Heavenly Treasure In Clay Pots
2 Corinthians 4:1-11

Objective: Inspire and encourage each to boldly glorify God with their lives.

Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:1-7.

Memory: 2 Corinthians 4:7: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”

Introduction:
1. Paul describes his Christian life as a race. (2 Timothy 4:7) “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” What would this race look like if we could get an aerial view of the whole thing? I suspect it would look like a marathon with a few running along, some plodding along, some slowly walking in the right direction, an a goodly number who have pretty much given up their zeal and are sitting by the roadside daydreaming.
2. As we try to do what we are supposed to do as Christians, we often get discouraged. If we don’t flat quit, we still tend to lose heart and slow down, plod along at best.
3. In a physical race, this discouragement comes when we can’t see the end and loose hope, loose focus on the goal. In our Christian race, it is the same; we don’t see what is happening, don’t see the result’s don’t see the purpose, loose perspective. Imagine quitting when your are running well, when you are nearing victory, when it is easily in your grasp. Folks, don’t lose heart.

We should be encouraged in our Christian efforts. (HOW?)

God has a very particular, though from our viewpoint, unusual plan to bring honor to Himself through our humble running of the race, even when it looks like we may be floundering and failing. To not lose heart in our ministry of the Gospel, we should understand some things about HOW God works through us for His glory.

Consider that you have been given something very precious to carry, to run with and you MUST get it through. Sort of like the Iditarod. (Diphtheria epidemic in 1928, serum was carried by sled dog Mushers 674 miles) Had to get the treasure to the people. Christians, if you grow discouraged, consider

I. The Treasure.

A. This is the knowledge of the glory of God.
   1. 2 Corinthians 4:6, “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.” The treasure is “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God”.
   2. An awareness of the very nature of God. the very character of God.
   3. It is Truth; the way things really are.
      a. Absolutely splendid.
      b. Spiritual realities; people are lost and dying, subject to Satan, but they can be saved.
   4. Something way beyond description, which we can behold. Some are blinded to all this, but the eyes of our hearts have been opened to grasp and behold the incredible truth of a loving God and savior who IS holiness and purity and truth, Who IS the power that created all things and holds all things together. Who IS beauty and wonder.
      a. Do you remember holding your newborn infant in your hands for the first time? Glorious!
      b. Imagine getting to carry the Olympic torch –glorious!
      c. Think of the value of freedom - glorious! Freedom from sin! Glorious!
   5. You see and hold the very GLORY of God! That is treasure. That is glorious!

B. It is in the “face of Christ”.
   1. All this “light” has now come to focus in the face of Jesus Christ.
   2. God IS light, and Jesus is “The true light that gives light to every man” that has come into the world.
   3. Colossians 2:9, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,”
   4. When you see Christ, you see God the Father!
   5. Now the veil is removed and you can see and understand the Glory of the universe.
   6. Now, In Christ, people can have light and knowledge. They can see and know.
      a. How to act and live. What mankind is supposed to be like.
      b. What God is like and how we are made in His image.
c. The way things really are in the heavenly realms
d. The nature of spiritual warfare.
7. Folks can have salvation; a renewed relationship to their Creator! It is the gift of LIFE.

Such an incredible treasure. When one has something glorious, they want it properly displayed; you don’t staple a Rembrandt to the wall, you put it in a case, in a wonderful frame that will enhance it. For such a treasure as the glory of the knowledge of God to be best displayed, one must consider…

II. The Package.
A. Now we are talking about you. (At least it is you if you are a Christian!)
1. This glory of God, this knowledge of the glory of God, this truth is now all wrapped up IN YOU!
2. Not me?? Yes. We are supposed to be ambassadors. We are given the honor of carrying this LIGHT! This knowledge, this life saving glory of God in our selves. Not some eloquent, well trained super genius – you!
3. That’s why we are supposed to be transformed. Why we are supposed to be holy / pure / godly!
4. People are supposed to be able to look at YOU and see the face of Christ and hence the very nature and glory of almighty God!
5. God has “…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. But we have this treasure in jars of clay…” (2 Corinthians 4:6-7)
6. Do you know, do you realize what you have been entrusted with? What you are carrying? On Who’s behalf you are carrying it? I get nervous when someone asks me to hold ten $ for them.
7. God placed this incredible, desperately valuable treasure, this life-saving, essential serum - in us? Unqualified goof-ups.
   a. I don’t even know how to run a sled dog team, you better not send me on the race.
   b. I get lost in a shopping mall and am scared of the dark, don’t send me through the wilderness full of wild rivers and moose and bears from Nenana to Nome to save people’s lives.
   c. Who am I to carry the soul saving message of God in Christ to folks around me!
B. Treasure in frail human vessels.
1. Why!? Why would God do such a thing?
2. Here is the treasure of the universe – the treasure that saves men’s souls! The very glory of the Creator! Lock it away in a safe someplace. Post a guard around it. Get a titanium vault to protect it. And make it beautiful. It should have a beautiful case so folks would know what to expect. The most ornate golden, jeweled box. It should have its own building. Such a treasure should be placed in something more prestigious than Solomon’s temple was!
3. I get so tired. I get so confused. I can never seem to find the right words. I am aware of my own stumbling and shortcomings. I have two left feet and stumble around. I am easily discouraged and disappointed. I don’t feel qualified or good enough. I am just a clay pot, earthen vessel.
4. But God chose to put His Treasure in me. For safe keeping. Safe transport.
5. But God chose to put that incredible treasure in YOU. For exhibition. So other folks to see.
6. God chose to entrust it to US – unqualified goof-ups – for safe keeping and for wonderfully effective display.
7. This doesn’t seem to make sense to us. I would have done it differently.
   a. I would have used superior persons only.
   b. I would have used eloquent speakers from good and well educated backgrounds.
   c. If I used people at all, I would have used only naturally gifted and charismatic people who never have any problems or struggles, who have power and prestige that all the world would fear and look up to and respect.
   d. – and it would not have worked nearly so well.

God placed His one-of-a kind incredible treasure of the Cosmos in frail human beings, and we need to consider that God knows what He is doing, which we can see by

III. The Result.
A. The wonder, the power is obviously from God.
1. 2 Corinthians 4:7, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”
2. It can’t be us! We are weak and frail! Unqualified goof-ups, but not really. You are qualified IF you are faithful. Then the power of God is at work in you.

3. Folks can knock us down. Problems can confuse us. Forces can oppress us. But God still comes through victorious. People still see the truth, they still see the glory of God, the veil is still removed from their eyes so they can see!

4. It is obviously not us succeeding, people can see that there MUST be a higher power at work

B. So our weaknesses reveal God at work.
   1. His glory is seen through an exhibition of our weaknesses.
   2. Paul relates this elsewhere; (2 Corinthians 12:9-10), “But he(God) 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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
   3. Here Paul relates the experience He has seen among Christians; 2 Corinthians 4:8-11, “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.”
   4. There can be no mistake. This is not just John doing things, Steve could not accomplish such heart changes in other folks, it must be God at work!
   5. Hence, your struggles, your failures and frailties result in God being glorified! Folks have to know it is not you that are so wonderful. It must be God at work.
   6. Every time you get knocked down but stand up again, they behold God and the power of resurrection. People can see the power and glory of God! The same power that spoke the universe into existence, the same power that raised Christ from the dead. Folks can see it because the treasure is in a frail human vessel.
   7. Every time they persecute you and humiliate you and put you down, but you smile and forgive and keep on going, they see the very nature and character and power of God at work!

C. Souls are saved.
   1. Other people are enabled to come to the knowledge of God.
   2. Paul explains in verse 15 (2 Corinthians 4), “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.”
   3. This is how God is praised and glorified, through frail humans. Even powers in heavenly realms are seeing the wonder and glory of God through your frailty and your transformation! Ephesians 3:10, “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms”
   4. Because of the power of God that is evidenced through His incredible treasure being manifested in your frail human body.

So What?
Don’t loose heart! If we know what is going on, if we know how we are being utilized, that will help us to not loose heart, to keep our courage, our faith and our enthusiasm. Proudly and eagerly persevere through any and all trials and discouragements that come to your life. Let the glory of God be seen in you at all times.

Closing Prayer:
Heavenly Treasure In Clay Pots
2 Corinthians 4:1-11

Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:1-7
“B_w_h_t_t_i_j_o_c_t_t_a_s_p_i_f_G_a_n_f_u.”

Memory: 2 Corinthians 4:7

We should be encouraged in our Christian efforts.
We should understand some things about HOW God works through us for His glory.

I. The Treasure.
A. This is the knowledge of the glory of God. 2 Corinthians 4:6

B. It is in the “face of Christ”. Colossians 2:9

II. The Package.
A. Now we are talking about you. 2 Corinthians 4:6-7

B. Treasure in frail human vessels.

III. The Result.
A. The wonder, the power is obviously from God. 2 Corinthians 4:7

B. So our weaknesses reveal God at work. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 2 Corinthians 4:8-11

C. Souls are saved. 2 Corinthians 4:15 Ephesians 3:10

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