see why he's quoting the author of Psalm 116. 116. It seems like death is about to take the writer of Psalm 116, but he is rescued from death.

Let's pick it up in verse 1. He says, I love the Lord, for he heard my voice. He heard my cry for mercy.

because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. And here's the experience, the cords of death entangled me. The anguish of the grave came over me.

I was overcome by distress and sorrow, and I called on the name of the Lord. Lord, save me. Verse 8.

[22 : 30] For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

And here's the verse that he quoted. I trusted in the Lord when I said, or because I believed, I spoke, I am greatly afflicted.

let's go back to 2nd Corinthians. You see, as the tentacles of death began to take their hold on him, he cries out in face, Lord, save me.

In his affliction, he trusted in God and he was saved. But one day the cords of death are going to coil around us and we have hope in the midst of death.

Look at verse 13. It is written, I believed, therefore I have spoken. Since we have that same spirit of faith, the same faith that the author had in the Psalms, we also believe and therefore speak.

[23 : 59] Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself.

you see, life is going to end in the grave. But we have a saviour, Jesus Christ, who has crushed death to death.

He has gone to the grave for us and has defeated death by his resurrection. So with confidence and assurance we can now proclaim, we can now speak that though we may have been afflicted, though hard times may come, verse 14, we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus.

You see, through our death, we are proclaiming life to a world that is spiritually dead. Even through our death, we are proclaiming that Jesus has the victory.

Our death proclaims resurrection hope. It preaches life to the world. Embracing gospel-sharing life is hard.

[25 : 31] we face the reality of our weaknesses, we experience the daily effects of our suffering, and one day he's saying that the weaknesses and the sufferings will come together and lead to our death.

But through it all, God is at work for our good and for his glory. Look at the way he concludes in verse 15.

Let's read verse 15. And all of this, all that we go through, all that we face, all this is for your benefit, for your good, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

did you see that in the middle of verse 15? As we go through life with all its struggles and trials, as we mosey along as jars of clay, through us God's grace is reaching more and more people.

Our weaknesses, our suffering, and our death will lead people to know and experience the light shining, life transforming gospel of grace.

[27 : 02] grace. But more than that, it is glory giving. As people receive and experience God's grace, look what it results in, the end of verse 15, people may, it will cause people to overflow in thanksgiving to the glory of God.

Your life and your service for Jesus and his gospel is not insignificant. It will cause many, many people to give glory to God.

The world will tell you, you're a failure, you're weak, you have nothing to give, you have nothing to say, but it is God's power, it is God's work.

Therefore, look at verse 16, therefore, in all our weaknesses and in all our sufferings and even in our deaths, we do not lose heart.

His power is on display, Christ's life is revealed, and resurrection hope is proclaimed. So, my brothers and sisters, to you and to me, we say, do not lose heart.

[28 : 43] God is at work. Let's pray. Amen. Lord God, we thank you for the encouragement and reminder through your word to us today.

That no matter how we are feeling, so often we feel that we are pressed on every side.

We are perplexed, we are struck down, but we can know because of God's power we are not crushed, we are not in despair, we are not abandoned, we are not destroyed, we are bringing the light shining, life transforming gospel of Christ.

God's grace is reaching more and more, and to you be all the glory given. Please encourage us to go on serving in the strength that you give us.

Thank you for your help to us today. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.