

2 Corinthians 4:7-12 “We Have This Treasure”

Since:

- **We have this ministry**
2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.
- **We have this treasure**
2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.
- **We have this Spirit of Faith**
2 Corinthians 4:13 And 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,
- **Therefore:**
2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart.

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

- **Who would keep a treasure in a fragile earthen vessel?**
 - No one in their right mind –
 - But Jesus does!
Matthew 13:45-46
45“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls,
46who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,**

2 Peter 1:3 as His divine power has given to us **all things that pertain to life and godliness,** through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,
- **Earthen Vessels**
 - Made from dirt
 - Fashioned by skillful hands
 - Molded into containers of:
 - Different shapes, sizes, purposes
 - Carried more valuable resources than the container itself.
 - Fragile and discarded outside the city when useful life is finished.
- **Concerning Paul – he knew about what it meant to be a vessel.**
Acts 9:15-16
15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for **he is a chosen vessel of Mine** to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.
16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”
- **Vessels made to contain the Holy Spirit:**
Ephesians 5:17-18
17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; **but be filled with the Spirit,**

- Paul knew that we each have the capacity to misuse this vessel God has poured His Spirit into:

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;
4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,
5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

2 Timothy 2:20-21

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.
21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be **a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.**

8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

- **Literally: “We are pressed closely, yet not cramped; pressed on every side, yet not straitened.”**¹
 - Vessels don’t have straight sides – they have round sides as the potter’s wheel turns.
 - Constant pressure
 - Pressure on every side
 - Pressure of life molds us into the adults we need to be.
 - God never crushes
- **Literally: “We are perplexed, but not utterly perplexed”.**
 - The play between the Greek words cannot be rendered.²
 - Could it be that we are perplexed at what the Lord is making in us at times?

Romans 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?”

 - **God never has your despair in mind.**

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

I still don't understand, nearly 10 years later. At least I don't understand why the Lord allowed my sons to be afflicted with infantile bilateral striatal necrosis. I don't understand why Jonathan died or why Christopher lived. Today he's 16 and nearly totally recovered.

All I understand is this: life is a riddle, which God wants me to experience but not necessarily solve. When I was struggling to solve it, I found 1 Corinthians 13:12, which only makes sense in the original Greek: "For now we see (or understand) through a mirror, in a riddle," the apostle Paul wrote, "but then face to face."

Modern Christians sometimes rush to put God's truth into little boxes, neatly systematized, categorized, organized, and principle-ized, when God's perspective on suffering is too big for any of that. While for some "spirituality" is defined by what you know, God may be more concerned with how you handle what you cannot know.

¹Vincent, M. R. (2002). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 3, Page 1-312). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.
²Vincent, M. R. (2002). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 3, Page 1-313). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

A riddle loses its mystery and its power, even perhaps its significance, once it is solved. By keeping us in our riddle (every person's riddle is unique) God is helping us learn to walk by faith, and not by sight.

-- **David Biebel**, author. *Men of Integrity*, Vol. 1, no. 2.

9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—

2 Corinthians 1:8-10

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,

10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,

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.

- **Jesus' death is our focus for life**

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.