

The Greatest Christmas Treasure

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Peter LaRuffa / Dec 15, 2019

I. You're likely pretty ordinary, but inside you is a gift of incalculable worth - the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

2 Cor 4:6,7 - ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷But we have **this treasure in jars of clay**, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

God is glorified when the surpassing power of the Gospel shines through our limitations.

A. The Gospel **releases** people from condemnation. (Rom. 8:1)

Rom 8:1 - ¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

B. The Gospel **frees** people from the power of sin & death. (Rom. 8:2)

Rom. 8:2 - ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

C. The Gospel **transforms** us into the image of Christ Himself.
(Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18)

Rom. 8:29 - ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

2 Cor. 3:18 - ¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Especially around Christmas, we remember that oftentimes the best gifts come in the most mundane, ordinary packages. It's the same with us. On the outside, we're just ordinary jars of clay. Inside, however, is the most priceless treasure - the power of the Gospel!

II. You may be struggling and suffering. It may even be constant. But because of the Gospel, it will never be as bad as it could be, and will not be your undoing.

2 Cor. 4:8,9 - ⁸We are afflicted in every way, **but not crushed**; perplexed, **but not driven to despair**; ⁹persecuted, **but not forsaken**; struck down, **but not destroyed**...

Paul shows us a godly perspective to have on struggle, suffering and trials in life. He doesn't sugarcoat it, but he also acknowledges that it's not as bad as it could be because of the Gospel.

"I am _____, but not _____."

Looking for the *but not's* in life will afford you opportunities to be grateful even in the darkest and hardest times. In so doing, we'll be reminded of our need for Christ.

2 Cor. 1:9 - ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. **But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.**

III. You need to remember the opportunity that accompanies every struggle - the power of the Gospel being unleashed in your life for all to see!

2 Cor. 4:10,11 - ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, **so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.** ¹¹For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, **so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.**

Gal. 2:20 - ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

2 Cor. 6:8-10 - We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

Questions for Community Group and/or Personal Application:

1. How have you seen "surpassing power" manifest itself in your life? How have you seen it in others?
2. In 2 Cor. 4:8,9, Paul lists several cause-and-effect pairs (afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed). Which resonate with you today? Which have you experienced in the past?
3. Pastor Peter said "You need to look for the 'but not's' in your life." Did you understand what he meant? If so, how would you fill in the blanks:

"I am _____, but not _____."

4. What has taken place in your life for which there is no explanation other than God's power?
5. What opportunities do you currently have to struggle or suffer well so the power of God would be seen by others?