

## 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

“The Blessing Of Brokenness”

We left off recognizing the glorious truth of the fact that even though the *blinding power* of Satan upon the minds of unbelievers is great, the *shining power* of the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ shining upon the darkened hearts of man is even greater. In the beginning there was darkness, the earth was with out form and void and the Spirit of God was brooding over the face of the deep. and God spoke and said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. **and It’s so great to realize that God can do (and does do) the same thing in our hearts today, so that if your heart is enshrouded with darkness, with out form and void, as the Spirit of God begins to brood over your heart, wooing you and drawing you, in a moment of time God can simply speak the word and cause His glorious light to shine in your heart giving you life in Christ Jesus.** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; that was the 1<sup>st</sup> order of creation. But there’s another order of creation. The bible tells us even in this next Ch, “...*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” 2 Cor 5:17 When we give our lives to Christ we become a new creation, God causing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ to shine *in to* that He might shine *out through* us that others might see Him in us.

**As a believer your life, my life is to be shining for Jesus Christ now that might bring conviction to your heart, we have to think about that. Is my life like a beacon of light shining forth the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in this dark world around me? Do people even realize you’re a believer? Or do they look and say, “Wow, you’re a Christian? I never would’ve guessed.”** Man God has caused His light to shine in us because He wants it to shine forth from us to the glory of Jesus Christ But before it can shine forth *from* the vessel, there’s something that has to take place *in* that vessel, or *to* that vessel, right? **Sure, if I take a light and place say a clay pot over it, you might see the light coming out from underneath it, perhaps you could tell that there was something about it, or unique and glorious in it. But you really wouldn’t see the brilliance of it, or benefit much from the light *in* it, before that *can* happen something else *has* to happen which brings us to our text today.**

and As we study this passage that’s before us we’re soberly awakened to the reality that it’s not the *container* that becomes the focal point. But rather the *contents* of the container that’s so valuable, we’re just like clay pots, but Christ in you, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God entrusted *to* you, invested *in* you, that’s the true treasure. Look at Vs 7.

Vs7

**Paul has been talking about the power of God to touch and transform lives, the person and work of Jesus Christ in the human heart. and God has chosen to do that work, the work of touching, and transforming lives by the power of His Holy Spirit through people like you and me. This treasure of the knowledge of the glory of God has been placed in earthen vessels. and Understand that when Paul refers to you and me as “earthen vessels” that he’s not belittling the body, we realize that it’s the temple of the Living God, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. He’s just speaking of the facts, when God created man He created him out of what? The earth, we are truly earthen vessels. Now earthen vessels in the ancient (much like today) were of very little value, clay pots.**

So as far as a comparison is concerned the illustration couldn't be any better because when you compare the contents with the container God has placed it in, there's no comparison. The greatest treasure mankind could ever know, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God and yet He's chosen to place that treasure in clay pots, it blows us away.

Who's worthy to receive such a gem? The smartest person isn't smart enough, the purest person isn't pure enough, the most talented person isn't talented enough, we are at best jars of clay containing an unspeakably glorious treasure. But be encouraged by that because in the day that Paul was writing this earthen vessels were no doubt the most common vessels there were, they weren't very durable compared to other vessels of various metals, they weren't at all valuable compared to various vessels of silver or gold, they cracked, chipped and broke very easily so they were cheap. My point is that God has chosen to place this treasure (of the person and work of His Son, His ministry and His message) in everyday dishes, not the fine china. and I for one am so glad to hear that because if you're looking for fine china in a person you're not going to find it in me, I'm an everyday, weak and fragile dish. But that's exactly the type of person God is looking for. Jesus said, "*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*" Matt 9:12 and Then He said, "...*I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*" Matt 9:13 He's not looking for the fine china, the "super spiritual got it all figured out I'm a little bit better than everyone else" kinda person. He came to this earth to seek and to save that which was lost. He's looking for the one who realizes where he's been, what he's done, knows he's/she's a sinner in need of a Savior and isn't looking to in anyway justify themselves but just cry out to God saying, "Be merciful to me, a sinner." That's the one He justifies, He sanctifies and places His treasure into, earthen vessels; why? "...that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." So that there's no confusing who it is who's done the work, and who it is that gets the glory. In 1<sup>st</sup> Cor Paul put this another way, let's look at it quickly together, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1 (Vs 26-31)

Or as he put it here in Vs 7 of Ch 4 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor, "...that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." So that when someone looks at what God does through your life, or through my life, there's no confusion as to who it is who's done it. Because anyone who knows me, knows *it's not* me, there's no way, it has to be the Lord. and That's why God chose earthen vessels, are they a risky investment? You bet, He could've used safe, perfect, heavenly vessels to deliver the message, to touch and transform lives, He could've opted to used the angelic hosts to evangelize the world. But perfect vessels have a tendency (even if it be inadvertently) to bring glory to themselves. It's not at all uncommon in the scriptures to see someone who's been confronted by an angel and they fall to their faces and begin to worship the angel. and The angel has to warn them not to do that because they're our fellow servants, but to worship God. So God has chosen to use the likes of you and me to share the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified that lives might be changed and people might be saved so that the excellence of the power may be undoubtedly of Him.

I was reading in my devotions Friday morning before I began to prepare this message and I was in Acts Ch 10. and There was Cornelius the centurion who feared God and gave alms generously to the people.

One day he had a vision and there was an angel who came to visit him because his prayers and alms had come up for a memorial before God (which in and of itself is a mind blowing thought to ponder) that what we do would ever come singularly before God to be remembered before Him and the hosts of heaven is something I'm not sure I can even comprehend. But he said, "Send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. He's lodging with Simon the tanner down by the sea and he'll tell you what you must do." Well, the angel had Cornelius captivated, he had his full attention right there, why didn't he just tell him what he needed to do? That he needed to believe on Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. It's because God has placed this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Now, as we began our time together I told you that in order for light to shine forth from a jar of clay, something has to happen to that jar of clay 1<sup>st</sup>. If I had a light in a clay vessel how could I get the light to shine forth from it? I'd need to break that vessel wouldn't I? and The larger the break, the more light that could shine through.

Of course we're reminded of the account of Gideon when the Lord called him to defeat the Midianites with the odds set at 450 to 1. 300 in the army of Gideon 135,000 in the Midianite army. and Gideon armed his men with a trumpet in one hand and a torch in the other under an earthen vessel, an empty pitcher. (They put the torch in the pitcher). and Gideon said, "When I give the signal do as I do; blow your trumpet, yell, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon' and break the pitcher so that the light of that torch can shine forth." So they surrounded the Midianite army under the cover of night, Gideon blasted his trumpet and shouted, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!" and All of the sudden as the Midianites were woke up out of sleep they heard hundreds of men shouting, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," the trumpets were blowing, torches were shining forth all around them, and no doubt figuring that behind each of those torches was a battalion of men, panic and confusion set in. and They all started hacking at each other and God gave Gideon an amazing victory, but it was as those vessels that had the light in them were broken that the light was able to shine forth and God did an amazing work. and God desires that His light shine forth from our lives that He might do amazing things through you and me, but a breaking must occur 1<sup>st</sup>. and That's what Paul speaks about here in Vs 8-9, how he was a broken vessel, and we see his weakness, but God's strength, his inability, but God's sufficiency.

### Vs8-9

and We could take the time to investigate each of these phrases but really in each of them the bottom line that Paul is seeking to communicate is that he's at the end of himself, a broken man. But his sufficiency is of Christ, God is able to make a way when there is no way, when all hope is lost we're not with out hope because we're not with out God in the world. There is a breaking that must take place in the life of every believer, it's a non option. If the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is to shine forth from the being of your earthen vessel, you will be broken. It's not a might, it's not a maybe, it's not an *if*, it's a *when*, it *will* happen. I wrote down on a post it note as I was studying this passage that "Conviction, compassion, and character (meaningful ministry) so often is forged on the anvil of affliction."

God has a way of deepening our character, developing our compassion and defining our conviction, helping us to decrease that He might increase in our lives, through suffering. But He's a good God, His grace is sufficient to sustain us and give us strength to endure in the midst of it, that's what Paul is saying here. He says, "We're hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed." Translation, "I'm at the end of me, but God is sustaining me, I'm not crushed, "Perplexed, but not in despair." "I don't know what to do or which way to go, so often I'm at a loss, but I'm not without hope, because I'm not without God in the world, I know God has my back." "Persecuted, but not forsaken." Paul was a hunted, and a wanted man, it wasn't uncommon for his life to be being weighed in the balance on any given day, but God was with him, promised never to leave nor forsake him, and he knew that until God was done with him that he was going to continue on in one way or another. "Struck down, but not destroyed." "Down, but not out." and Each one of these things are applicable to you and to me in our time of crisis, there's a big picture here, God is at work. and God is delicately, yet very definitely in the business of breaking His vessels. Jesus said in regards to who He was, "...*whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.*" Matt 21:44

So believe me when I say it's much better to fall on the solid rock of Jesus Christ and be a broken man, a broken woman, than to have Him fall on you in judgment and grind you to powder. and God is the only one I know who increases the value of things by breaking them. If I break something I mess it all up, if I break a vessel it decreases the value. But when God does the breaking something beautiful occurs, the value of the vessel increases in worth as the contents of the container become more and more apparent in and through it. You see the world looks down on things that are broken, God places a premium on them. David wrote, "*O Lord, open my lips,*

*And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart -- These, O God, You will not despise.*" Ps 51:15-17 We read in Isaiah, "*For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'*" Isa 57:15 and Again in Ps 34, "*The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*" Ps 34:18 God places a premium on and does incredible works through His vessels that are broken. Paul was a broken man.

### **Vs10-11**

Now Paul isn't talking about the life of Christ on the pre-side of the cross, but the resurrection life of Christ on the post side of the cross. and Again what he's getting at here is that in death to self, denial of self, suffering for the sake Christ are ways that people see the resurrection power of Jesus at work in your life. Notice in these Vs that death precedes life. He says, "We're always carrying around in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus *that* the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body." "For we who live are always being delivered to death for Jesus' sake *that* the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh." There cannot be resurrection power at work in my life unless there has 1<sup>st</sup> been death at work in my life. Until I've identified with the death of Christ, I can't identify with the resurrection life of Christ, I have to die to self before the life of Christ can be seen in me.

To the Philippians he put it like this, “... *I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*” Phil 3:8-11 Now if you’re anything like me you kind of like the thought of knowing Him, and the *power* of His resurrection. Who doesn’t want resurrection power released and at work in their lives? and Sometimes I get so excited at the prospect of the power of His resurrection that I completely overlook it’s implicit/non-negotiable connection to the fellowship of His sufferings and being conformed to His death. You can’t have the one apart from the other, you’ve got to take up your cross, die to self, self will, the self life, carrying about (as it were) in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the *life* of Jesus also may be manifested in you, in me.

### **Vs12**

This goes back to what I was saying earlier, the meaningful ministry that Paul the apostle had, his conviction, his compassion, his character, those things that God used to bring depth to his message by the power of His Spirit in and through Paul’s life were forged on the anvil of affliction and suffering. Paul was able to communicate so effectively the heart of God (thereby bringing life to these people) in no small part through the suffering, the identification with Christ that he had endured personally. He says, “Death is at work in me, but it means life for you.” We’re again reminded of Paul’s “other’s oriented” frame of heart and mind, his buffeting would make for their benefit, their blessing.

So often the things of the heart of God that *you* learn through suffering will make for a benefit, or a blessing to others around you as well, death at work in you, but life in them. God wants to use your life as a blessing to others, to introduce life in Christ Jesus to them.

### **Vs13-14**

What’s the point here? That faith creates testimony, “I believe and therefore I speak.” Paul is saying that he speaks from conviction, and from what he’s convinced of. When it comes to my reflection of God, when it comes to you witness of who God is, of who Christ is, of what His word says; if you *don’t* believe it, you do well not to speak it. Why speak what you don’t believe? Why try to reflect or represent something you’re not altogether convinced of yourself? It’ll only get you in trouble; but to the flipside of that if you *do* believe it, then why *don’t* you speak it. Why *not* share it? Don’t get me wrong, Jesus made it clear if you reflect Him it’ll cost you, you’ll make enemies, people will persecute and speak evil of you for His sake. That’s what Paul has been saying, “Man we’re hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, struck down.” **The gospel will create division and make enemies in your life, but if you believe it, how can you not share it, how can I not speak it? God is there for you, you won’t be crushed, you won’t be in despair, you won’t be forsaken or destroyed, even if your body is destroyed what’s that to you, what’s that to me?**

As the Psalmist said, “*The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*” Ps 118:6 Destroy my body? So what, sure it’s a bit scary and intimidating to consider being beaten or martyred for Christ, but you can count on His grace being sufficient for you in time of need. Besides Jesus said, “...*do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*” Matt 10:28 You see Paul has been speaking of suffering for Christ, being broken that the light of Christ might shine forth from him. He’s made his enemies through the simple declaration of the gospel, but he can’t not speak. “I believed therefore I spoke.” and Even if the worst should occur, should he be called upon to lay down his life for the gospel (which ultimately he would) he knew and was convinced that He who was faithful to raise up the Lord Jesus would raise him up with Jesus as well. So he continued to administer the message.

### Vs15

Paul had immediate goals, and he had ultimate goals. His immediate goal was to serve these people in anyway he could, “...all things are for your sakes.” It’s his desire to share and show the grace of God to as many people as he possibly could. Why? That’s where the ultimate goal kicks in. That it might cause, “...thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.” When we realize where we’ve been, what we’ve done, what we deserve, yet God has shed grace upon us; how can we *not* but respond with an overwhelming sense of praise/worship, and thanksgiving. As the psalmist said, “*You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.*” Ps 30:11-12

### Vs16

Remember how this Ch began? Look at Vs 1 (read), then Paul goes on to share about all the tough times and turbulence that breaks loose in his life and it’s as if he expects us to go, “How can you *not* lose heart?” and The Holy Spirit through Paul the apostle causes us to realize that it’s because there is a blessing in brokenness, that God does something special through your suffering. and God is preparing you for a glorious eternity knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up, therefore we do not lose heart. We don’t quit, we don’t give up, and we don’t give in. Oh, it’s true, our outward man is perishing, it takes a beating, a bruising, it’s decaying, things don’t work like they used to, we get a little older and start breaking down.

But the inward man is being renewed, refreshed, made stronger and more vibrant day by day, it’s that transformation as by the Spirit of the Lord into the image of the Lord, from glory to greater glory day by day by day. Remember Ps 73? “*My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*” Ps 73:26

### Vs17

Now we’ll develop Paul’s “light affliction” more fully in later passages. But even with what he’s revealed so far, hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down we go, “What are you talking about *light*?” and If Paul’s afflictions were light, what does that make mine? “Feather weight?” “Not even worth making mention of?” Paul says, “Our affliction is light when compared to the far more exceeding eternal weight of glory that it’s working for us.” Most affliction is temporary, it passes, but the glory it will work in you will last forever. Affliction is light in that it’s temporal, even if it lasts our entire lives what is our life but a vapor is the span of eternity. Our affliction is light (really) in manifold ways.

It's light compared to what so many others suffer, it's light compared to what we in reality deserve to suffer, it's light compared to what Jesus suffered for us, it's light compared to the strength of God's grace that's able to sustain us. and It's light compared to the glory that it works in us.

It's as if Paul is saying, "Take all your pain, all your suffering, all your afflictions and place them on one side of the scale, and then see what happens when the *weight* of glory that it's working for you is placed on the other side, it won't even compare." To the Romans Paul said, "*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*" Rom 8:18 **If you're suffering right now, going through tough times, don't waste it. God wants to do something through it, He wants to reveal glory in you by it. But if you're not careful you can waste your suffering, allow it to embitter you, disillusion you, and ultimately destroy you. Don't focus on what you see, but upon the unseen, not the temporal, but the eternal.** Focus on the here and now and it'll *goad* you, focus on the Lord, set your mind on things above and He'll reveal His *glory* in you on that day.

### **Vs18**

You see when you focus on the things which are seen, when I look to those things that are seen I have a tendency to focus on my affliction (and it doesn't appear very light). **But when I focus on the eternal, realizing that if I suffer with Christ, I'll also be glorified together with Him on that day then I'm able to appreciate the eternal weight of glory that God is working in me. I don't want to waste my suffering, but rather receive the blessing in brokenness.** Carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

This word, "Look" here in Vs 18 isn't a reference to a casual glance, it's a focused observation, the problem isn't that we take the time to think of our light affliction, I think that's only natural. **The problem is that we *don't* take the time to think of the eternal weight of glory, we get so focused on the temporal that we lose sight of the eternal. God has placed His treasure in you, but He wants it to spill and shine forth from you, so in His time, and in His way, He'll break you, but in that He's making of you a vessel fit for the use of the King, don't resist it, receive the blessing of brokenness.**

### Prayer Points:

Lord we thank You for the encouragement of Your Word. That You have a plan and a purpose for our lives and sometimes suffering is a part of it. But you haven't left us nor forsaken us, Your grace is sufficient for us. and God You remember our frame, you know that we're but dust, the idea of suffering, the thought of affliction doesn't appeal to us. We wince at the idea of pain and personal hardship. But we trust Your heart toward us, and we know you have our eternal good and Your eternal glory at heart and that that thoughts You think toward us are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give us a future and a hope, and so we say, "Have Your way in us. Be glorified through us, let Your light shine forth from us that grace having spread through many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to Your glory."

I want to take the time to encourage you today that if you don't know Jesus Christ and you feel as though your heart is with out form and void, empty. God wants to shine the light of salvation into your heart and into your life today. **I'm not promising you a primrose path, or life on easy street, I'm promising you forgiveness of sin and everlasting life in Jesus name. God knows where you've been, He knows what you've done, and He loves you, desires to forgive you today in Christ.** Just call upon His name, cry out for His forgiveness and Jesus will come into your heart and make you a new creation.