

**Bible Study Notes**  
**2 Corinthians: Section 12**

by Larry Roach

**2 Corinthians 4:7-12**

**Jars of Clay**

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We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us. 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. So then death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

In the previous section we discussed how God 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. Now in verse 7 Paul describes this treasure in jars of clay. This treasure is the light of God illuminating our heart, thus revealing himself through the face of Christ.

This jar of clay Paul references is the body of the believer. Something so powerful and perfect has been placed into something that is so weak and is imperfect. God has done this to make clear that the power that is it now at work within us if not our power -- it is his power. It is not any ordinary power; it is an all surpassing power. A power that is greater than anything else in all creation -- for it is the power of God that created everything. For now we have the power of God working in us and through us. It originates from him and flows through us to accomplish his will.

Paul and the other followers of Christ, witnessed this power being demonstrated as they were persecuted from every side. He said that they were hard-pressed on every side. I'm not sure what pressure or stress you are under, but certainly they were under intense pressure from every side. He goes on to explain some of what this pressure was like. He said they were hard pressed from every side -- but not crushed. Paul is basically saying that crushing was happening from every side – yet they were not crushed. He goes on to say that they are perplexed or facing difficulty from every side -- however they were not in despair. They were persecuted from every side -- but remained confident knowing they were not abandoned. They were struck down from every side -- but they were not destroyed. What a picture of victorious living in the Lord!

These could be our encounters as well, as we follow Christ. If we are following Christ then we have entered into his sufferings. We have pressures from every side -- yet as we stand firm in Christ and we are not crushed. We often face perplexing and difficult situations -- but if we stand firm in Christ we are not in despair. In Christ -- we do not give up hope. And at times we are persecuted – yet we stand firm and are confident that he stands victorious within us. Often the enemy strikes us down -- but we know that Christ will lift us up and we will not be destroyed.

**Verse 10** introduces a very profound statement. Paul states, “We always carry around in our bodies the death of Jesus.” These same jars of clay, which are weak, are carrying around the intense suffering and death of Christ. As Paul continues in **2 Corinthians, chapter 4 verse 11**, “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.” We know through Christ our flesh is being crucified. And we know all of this is for the sake of Christ -- for his glory. He is taking our weak, fragile and imperfect bodies and molding us through fire and pressure to reveal him through our weaknesses.

As you remember from **chapter 1 verse 5**, Paul states “For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives so also through Christ our comfort overflows.” As we discussed before, the sufferings of Christ are flowing over into our lives. The sufferings that Christ experienced as he proclaimed the gospel, we have become partakers in our mortal bodies. In that same chapter, beginning in **verse 8**, Paul states, “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers.”

Paul understood that in order to experience the resurrection and the life of Jesus, he must also experience the suffering and the death of Jesus. In **Romans 8:18**, Paul said it this way, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” In **verse 37**, of that same chapter, Paul declares, “In all these things [sufferings, trials, tribulations and persecutions] we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Paul states in **Romans 6**, beginning at **verse 3**, “Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin -- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”

Later in **2 Corinthians 12**, Paul speaks of the weakness of his body in withstanding the torment of a messenger of Satan. God made it clear to Paul when he said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” God sums up what is being said throughout this letter. The reality of God's grace, which is his unmerited favor, power and presence -- is sufficient for all of our needs. It is not based upon our strength or our ability or intellect -- it is based on God's power and his power alone. These are the words of the Lord that came to Zechariah for us to hold firmly, “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” Zechariah 6:6.

In conclusion: God has chosen to use the clay vessels of our bodies, which are imperfect and weak, to reveal the glory and power of who he is. He shines his light into our hearts -- thus transforming us from the inside out into the image of his Son Jesus Christ.

**In light of this truth, what would God have you do?**