

Session 2 - The Purpose of the Pressure and the Promise of the Power

*7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.
8 We have hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 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.*

I. REVIEW

- A. In 2 Corinthians 4-6, Paul develops the theme of how to experience the manifest presence of God in a greater way. Within this chapter we discover foundational truths that will equip the believer to endure and to resist the temptation of giving up or losing heart.
- B. **Truth #1:** The Genesis 1 God is in control and has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (vs 6) **Truth #2:** There is a redemptive purpose within the pressures of life. These pressure can lead us to lean on Him, experience an increase of the manifest presence of God, a context to edify others by the response we give, and these pressures provide opportunity for the believer to respond now in a way that they may experience an increase of God's glory in the ago to come. **Truth #3:** As believers we are called to look at the unseen things. We look at the eternal (vs 18)
- C. **As we have received mercy:** the demonstrations of mercy and lavish generosity of the Lord is throughout the word of God. His mercy is our past, present, and the future of our walk with Him. We have received a far better standing with God than we could ever deserve. We receive a banner of Love and mercy over our lives instead of the flames of hell that we deserved as enemies of God.
- D. **We do not loose heart:** in Chapter 4, we see the truths and principles at work that will empower the weak earthen vessel to not lose heart. The chapter is bookended with the phrase "we do not lose heart". Much like the "let not your hearts be troubled" found in John 14, this Corinthians passage uses eternity as a motivator to stay steady in the face of hardship.

E. CHAPTER 4 OUTLINE

- 1. Vs 1-6 - Ministry, Mercy, and the True Light
- 2. Vs 7-12 - Purpose of the Pressure and the Promise of the Power
- 3. 13-15 - Death to Life
- 4. 16-18 - Seeing the Unseen

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE PRESSURE - THE DELIMA AND THE DESIGN (vs 7)

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

- A. **This Treasure**: - The very light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is shining upon our hearts. We have the Word spoken of in John 1. This Word that was in the beginning, this Word that was God, the Word in whom was life, and the life was the light of men. This very life and light is now within us.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:1-4)

16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the word cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (John 14:16-18)

26 But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. (John 15:26)

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you....12 I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. (John 16:7, 12-15)

- B. The Spirit lives in us to empower our hearts in love, meekness, revelation, and our ministries to impact others with the life of Jesus as we fellowship with the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). Paul had just given an overview of the new covenant (2 Cor. 2:14-4:6) emphasizing the ministry of the indwelling Spirit (3:3-18) that was shining in the hearts of believers (4:4-6)
- C. **Earthen vessel**: humanity with our weak mind, body, and soul, with wrong ideas and desires. In Gen 2:7 we read, “*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became living being.*” To be an earthen vessel is to be of the earth and the earth is of the Maker.

- D. **The dilemma:** The very breakthrough of God's power in our circumstances and ministry often awakens pride in us that hinders God's blessing in our life. Many become easily preoccupied with the increase of God's power and blessing so that their relationship with Jesus diminishes (Rev. 2:4). It is pride to have confidence to continue in this way without being troubled by it.

7 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. **The design:** God protects His people who experience His power, with problems. Pressure causes us to connect and dialogue more earnestly with Jesus, which leads to greater humility and thus to increased blessing. We should always contend for the fullness of God's blessings and trust God to administrate the measure and timing of its release.

- F. The story of Israel is a story of a Master potter molding and shaping a stiff necked stubborn people into a vessel for His Glory. (Rom 9) It is the Lord's way to mend and bend, press and fold the lump of clay into a vessel for His bidding and glory. It is Israel's story, as well as the nations of the earth, it is your story and it is mine.

8 But now, O Lord, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand. (Is 64:8)

9 Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, "What are you making? Or "Your work has no handles?" (Is 45:9)

20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" (Rom 9:20)

- G. **That the... power may be of God not of Us:** Why, in the design of God, did he choose to put this treasure in the earthen vessel? Why not a safe or vault, a cathedral, fortress, etc... The Lord wants to display His power, the Life of Jesus manifest, in mortal flesh... what better way to showcase His power than in a frail frame. Make no mistake about where the power comes from... it is not "of the vessel" but "of God"

- H. The Lord chose Gideon who was "the least" in his fathers house and who led the weakest clan in Manasseh. The Lord began to reduced the "weakest clan" to make them even weaker. The Lord reduces a clan of 32,000 and brings them to 300. He wants the stage set where the power manifest and the imminent victory may be "of God" and not "of Gideon"

15 So he said to Him, " O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." (Judges 6:15)

2 And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim for itself again Me, saying 'My own hand has saved me.'" (Judges 7:2)

- I. We will never stop being an earthen vessel. The question is: What can the Lord accomplish, in us, in our earthen vessel condition both now and forever? One of the purposes of the pressure is to remind us continually we are earthen vessels.

III. THE SOURCE OF THE PRESSURE

- A. **The Father's Doing:** He chastens, prunes, and restrains.
1. The **Father will chasten** or train us by resisting all that hinders love and all that prevents us from being prepared for our assignment in the age to come (Heb. 12:6-12).
 2. The **Father prunes** us after season of blessing and fruit bearing. (John 15)
 3. The **Father restrains** bringing the breakthrough waiting for the perfect time in His perfect wisdom and knowledge.
- B. **Satan's attack:** He rages against us as he seeks to devour us (1 Pet. 5:8).
- C. **Man's sin:** Sinful actions bring many unnecessary pressures on our life and on others.
- D. **Creation's groan:** We work in the midst of resistance to restore the environment (Rom. 8:22).
- E. We **submit** to the Father's discipline with endurance and gratitude. We **resist** Satan's attacks by the Word of God. We **repent** of wrong ideas and desires as we humble ourselves before people. We **work** in the midst of lack and resistance (heat of the sun) to cleanse and restore the earth.

IV. FOUR PARADOXES THAT ARE COMMON TO EVERY BELIEVER (VS 8-9)

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

- A. **Paradox #1** (attacking our emotions): *We are **hard pressed** on every side, yet **not crushed**.* This speaks of circumstances that pressure our **emotions**. Pressure comes from every direction including finances, sickness, broken relationships, accidents, failures in sin, etc. The enemy wants us to feel **crushed so that we will give up in our resolve to pursue Jesus and His kingdom.**
- B. The most common temptation in life is to quit with the feeling that we cannot bear it any longer.
- ¹³ *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who **will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation will also **make the way of escape**, that you may be **able to bear it**.* (1 Cor. 10:13)
- 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect..*

C. Paradox #2 (attacking our understanding): ***We are perplexed, but we are not in despair.***

1. This speaks of circumstances that perplex us, causing us pressure in our understanding. We ask the question: “Why, God?” It is common to yield to despair when perplexed, leading people to lose confidence in God’s goodness. People in despair often become hopeless and aimless because they cannot connect their struggle with the good that it is producing in them.
2. One of the biggest issues of perplexity is boredom while waiting for a breakthrough.
3. Paul wrote 13 books in the NT, but continued to struggle with perplexity.
4. God uses perplexity to train us. The Father purposely hides many details of our lives, including how He will bring deliverance to our problems. Why does God do this? He wants us to have confidence and security by virtue of intimacy with Him, rather than in having all the details of how God will provide for us in our need.

D. Paradox #3 (attacked by people): ***We are persecuted, but not forsaken.***

1. This speaks of persecution, causing us pressure from people. Instead of being appreciated by others as we serve and stand for truth, they resist us and influence others to join them. All who stand for truth will be resisted; sometimes it even comes from within the Church.
2. The enemy lies to us, saying that because some people have forsaken us God has also forsaken us, and that He has overlooked us when we are mistreated. When man’s favor is lifted from you that does not mean that God has taken His favor from you. When people feel forsaken, they lose sight of God’s love for them and become fearful.

E. Paradox #4 (attacking our life purpose): ***We are struck down, but not destroyed.***

1. This speaks of major setbacks in life that threaten to destroy our primary life purpose. Over an entire life, there are usually only a few major setbacks that are life-altering enough to make one feel struck down.
2. These can include suffering through the death of a loved one, a divorce, abuse, prison, a sickness, a serious accident, financial calamity, a natural disaster, etc. The enemy lies, telling us that such calamities have the power to destroy our primary life purpose in God.
3. Many of the heroes, in the Word, had a season of being struck down. We can glean from their testimony of the faithfulness of the Lord and how He molds an earthen vessel to fulfill his purposes. Moses, Sampson, David, Daniel, Job, Esther, Paul, Peter, John, Mary, Martha... etc all had seasons when it looked like the promise of God over their lives would not happen. However, the Lord in His kindness and mercy always comes through.

V. THE PROMISE OF THE POWER: THE LIFE OF JESUS MANIFEST (VS 10-12)

10 Carrying out in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body...11 Delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh... 12 death is working in us, but life in you. (2 Cor. 4:10-12)

- A. **The dying of Jesus:** We embrace Jesus' teaching and example to die to our own interests.
²⁴ If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me...²⁵ Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Mt. 16:24-25)
- B. **The life of Jesus manifest:** His presence touching our heart and flowing through our ministry. It is the life of Jesus, manifest in us, that keeps us from being crushed, being given over to despair, from being forsaken, and being destroyed.
- C. **Excellence of the power (vs 7):** sometimes we don't recognize the power manifest as excellent. Sometime we don't recognize it at all. The excellence of the power is both seemingly small and at times very great. The grace of God on the human heart and mind to make right choices is an example of the life of Jesus manifest. His life also flows through our ministry in subtle and not so subtle ways. We want to acknowledge and express gratitude for both the subtle and overt demonstrations of power.

VI. RESPONSE TO THE PRESSURE: ACTIVATION OF FAITH THROUGH PROCLAMATION

- A. We are to respond to God with faith in the pressures by speaking in agreement with God's Word.
¹³ Since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak... (2 Cor. 4:13) Vs 7 - But we have this treasure
- B. We lean into and proclaim the power of the resurrection. Knowing that we will all be caught up together with Him (1 Thess. 4:17) on the day of His glorious appearing.
14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus and will present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God
- C. Foundational to understanding God's purpose for pressure in our life is the revelation of eternity and the continuity of our life choices in this age to the measure of glory we experience in the age to come. Every believer will experience a different measure of glory in the age to come.
⁴¹ For one star differs from another star in glory. ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor. 15:41-42)