

Jars of Clay; 2 Corinthians 4:6-12

I. Surpassing Power

- A. We have been taught power equals success
 - 1. Might — “walk softly but carry a big stick” — be the mightiest
 - 2. Wealth — you can do what you want, money buys everything you need (the rich and famous)
 - 3. CEO — strive to be at the top so no one can tell you what to do
- B. Paul says that “surpassing power belongs to God”
- C. We are jars of clay not rods of steel
- D. We are not made strong in our power, only in our weakness
- E. 2 Corinthians 12:7–9 (ESV); ⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
- F. Our bodies are mortal

II. Jars of Clay

- A. 2 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV); But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.
- B. My mother worked with ceramics — she was a pot thrower
 - 1. She would spend hours making bowls, mugs, vases, etc.
 - 2. She would make them for my brother and me
 - 3. I only have a few left — the rest have been broken
 - 4. They were delicate, brittle, easily cracked or broken
- C. Our bodies are the same way — mortal
 - 1. The common cold can be debilitating
 - 2. Disease affects us
 - 3. As we age the body wears down physically and mentally
- D. I think Paul uses this analogy purposefully
 - 1. He wants us to know that this body is mortal — but in it is immortality (through Jesus)
 - 2. Romans 9:21 (ESV); Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?
 - 3. 1 Corinthians 15:42–44 (ESV); ⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

III. The Life of Jesus

- A. 2 Corinthians 4:8–10 (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; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.
- B. These jars of clay, these mortal bodies are subject to the forces of evil — Satan is searching for those of us who will give into the desires of our flesh, give into temptation (1 Peter 5:8)
 - 1. We are afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down
 - 2. Satan is constantly looking to exploit our weaknesses — and sometimes he is successful
 - 3. Remember these are jars of clay — weak and vulnerable and subject to cracking and breaking
 - 4. This is why we carry the death of Jesus in our body

5. Romans 6:5 (ESV); For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.
 6. If we have died with Him, we will also live with Him (2 Timothy 2:11, Romans 6:8)
 7. More than that, His life shines through our weak mortal bodies showing God's strength, love, care, and salvation
- C. "We have this treasure" — eternal life — in jars of clay!
1. What a paradox — immortality in mortal bodies
 2. 1 Corinthians 15:50–55 (ESV); ⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"
- IV. "Unlimited Power!"
- A. Star Wars Episode 3 (really the sixth movie), *Revenge of the Sith*
 - B. Our power does not stem from anything we have accomplished
 - C. Our power stems from eternal life that dwell in our terminal bodies
 - D. Paul claimed anything he had was garbage compared to knowing Jesus
 1. Knowing Jesus is truly unlimited power
 2. When our mortal bodies are done, our immortal bodies continue
 - E. We must embrace our weaknesses in order to manifest God's strength — His surpassing power
 1. We see our weakness as something to be ashamed of, something to hide
 2. God sees our weakness as a way to make known His power
 - a) Paul (Saul of Tarsus) was a very learned and powerful man (a Pharisee)
 - b) God crippled him on the side of the road and showed him true power — the Gospel of Jesus
 - F. Mortal power is nothing compared to immortality — and we only get immortality through the blood of Jesus