

## ***The Paradox in Experiencing God's Glory (2 Cor. 4)***

***We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you. (2 Cor. 4:7-12)***

### **I. THE TREASURE: THE EXCELLENCY OF THE POWER OF GOD (3 FOLD)**

A. What is the treasure? It is 3 things that are automatically ours at the new birth.

***The grace (power) of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love (affection) of God, and the communion (fellowship) of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (2 Cor. 13:14)***

1. Acceptance by the Father: we receive the Father's passionate affection.

***The Father...accepted us...according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:6-7)***

2. Authority to use the name of Jesus: we use the name of Jesus to release a breakthrough of God's power in our life, circumstances and nation.

***If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (Jn. 14:14)***

3. Partnership with the Spirit: we receive the Spirit, as a person living in our members. He dynamically empowers us as we consciously fellowship with Him.

***The Father...will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you...17 the Spirit of truth...will be in you. 26 The Helper, the Holy Spirit...will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (Jn. 14:16, 17, 26)***

B. The earthen vessel speaks of our humanity. In other words, our body with its great limitations (weariness, sickness, etc.) and our mind and heart that are subject to wrong ideas and desires.

C. The dilemma: when God manifests His power through us, then because of our pride (earthen vessel) we are prone to wrongly interpret why God is blessing us or using us so powerfully.

***This treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.***

D. The very breakthrough of God's power in our circumstances and ministry awakens pride in us.

***Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted... (2 Cor. 12:7)***

E. Christianity is God's plan to release the power (treasure) in context to our sinful humanity (depravity). The two dimensions together express the true nature of our salvation. False ideals (romanticism) about the Kingdom of God will result in disillusionment.

## II. THREE SOURCES OF PRESSURE IN OUR LIVES

- A. The Father's discipline is meant to train us to partner with Jesus in righteousness.

*Do not despise the chastening of the LORD...6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives...10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:5-12)*

- B. Satan's attack is meant to devour us.

*The devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.* (1 Pet. 5:8)

*Take up the armor of God...you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.* (Eph. 6:13, 16)

- C. Our human weakness (wrong ideas and sinful desires) brings us many pressures.

*For the flesh lusts (wars) against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh... (Gal. 5:17)*

## III. THREE NECESSARY GODLY RESPONSES

- A. We submit to the Father's discipline with endurance and gratitude. We refuse to quit.

- B. We resist Satan's attacks by the Word of God. We don't passively accept them.

- C. We repent of our wrong ideas and desires as we humble ourselves before God and people.

## IV. THE COMMON STRUGGLE: FOUR PARADOXES

*We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- (2 Cor. 4:8-9)*

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted (tested) beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape (deliverance), that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:13)*

- A. Paul's premise: in this age, we will always face difficulties because God continues to train us, as the devil continues to attack us as we continue to hold wrong ideas and desires.

- B. Our media culture promotes this lying image of life in advertisement and movies, etc.

- C. Our journey needs endurance as if we were walking up a mountain in mud on a hot day.

- D. Our assignment in this life (internship) prepares us for our primary assignment in the age to come.

E. **First paradox:** we are hard pressed on every side yet not crushed.

1. We all experience circumstances that can create **pressures in our emotions.** Circumstances that press (pressure) us come from all sides (every direction in our life) including finances, broken relationships, sickness, accidents, failures in sin, attacks from Satan, etc.
2. Many feel crushed or decide to quit when they are hard pressed. In other words, they give up in their passionate pursuit of Jesus and His kingdom. They confess that they are burnt out and worn out and can no longer continue to press into God.
3. When we are hard pressed, we can continue to run the race with endurance. The devil crushes us with lies in telling us that we are too tired and must quit. We must not agree with Satan by confessing that we can't go on any longer and that it is too hard.

F. **Second paradox:** We are perplexed, but we are not in despair.

1. We all experience circumstances that can create **pressures in our understanding.**
2. Many people fall into despair when they are perplexed. Paul wrote 13 books in the NT, but continued to struggle with perplexity as he often asked the question, “Why, God?”
3. God uses perplexity to train us in righteousness. The Father purposely hides many details of life including how He will bring deliverance to our problems.
4. Why does God do this? He wants us to have security by virtue of intimacy with Him, rather than in having all the information about the details of our future.

G. **Third paradox:** We are persecuted, but not forsaken.

1. We all experience circumstances that can create **pressures from people.**
2. Instead of always being blessed by others, for standing for righteousness, we will all be resisted and even persecuted. Sometimes the persecution will come from the Church.  
**All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3:12)**

H. **Fourth paradox:** We are struck down, but not destroyed.

1. We all experience circumstances that can be **pressures that destroy our life purpose.**
2. These are life threatening or life altering circumstances that strike down our natural strength. They seem like they can destroy our life purpose.

## V. GOD'S DESIRED RESULT

*Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you. (2 Cor. 4:10-12)*

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)*

## VI. JESUS EMBRACED THE STRUGGLE OF THE TREASURE IN HIS EARTHEN VESSEL

*For it was fitting for Him...in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings...17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest...18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Heb. 2:10, 17-18)*

*Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him... (Heb. 5:8-9)*

*I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; Yet surely my just reward is with the LORD, and my work with my God.'" 5 "Now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and My God shall be My strength), 6 He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should...raise up Jacob and restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'" (Isa. 49:5-6)*

*Suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mt. 3:17)*