

HEAVENLY TREASURES IN EARTHEN VESSELS



Beautiful Glory Vessel

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. (2 Corinthians 4:7)

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Corinthians 3:1-6)

Paul is pointing to specific things he is getting done. This is a testimony of a man who can walk into a city of half a million people, who had never heard the name of Jesus, stay there for 18 months, and then walk away leaving behind him... a church so ablaze with the life of God... that that entire city and regions far beyond that city are hearing the name of Jesus. Paul knew that he was getting things done. He wasn't sitting around wringing his hands, wondering what he should do next, or whether he was accomplishing anything, or whether his life was counting for any purpose. Paul was very clear in his heart, he knew that he was getting somewhere, that things of eternal consequence were taking place in people's lives.

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Now this is the kind of thing all of us are really after.

We want to be able to impart the life of God to people in such a way that it remains with them.

We want to bring people from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.

We want to bear fruit as Jesus promised we would, that remains.

We want to see them stay alive and God after we have in some way served them in the name of Jesus...in such a way that they stay alive in God once they've done so once they've heard, once they respond.

How come these things are not happening with consistency in our lives? How come it seems to take us a lifetime to accomplish what Paul got done in two weeks.

Is it because the Heavenly Father decreed that “my servant Paul is going to be the last of his kind. After him, there will be no manifestations of my grace and power in such an order until the Kingdom comes in its fullness”? Or was this life that flowed from Paul the result of the fact that Paul was willing that the power of the Spirit, that qualified him to be an able minister of the New Covenant would remain in Paul contained in an earthen vessel all his life?

Inwardly Paul was ablaze with the life of God, but outwardly, Paul never became a golden bowl, or a silver chalice.

He remained a vessel of clay on earth.

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

....

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us.

The power that brings people from death to life, that opens their eyes to the reality of God is contained on this earth ... only in earthen vessels, never in any other kind.

And God will never entrust this power to us, unless we are willing to be earthen vessels.

On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’

Matthew 7:22-23

Evildoers? People who prophesy in the name of Jesus and cast out demons in the name of Jesus, how can such people be called evildoers? Are such things evil deeds?

They look like impressive fruit, these things that they do, but it's actually evil fruit because it comes from an evil tree, of an evil heart.

Instead of heavenly treasure dwelling in an earthen vessel, it becomes evil treasure coming from a golden bowl. It looks impressive on the outside, but inwardly it is evil because it comes from an evil source.

The world, particularly, the religious world, always concentrates on the appearance on the outside, the Pharisees and Scribes were all the time shining up the outside of the cup, even though the inside was

filthy, always slapping another coat of whitewash on the tomb. But this didn't change the fact that inside the tomb it was full of dead men's bones and all kinds of uncleanness.

The Kingdom operates on the very opposite principle. It takes the life of heaven and brings it down into the world and wraps it in the ordinary. Jesus was not born in a palace and he was not wrapped in silk. He was born in a stable and he was wrapped in ordinary rags, and he was put in an animal's feed trough.

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men;

Isaiah 53

An earthen vessel forever showing that the divine power, the transcendent glory that was coming forth from his life ... was coming from the Father who sent him.

Not from him.

Christendom always puts its efforts into the package, because it's the package that sells, but inside the package is a vacuum. There is no substance. There is no life. There is no reality.

The Kingdom puts its efforts into downgrading the package. It never puts the heavenly treasure in a golden bowl or a silver chalice, always its' put into an earthen vessel, wraps it in the ordinary.

How does Jesus come to us today, in our churches? He comes to us in a piece of bread and a glass of wine... which are earthen vessels.

And he goes forth to touch the world out there through ordinary men and women who are being pressed from every side by problems, people who are afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, cast down... who are experiencing inside themselves the power of death at work in their mortal flesh.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.



Vessel of Honor

The more willing we are to be earthen vessels, the more freely the life of the Spirit of God will flow forth from us... for healing, for salvation, for conquering evil.

What we need to do is forget about the packaging and be content that the package should be always earthen. And concentrate on making sure that inside the package, the inside of the earthen vessel, is fit to contain the heavenly treasure.

The power of heaven will burn in the earthen vessel of our lives if we are willing to concentrate on keeping the earthen vessel inwardly clean.

For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh

And that sprinkling was external.

... how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Hebrews 9

And this sprinkling of blood on the conscience... is inward.

Now the external side of the earthen vessel is God's business, not ours, we are not to worry about that. Our department is to make sure that the inside of the vessel is cleansed by the blood, that there is nothing hidden in us... that has not been confessed or washed by that blood...

Our attitudes.

Our secret idolatry.

Our vanity.

Our lust.

Our hidden grudges.

Now we take the inmost door, of our inmost heart, and open them... *"Lord, If you will, you can make me clean."* And he says, *of course I will make you clean.* And he plunges the whole mess that's inside us under the blood and washes it away. The power of heaven will burn in the earthen vessel of our lives if we are willing to make sure that the earthen vessel, inwardly, is nailed to the cross...all the time. Inwardly we're all the time touching the cross. In a mystery, our inmost life is to be nailed to the Cross of Jesus.



He Answers

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;

Galatians 2

There is no way that I can have Christ living in me... unless I am willing to be crucified with him...nailed to his cross with him... bearing his reproach...following him outside the city...knowing him in the fellowship of his sufferings...becoming like him in his death.

The Cross of Jesus is not only something that atoned for your sins 20 centuries ago... the cross of Jesus is planted in your heart now, it's your center, today. It's the source of your life.

Except you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood.

What does that mean, but to join yourself to his cross, unless you do, you have no life in you.

The power of Heaven will burn in the earthen vessels of our lives if we are willing to make sure that the earthen vessel is inwardly renewed every day.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

And the things that are unseen and eternal are inward. As we daily experience renewal and cleansing.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

2 Corinthians 3:18

And inwardly, we will see the glory of God in the starry heavens, we will behold the wisdom of the Lord... in the ocean, and the mountains, and the trees, and the flowers, and the rain, and the wind when we learn to worship the glory of the Lord which has now come to dwell forever within the earthen vessel ... in the Holy of Holies, which God has created in our inmost heart.

God help us to find him there and practice his presence there, day by day.

The power of heaven will burn in the earthen vessel of our lives when we are willing to give for alms such things as are within, when we are willing to start giving forth the mercy which God has put in us.

While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

Luke 11:37-41

So God puts his peace inside us not only for our own satisfaction, but so that we can give that peace forth and touch other lives with his peace. He puts his mercy in our inmost parts, what a change that brings about in our living, but it's not just for us. It's so that we may take that mercy and give it forth ..that we may give for alms those things that are within and until it becomes our life, our second nature, to continuously pull out and give forth what God puts in.

... That we work out our salvation, which God worked in.

Until we do that, we stagnate.

Stagnation not only happens to us as individuals but it will also happen to us as a body.

If we don't give forth what God puts in we will rot.

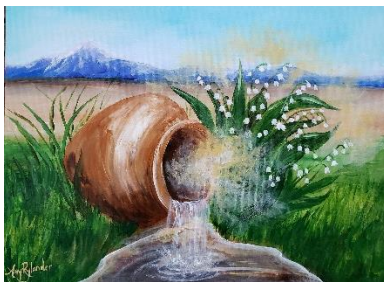
If God had said, “my servant Paul is the last of his kind, after him there will be no manifestations of that order until the Kingdom comes in its fullness”... we'd be off the hook, we would have an excuse. But there have been countless people who have ministered the life of the new covenant, just as Paul did who were qualified by God's Spirit to minister that life. Countless people since Paul and there will be countless more. Even if we only have a short time to go.

The hour has come for us to decide whether we are willing to let God qualify us to be servants of the new covenant of the Spirit, to jump into that deep and allow God to make us and use us to touch the hungry, thirsty, painful, suffering world out there with his life to a degree, we've never done before.

The issue is very simple. It's twofold...

Are we willing to be earthen vessels?

Are we willing to keep the earthen vessel fit for the heavenly treasure?



Message REB 1981 [Link to Audio Sermon](#)
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Prayer- Holy Lord, we are ready and willing, for your sake, to be simple, earthen vessels that minister your life, your holiness to this world. Do what it takes to make us fit to hold and share this precious, heavenly treasure. Clean us, purify us, keep us coming to you to have the inner filth removed. May we be willing to meet you outside the city, to meet you in your reproach... because there is where we meet you, there is where we find life. And Lord as we behold you, as we savor your presence, jumping into the deep, may we be transformed into earthen glory vessels, filled with your transcendent power and light with the power of heaven burning so strongly in us that your power, your life, touches the hungry, thirsty, suffering world through us like never before. Amen

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