

Series: 1 Corinthians

Title: That the Power be of God!

Text: 2 Corinthians 4: 7

Date: June 8, 2017

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Paul has been declaring why we preach and why we preach only Christ Jesus. God makes us triumph always. (2 Cor 2: 14-17) We are made ministers of the new covenant which is far better than the old. (2 Cor 3: 5-11) The Spirit uses this word to change us into Christ's image. (2 Cor 12-18)

So in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul declared that our one means and one message is the preaching of Christ and him crucified, "*For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*" In verse 6, he declares the reason we preach and why we only preach Christ—"*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*"

Now, in verse 7, he declares why God is pleased to reveal Christ through the preaching of the gospel using earthen vessels—

2 Cor 4: 7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Title: That the Power Be of God!

Proposition: We preach Christ crucified because those who have experienced the power of God know that only God can work this power in others and that it pleased God to do so through the preaching of Christ!

WE HAVE THIS TREASURE

2 Cor 4: 7: But we have this treasure...

When God shines into our hearts he gives "*the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ Jesus.*" We have this treasure within us. The apostle Peter defines this treasure is in 2 Peter 1.

2 Peter 1: 1: Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

Through the gospel, making us behold the glory of God in the face of Christ, God has made us his servants. What a treasure! God has given us like precious faith in Christ Jesus our Lord with a multitude of brethren! God has made us his new creation through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ and we are made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Peter 1 2: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

Through the gospel, God has given us the treasure of God's grace and God's peace through giving us the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. And he has made us know it is through the gospel that he multiplies grace and peace unto us through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

2 Peter 1: 3: According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Through the preaching of Christ, by God's divine power, he has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.—all things! So we know that it is through this gospel that he continues to do so! What a treasure!

2 Peter 1: 4: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Through the preaching of the gospel, making us behold his covenant glory in Christ, God has given us his exceeding great and precious promises. By Christ the Light shining in our hearts, creating in us a new heart, God has made us partakers of the divine nature. And God has made us escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.

2 Peter 1: 5: And beside this—

God has given us a desire to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ. He has taught us by using this means of his gospel—

2 Peter 1: 5...giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6: And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7: And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8: For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All this treasure we have by Christ's Light shining in our hearts revealing God's glory in Christ through the preaching of the gospel of Christ by the power of God! Does anyone wonder why the apostles were taken up with one means and one message? Does anyone wonder why today we faint not to preach and that we preach only Christ and him crucified? It is because this is how God has given us all things!

EARTHEN VESSELS

2 Corinthians 4: 7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels,...

By the power of God creating us anew and putting this treasure within us now we know something about ourselves that we did not know before. None of us know what we are until God reveals Christ in us. The apostle Paul thought he had knowledge of God once. But his so-called knowledge only gave him confidence in his flesh.

Philippians 3: 4: Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5; Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6: Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Paul had confidence in his own fleshly power and so did we. We looked to this vain world's religion and to our own learning and thought it was great knowledge. While dead in our sins, in our religion we tried to make ourselves judges of doctrine by our learning rather than by God first shining light into our hearts to make us know Christ. So we thought we made ourselves righteous and holy by our obedience. And we thought we could beat others over the head with our knowledge and make others learn doctrine and become righteous and holy the same way. We made ourselves converts and tried to do the same to others. So like

Paul, we rejected Christ's true church who declared God alone through his gospel gives us the knowledge of Christ!

But what did Paul find out and how did he find it out? What did we learn and how?

Philippians 3: 7: But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8: Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss **for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, 9: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may **know him**, and **the power of his resurrection**, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

When God in his great power, gives true knowledge by revealing Christ in us then we find out that we are only helpless, earthen vessel—a clay pot! We might have vainly said we were earthen vessels before but now everything that we once thought was knowledge becomes ignorance and insignificant in the light of the knowledge of Christ.

Beholding God's glory in Christ, we have been broken by God's power and given a humble and contrite spirit. And it is only broken earthen vessels, that God uses to preach his gospel and build his house,

Isaiah 66: 1: Thus saith the LORD, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest? 2: For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is poor* and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

So now we use only God's ordained means which pleases God—the preaching of Christ—because we have experienced God's power through the gospel and have been

Colossians 1: 9...**filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding**;
10: That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto **all pleasing**,

Now, we heed and promote the gospel that pleases the Lord. He said, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Christ has made us take his yoke upon us, made us willing to obey his ordained means and to learn of him thereby.

Colossians 1: 10..being fruitful in every good work, and **increasing in the knowledge of God**; 11 **Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power**, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

Beholding God's longsuffering toward us in Christ, now we are longsuffering, patiently waiting on God to work his power in others rather than force-feeding our doctrine like we once did.

Colossians 1: 12: Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance **of the saints in light**: 13: Who hath delivered us **from the power of darkness**, and hath **translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son**: 14: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

In Christ our Redeemer, we behold the invisible God through faith. He is the Firstborn who made us his new creation.

Let me illustrate how God uses earthen vessels. God whittled down Gideon's army until they were very few in number. God used that little army to conquer this great host of enemies. The mighty weapon God used was in one hand they carried earthen pitchers with lamps inside. But the way those lamps shined the light is by the pitcher being broken. In the other hand they held a trumpet which they blew. (Jud 7: 16-25)

God has made us broken clay pots—earthen vessels—who depend entirely upon the power of God. We have the treasure of Christ the Light within us which we shine forth by simply blowing the gospel trumpet! We do so because we have experienced the power of God through the preaching of the gospel of Christ—*“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”* (1 Cor 1: 18)

THAT THE POWER BE OF GOD AND NOT OF US

2 Corinthians 4: 7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

The reason God uses the means of preaching through earthen vessels is that the excellency of the power—by which he reveals the excellency of the knowledge of Christ our Lord—may be of God, and not of us. Religious men and women who reject God's means of gospel preaching have *“a form of godliness but deny the power thereof: from such turn away.”* (2 Tim 3: 5)

God receives all the glory and not us and that is how his earthen vessels want it! Paul told the Corinthians,

1 Corinthians 2: 1: And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2: For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3: And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4: And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

God makes his preacher and his people desire for others what Paul prayed for the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1: 17: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19: And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20: Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*...

God's faithful preacher proclaims Christ that you might know that through this gospel God works the same exceeding power to quicken his people from death to life that he used to raise Christ from the dead! It is the same power of justice satisfied by Christ, the same power of righteousness brought in by Christ, the same power of Christ's blood by which he must and shall fill all in all his people.

Through the means of gospel preaching, God in power reveals his glory in Christ, and makes his regenerated child know that we have a great rich treasure—Christ our Lord and all blessings in him. God makes us know that we are only earthen vessels that are only to preach Christ and him crucified and heed this gospel ourselves. God makes us to know and rejoice that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us clay pots.

Therefore, we have *“renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God...For we preach not ourselves but Jesus Christ the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus’s sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* (2 Cor 4: 2-6)

Paul had experienced the power of God *through Christ himself preaching Christ* to Paul. Beholding Christ he was changed into Christ’s image and taught by Christ how he ought to walk in the Light of Christ! So he knew this fruit is produced by the power of God through the preaching of Christ and him crucified—not by the preaching of touch not, taste not, handle not!

Psalm 136: 8: [God gave] The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: 9: The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Christ is the Sun. He said when he was here it was day. Now that he has returned to the Father it is night. His preachers and his people are the moon and stars. (Rev 2: 1) We are not that Light, we merely reflect the Light of Christ by preaching Christ like the moon and stars reflect the sun in the sky at night. And we only do it by Christ the Light. Paul said, *“Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”* (Col 1: 29)

Now, why in the past two chapters has Paul been declaring that we preach and that we preach only Christ? Paul declares by the Holy Spirit throughout 2 Corinthians because Satan was using his false preachers to beguile and lead some of the Corinthians away. (2 Cor 11: 1-15) He is declaring this is why we only preach Christ crucified! This is why we provoke one another to not forsake *“the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* (Heb 10: 25) It is because this is the means by which we *“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (2 Peter 3: 18) It is that God might receive all the glory!

2 Corinthians 4: 7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Amen!