

# Treasure in earthen vessels. (Quality: very good)

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 08 August 1965

Preacher: Dawson, Herbert (1890-1969)

[ 0 : 00 ] As the Lord should be pleased to help me, I should call your attention to a subject you will find in the second epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 4 and the 7th verse.

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

Chapter 4, 2nd epistle to the Corinthians, and the 7th verse.

This word was penned by the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth, that some of those in membership with the church there might have their judgments well balanced about those who preach the gospel.

You will find that the church at Corinth was a rather unusual church inasmuch as the Apostle Paul went there, as you read in the Acts of the Apostles.

[ 1 : 31 ] And in journey and in the city, the word of the Lord came to him, I have much people in this place.

And he realised it was the will of God, he should preach the gospel there, and he was wonderfully helped of God to do so.

And the church at Corinth, and the church at Corinth was gathered together, and well founded, and built up with a godly increase.

And the great majority of those in the church were well educated. And therein, ultimately, became a snare.

When, after the Apostle Paul's work was done at Corinth, he was instructed of God to go elsewhere, to do yet more work on God's behalf.

[ 2 : 33 ] But, then, Satan gained an advantage in the Apostle Paul's absence, and you find that some in the church there, began to set up one preacher against another.

And they had what we might call their favourite preachers. One said, I am for Paul, and another, I am for Apollos.

And now it says, that Apollos was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures. And therefore, his proclamation of the gospel, his presentation of it, with good grammar, and all connected with being well educated, appealed to those who were more highly intellectual in the church at Corinth.

And therefore they said, I am for Apollos. There were some who said, I am for Kephas. And there were some who said, I am for Christ.

And that was said, do remember this, that was said as ignoring the preachers altogether.

[ 4 : 07 ] As though there was no necessity for the preaching of the gospel. It was not said, it was said in a way that you might think, to the glory of God, as I view it.

And now the Apostle Paul learned of what was happening in the church at Corinth, and the disruption there was. And the preachers were set up one against another.

And he was greatly grieved. And therefore he was inspired of God to pen this second epistle to them, to show what was indeed the foundation of the work of the ministry, and how men were appointed to be engaged in it.

And that this treasure, the gospel, and men ordained to preach it, this treasure is always in an earthen vessel.

The earthen vessel refers to the clay tabernacle of the preacher. Therefore, you read, Elias was a man of like passions as we are.

[ 5 : 34 ] And you must never forget, all preachers are men of like passions as you are. And that in preaching the gospel, it can only be, as God is pleased to own it, and bless it, communicate to it that power, which he alone can do, that you can get any good for your soul, in listening to it.

And that puts the gospel, in its right place, and the preacher of it, in his right place. The preacher is to be esteemed for his work, esteemed in love, but it must never be forgotten that he is just the pipe through which the golden oil flows, and that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.

And now, that is the setting of our subject. And I want to look at this text from two or three viewpoints of it.

And the context itself is very instructive. Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.

And then the Apostle Paul goes on, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, margin, shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully.

[ 7 : 17 ] What a very solemn thing that is, to handle the word of God deceitfully. To twist the scriptures, to suggest they are not what the word of God declares they are, as regards this and that doctrine therein, which is what godless modernists are doing nowadays, in altogether too many pulpits, alas that it should be sold.

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.

And now we come to a very solemn proclamation. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

If our gospel be hidden in what it really is, good tidings of great joy, if men are found under the gospel and hear it and never exhibit any concern, to realise in their own souls the good tidings of great joy, it is because they are still content to live as they were born.

And all the while they live like that, they must come in the category of the lost. Alas, who can begin to tell what a calamity that is to be lost?

[ 8 : 57 ] As long as God shall God remain, so long shall last hell linger in pain, so long the joys of heaven shall be, oh, long delight, long misery.

And now the apostle Paul goes on to enunciate a deep down truth which is not always realised.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them.

It is Satan going about, the God of this world who blinds the minds of people even under the gospel who sometimes show an interest in listening to it as though they might share in the blessedness of it and then Satan is at hand as he was with the wayside hearer, the stony ground and the thorny ground hearer, so that the good seed did not fall and produce corresponding fruit.

And now says the apostle Paul, for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness as shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ but we have this treasure in earth and vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

[ 11 : 03 ] And now I want to say something about this treasure earth and I want also as grace is given to find out if we have this treasure this is a wonderful confession of faith do you think you could honestly make it before God as you were here before God this Sabbath afternoon but we have this treasure in earth and vessels we have it we do believe deep down in our hearts there is just a little of it a little that makes us feel encouragement in our souls that it is the little which a righteous man has which is better than the riches of many wicked one thing is very evident let our dear young people remember what the preacher is saying one thing is very evident it is so desirable to have a right sense of value as you journey on through life you may as you are living your lives have in your hearts and ambitions to be this or that or you might according to your make-up being what it is have fallen a prize to the love of money which is the root of all evil and be concerned to pile up LSD or you might have some other picture hung up in your mind which is what you're aiming to have brought out in your life as you live it and therefore all your concerns are on this side of the ground you're only thinking in the terms of time things you have not considered that you were born for eternity and now whatever your aim is in this life you must have a right sense of values as to what it is really worth for it will not be worth what it looks like do remember that should it be to pile up

LSD as I said then the word of God says we brought nothing into this world and certain it is that we should carry nothing out if it should be ambition that you want to climb up the ladder and be this or that in the eyes of the world at large the end of it will be if you live and attain it and then die without having this treasure our text tells us about it would just say on your tombstone here lies so and so who while he lived was such and one but where will your soul be what shall it profit a man that he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul oh dear friends dear young friends oh you and I do need to have a right sense of value when all is said and done

Jesus engrave it on my heart that thou the one thing needful art I would from all things parted thee but never never lord from thee go back again to this treasure and now the lord Jesus gives us a wonderful setting forth of earthly treasure and it is enjoined upon the disciples and there is no doubt whatever that they had grace given to them to heed it lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal for where your treasure is there will your heart be also oh what a great truth that is for where your treasure is there will your heart be also and now where is your treasure dear friends dear young friends where is your treasure when you lie awake at night and ponder in your heart what are you pondering is it some particular plan that I have hinted at some picture hung up in your mind and that is all in all to you at the present time that you want to be this or that in this life and there is no concern whatever about things eternal where your treasure is there will your heart be also or is it that your treasure is this that when you do sometimes in secret ponder matters you do so before

God and your great concern is that you might be numbered with the people of God and that you might possess some religion that God is the author of and that your concern is say unto my soul I am thy salvation assure my conscience of her part in the Redeemer's blood and bear the witness with my heart that I am born of God is your heart set on that treasure the Lord bless you for he will increase it as you read in the book of Job though thy beginnings were small yet shall thy latter end greatly increase and so all earthly treasure the saviour tells us is subject to the moth and to the rust and to the ravages of the sea and now the word of

God says whatsoever things were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort in the scriptures might have hope and now remember if your heart is set on just earthly treasure whatever its nature what is to do with this life only the moth will affect it and the moth set forth time here you are where about you are in life journey let your conscience tell you you may be in life morning and you think a long life is before you and I hope there is but let me tell you this oh how swiftly the weeks will run into months and then into years and soon life morning will be gone you will be in life afternoon and here you can look things around in life afternoon you will be entering into it even in time and find you're on the road to the churchyard and what then swift to its close ebbs out life little day earth joys grow dim its glories pass away change and decay in all around

[ 19 : 54 ] I see all thou who change it not abide with me the pendulum goes on swinging in the clock and your life goes on running out like sand through the glass yes earthly treasure has the moth affecting it there is also the rust and that signifies that there is trouble anxiety especially if you should be heaping up earthly treasure your great concern will be to add to it and get more and that will bring anxiety and it will bring a great deal of trouble and concern and then at the end of life's journey you will leave it all behind not only so what does the word of god tell us about the thief oh here is the description of who the thief is and he spake a parable unto them saying the ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully and he thought within himself saying what shall

I do because I have no room where to bestow my fruit and he said this will I do I will pull down my barns and build greater and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods and I will say to my soul soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years take thine ease eat drink and be merry but god said unto him thou fool this night thy soul shall be required of thee then who shall those things be which thou hast provided so is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards god you see dear friends young and old all earthly treasure is open to the feast watch therefore for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the feast shall come so you do need as I have said and do ask the

Lord to emphasize it in your heart a right sense of value and remember but one thing is needful and that is to win Christ and be found in him to know my Jesus crucified by far itself all things beside but we have this treasure in earth and vessels and now there is another viewpoint of this subject which is well you should keep in mind I'm sure of this that any man whom God has ordained to preach if he looks back to what he was before he was born again as he hopes and thinks of his life as he lived it then he will ever be in an amazement in the consideration that God should ever have ordained that he should be one to be found on

Zion's wall to preach the gospel oh the apostle Paul never forgot what life he had been living before he was cut down on the Damascus road and he said who was a persecutor and injurious but then the grace of God reached him and he never forgot what he was before God made him the good minister of Jesus Christ that he became but we have this treasure in earthen vessels and every man whom God ordains to preach if he remembers what he was before the Lord began to deal with him and call him by grace it will keep him humble it will be as I said a matter of amazement that he should have been singled out by God to have such an honour conferred to preach the gospel then you must keep this in mind you must always have a right view of those who preach the gospel and not look upon them as being angelic for none of them are angelic but they have to contend with what they are by nature the same as you do listening to the gospel and therefore you must remember that those who preach are earthen vessels even the same as you who have this treasure listening to the gospel in the pews and that means it is only this treasure as it shines forth and makes its power manifest in our lips and lives that can make us lovable and to be esteemed for our work's sake just the same as it is with all who hear the gospel and know the power of it and they took knowledge of them that they had been with

Jesus but if there is anything in conduct or conversation that is unbecoming in the gospel that is not to do with this treasure in the earthen vessel but the earthen vessel itself do remember that and it will help you again to have a right sense of value and now let us look at what this treasure is but we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us in the immediate context I have already read that beautiful scripture it is set forth as life when in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and God said let there be light and there was light and now the word of

[ 27 : 05 ] God declares the entrance of thy word give it light and the apostle Paul speaks of the godly Hebrews I have told you this do not forget it speaks of the godly Hebrews as being illuminated lighted up inside and that light is the light of life light which comes from him who is the light of the world 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 and when that light streams into a poor sinner's heart oh what a revolution it produces it opens up to that poor sinner how sad his state by nature is and he has this treasure a gracious conviction of sin like Solomon sets it forth which shall know every man the plague of his own heart can you remember in how God began to lead you into the truth although you had heard the gospel preached from baby days onwards when at length you were born again and you felt the reality of what you would so long listen to it came to you it may be as a surprising thing when you looked in your breast and found from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it but wounds and bruises putrefying sores all that follows on when he the spirit of truth is come he shall convince the world of sin wonderful is this treasure a gracious conviction of sin and do you seek it dear friends convince us of our sins then lead to Jesus blood and to our wonderings you reveal the secret love of

God and this wondrous light this holy illumination has got a very special characteristic whereby you can know it you read in the gospel of John in him was light and the light was the light of men therefore it means that you feel within like what the light shows you to be according to the word of God living light like when you stand in the sunlight you're in the light of it and you feel the warmth of it and the reality of it and so the things of God must be like that in our soul's experience something must be known and felt but we have this treasure in earth and vessels and what a treasure it is to be taught to pray do go back over life's journey and way up when it could be said of you behold he prayeth oh when you get a little help from God and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth can speak and you can say it is good for me to draw near unto God as you sigh and cry say unto my soul

I am thy salvation and express your desire that I may know him in the power of his resurrection the fellowship of his suffering and be made conformable to his death oh it is treasure and it is so valuable that no preacher can find any illustration to tell you the worth of it it is just priceless the wonderful mercy to be taught to pray and have within our earthen vessels the spirit of prayer and grace of supplication and remember how would the powers of darkness boast if but one praying soul were lost to be taught to pray and to be made welcome before the throne of grace if you tell all the truth concerning your soul's desires means that you will be welcome another day before the throne of glory and hear the saviour say come ye blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world but I can only give you hints about this treasure but we have this treasure and now what a treasure is faith faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen and all who have this treasure faith are designated believers and do remember that is the name the

Holy Spirit gives to people taught of God in the acts of the apostles not any denominational name by which people taught of God are known nowadays it simply says believers as many as were ordained to eternal life believed and they which believed had all things common and so you will find it goes on and now this is the thing to consider dost thou believe on the Son of God are you the subject of this treasure living faith he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek him without faith it is impossible to please him oh wonderful treasure

Lord increase our faith and then think of the treasure of hope good hope through grace are any of you here this Sabbath afternoon without God and without all and now let your consciences tell you what is the truth about it it is a very solemn condition to be in without God and without hope which is to say that God does not come into your life to govern it and you are not at all concerned to have matters made right between him and you regarding your never dying soul that you might at the end of life's journey have all that is mortal of you well laid in the grave ensure uncertain hope of a joyful resurrection to the life's everlasting end all this treasure of hope good hope through grace the saints possess the fruit of Jesus righteousness and by his spirit given many of you blessed be

[ 35 : 29 ] God are not here without God and without hope I like to think often it is hope which has brought you so that in coming up to worship God you had that feeling I seek and hope to find a portion for my soul we have this treasure hope and a wonderful treasure it is it may sink very low and it may seem to be rather covered up at times with time things but there it is in the reality of it and it will rise up again the God of hope will maintain it as a good hope but we have this treasure in earthen vessels and now there is the treasure too not only of what

I have already hinted at I said a little about conviction of sin and the light of life and faith and hope but there is also the treasure of love the apostle Paul said the love of Christ can train it on and go back dear friends if you can to when your attitude changed to the things of God and you know you might have lived your teenage life like some of us did and your mind was more and more made up that when you could do as you like you would have no more to do with Arab people and our causes and our line of things but you would go out into the world and follow the bent of your mind and now can you remember when something happened which may be you cannot describe or define very definitely but something did happen and you found you could not do as you like about it and your outlook on the people of

God was changed and your thoughts about the things of God and you found that you could not go on living in the world and of it and just following after the flesh the things of the flesh but there was created in you an aching void which this world cannot fill and from that day to this you were found love alive in your heart toward the people of God and you have longed to be found amongst them living and dying glad you are at times to hear what they tell out of the dealings of God with their soul and you find as in water faith answereth unto faith so does the heart of man to man and that brings you back to that beautiful scripture we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren yes all this sweet treasure love the Lord direct your heart into the love of God and the effect of this treasure is and you can go back and remember how it worked in its varied working that you found you could go up to the house of prayer with different feelings all together and you could begin to sing we love the place oh God wherein thine honour dwells the joy of thine abode all earthly joy excels and you thought oh so differently of the word of God for you began to look into it and you wanted to realise thy word is a lamp unto my feet a light unto my path much might be said along that line of thought but we have this treasure in earth and vessels then there is the treasure of praise and now that seems to be very often at a low level alas in our hearts and yet how it does become us to offer unto God thanksgiving

I often wish I could do it more in earnest and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth might speak and when I light on that scripture as I do from time to time in everything give thanks I feel alas how far far short I come in giving unto God the glory that is due unto his holy name alongside such a standard in everything give thanks but oh you do have a little of this treasure at times when your heart is meekened by the spirit of gratitude and you can have that sweet feeling the hymn writer sets forth dissolved by thy goodness I fall to the ground and weep to the praise of the mercy I found and I might just add as I come toward the amen we have this treasure in earth and vessels and to sum it all up this treasure will be the spirit's witness that is what you want to know more about if you are like the preacher the spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of

God oh you want this treasure to know that your religion is that which God is the author of and that your soul be confirmed in the way you go along that the way is the right way and heaven awaits you at the end of it but we have this treasure in earth and vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us when you read the history of the church of Christ you may not have thought about this viewpoint of it it is worth thinking about you will find that some of those men God has raised up to preach especially some of the great reformers down through the ages and that you might not have liked them very much for the men that they were according to what they were by nature but God ordained them to be preachers and use them to his honour and glory and he still exercises his divine sovereignty in calling whom he will to go forth to preach the gospel and stand upon

[ 43 : 39 ] Zion's wall and fill some sphere in the church of Christ to proclaim that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and now I remember when I was a little chap and used to sit alongside my father in Grove Chapel sometimes there would be a new name announced for the minister to preach the next Lord's day and I used to picture in my mind what he might look like but I never got the picture right when at length he came out to go up in the pulpit he was quite a different man altogether to what I thought he would be and I can remember that when later on I knew what I was listening to that sometimes some men who went up in the pulpit you wondered whatever they would be saying in preaching the gospel because

I say this is great reverence they did not seem to raise your expectations very high according to their outward appearance as earthen vessels and yet when they did preach there was the power of God and they were like men transformed the reality of the gospel of the grace of God was evident in what they proclaimed and that is how God is pleased to work he uses faith things that are not the word of God says not only those who seem to be so well fitted from man's viewpoint being intellectual well educated and with much of the wisdom of this world to help them set forth things correctly but we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us and now you think of the earthen vessel you need to think of it because it sets forth what you were made of we are just clay tabernacles creatures of clay and what does the preacher say by the graveside when all that is mortal is laid therein earth to earth ashes to ashes dust to dust earthen vessels it means that those whom

God ordains to preach the gospel and those who receive the gospel in the power of it a just poor creature made of the earth earthy frail the earthen vessel may be easily injured or marred and man looks upon earthen vessels as contemptible means they're not looked on as ornamental no but we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us and the world will look on you if you are an earthen vessel with this treasure inside as an earthen vessel and you might learn what the apostle Paul says elsewhere to the

Corinthians we are treated as the off towering of the earth regarded as dread like the soot washed off the house right pot it used to be off sculling come so the world regards these men ordained of God to preach and those who are the happy recipients of this treasure as regards their earthen vessels the attitude of the world will always be depart from us we desire not the knowledge of thee or thy ways we will not have this man to reign over us we have this treasure in earth and vessel that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us the

Lord help you to think on these things amen