

# Unbroken Vessels

## 2 Corinthians 4:6-12

### Introduction

- How are you doing these days? Are you feeling afraid, overwhelmed, anxious, maybe increasingly aware of your mortality or frailty? Are you coming close to a breaking point?
- Don't let life's crushing uncertainty and challenges break you! Don't lose heart! Become an **Unbroken Vessel**, finding trust, balance, and strength in your weakness!
- As we're about to start studying 2 Corinthians next week in our Jesus Through the Scriptures reading plan, this seemed like a great time to find encouragement from Paul's challenges.

### Build Trust in Weakness

*"For 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. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Cor. 4:6-7).*

- **Takeaway**
  - Settle into the reality for a few moments, that the Creator of the whole universe has entrusted you with the treasure of knowing Jesus! You were once in darkness, but now you're illuminated to see the truth.
  - But before we get too confident, let's remember our weakness! We're "jars of clay" — ordinary, easily broken, and nothing extraordinary. As much as we might try to live up to, and be worthy of, this great treasure, our weakness shines the light away from us and right back on God.
  - Vulnerability and affliction builds our reliance and hope God's power, rather than in ours (2 Cor. 1:8-10).
- **Illustration**
  - We're so concerned about the container sometimes — the Land O Lakes butter dish on the table, the grocery store coleslaw transferred to a fancy dish.
- **Reflection**
  - Are you more concerned about the container or the treasure within?
  - Will you allow this challenging time to train you to rely on God's power and not yourself?

### Find Balance in Weakness

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

- **Takeaway**
  - Like a pendulum, maybe we go too far in only highlighting our weaknesses, allowing them to consume and overwhelm us. But perhaps we go to the other extreme and ignore our weaknesses completely — in some *pollyanna* kind of way — convincing ourselves that everything's fine!

- Let's get real about our weaknesses — like Paul was — but also see God's hand in caring for us during these moments.
- And while we often want to keep our troubles under wraps, portraying our lives as somehow "perfect" and "trouble-free", let's follow Paul's lead and boast about our weaknesses (2 Cor. 11:23-30).
- **Reflection**
  - Have you gotten overwhelmed by the barrage of challenges and concerns? Are you seeing the way God is leading you through those difficulties?
  - When was the last time you opened up to someone about what you're going through?

### **Be Strong in Weakness**

*"... always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For 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. So death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor. 4:10-12).*

- **Takeaway**
  - Weakness isn't what it seems. As we've studied in our **Last Week of Christ** series, Jesus' death looked like weakness and failure to the world, but in reality, it was the ultimate act of strength and love!
  - Following Jesus' steps, we can use our weaknesses and challenges to bring life to others.
  - Christ's power comes when we accept our weakness and devote ourselves to him (2 Cor. 12:8-10).
- **Reflection**
  - How can you use your weakness to point people to the treasure — the gospel of Christ — within you?
  - If you're losing heart, are you sure you're built on the right foundation?

### **Conclusion**

- Will you make it through the struggles and uncertainty of this life as **Unbroken Vessels**?
  - Trust in God and not yourself.
  - Don't let your weakness consume you.
  - Follow Christ and find strength in your difficulty.
- And looking forward, beyond this life, let's always remember these powerful words: *"For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1).*