

Celebrities & Clay Pots in Corinth

2 CORINTHIANS 4: 7-18

2nd Corinthians ...

- most autobiographical & transparent of Paul's letters
- clear presentation of the Gospel – all about heart change
- “paradoxes” of the Gospel
 - comfort in suffering (ch. 1)
 - true love can hurt (chs. 1 & 2)
 - strength in weakness (ch. 12)

We live in a “celebrity culture”

- made possible by “modern” technologies – instant dissemination of images/info/ideas through radio, TV, cinema, internet

Celebrity culture is nothing new



Paul “forced to” defend his ministry as an apostle of Jesus Christ

Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.

(2 Cor. 4: 1-2)

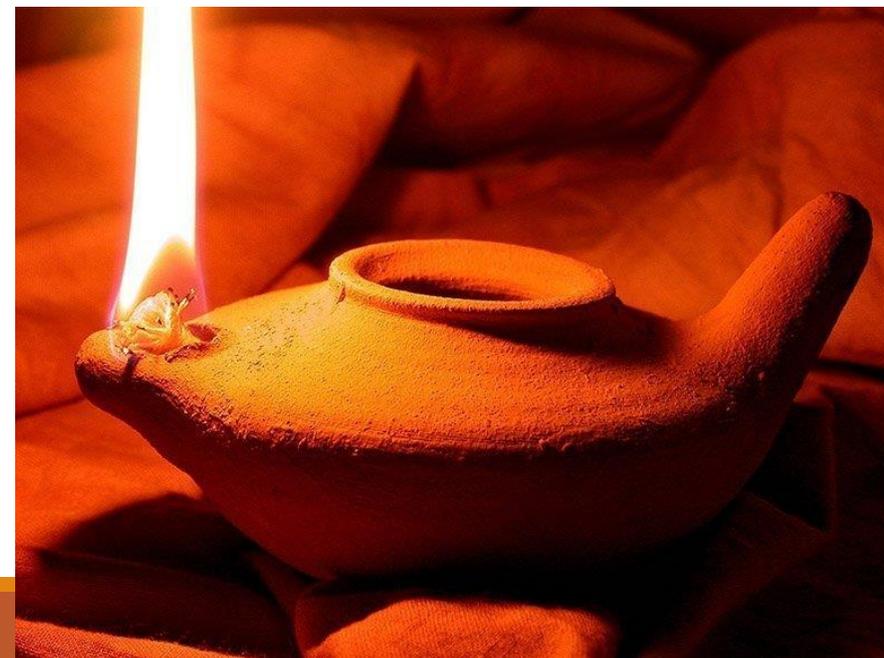
Treasures in Jars of Clay

...we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. (2 Cor. 4: 7)

Treasure ?

Jars of Clay ?





Celebrity preacher vs. Clay Pot preacher

“Just as wine cannot keep well in silver or gold vessels, but only in the lowliest of vessels – earthen ones – so words of Torah do not keep well in one who considers himself to be the same as silver or gold vessels, but only in one who considers himself the same as the lowliest of vessels ...”

– Rabbinic saying

“On Facebook and elsewhere, we design self-flattering profiles, post status updates, upload photos of ourselves and get tagged in others’ uploads, labor to choose the right “25 random things about me,” which are, of course, not random at all. Video cameras are marketed with a one-touch-upload-to-YouTube function. It is not so much that everyone gets fifteen minutes of fame or that anyone can be a star but that everyone already is a star: we ordinary people are growing accustomed to not just watching but also being constantly watched.”

- Joshua Gamson, *The Unwatched Life Is Not Worth Living: The Elevation of the Ordinary in Celebrity Culture*; PMLA, Vol. 126, No. 4, (October 2011), p. 1068.

<https://repository.usfca.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=soc>

We are Christ's representatives online

- ❑ Remember this before posting, tweeting, or sharing online
- ❑ We are “ambassadors” for Jesus Christ

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

(Matt. 5:16)

Cracked pots held together by “supernatural glue”

- ❑ hard pressed on every side ↔ not crushed (v. 8)
- ❑ perplexed ↔ not in despair (v. 8)
- ❑ persecuted ↔ not abandoned (v. 9)
- ❑ struck down ↔ not destroyed (v. 9)

⁸ We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. ⁹ We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. (2 Cor. 4: 8-9; NLT)

Attitudes toward “suffering & pain” during Paul’s time

- ❑ something to overcome
- ❑ something to endure
- ❑ Virtue ↔ Detachment
- ❑ A “Hero” (Virtue) ↔ A “Stoic” (Detachment)

Paul's attitude: resurrection life is a present experience

¹⁰ Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

¹¹ Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. ¹² So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you. (2 Cor. 4: 10-12; NLT)

Paul's attitude toward suffering & pain

¹³ But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, "I believed in God, so I spoke."^[c] ¹⁴ We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. ¹⁵ All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory. (2 Cor. 4: 13-15; NLT)

[c: Psalm 116: 110 - I trusted in the LORD when I said, "I am greatly afflicted"]

The secret to Paul's resiliency ?

□ the “power of Christ’s resurrection”

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The secret to Paul's resiliency?

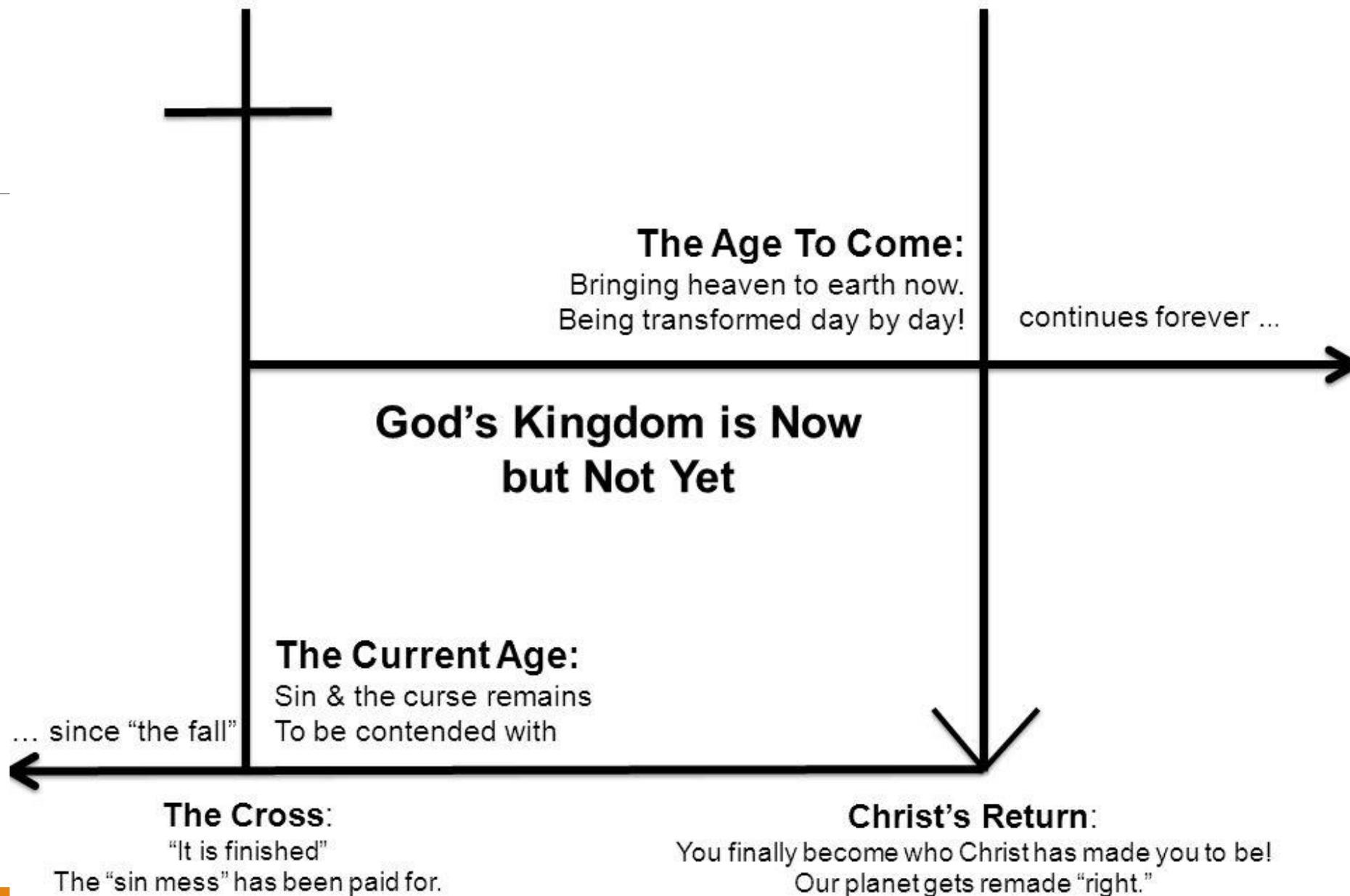
- ❑ the “power of Christ’s resurrection”
- ❑ “The more battered I am, the more successful my ministry seems to be, and the more glory to God for the multiplying numbers of people who receive the grace of God through me.”
- ❑ Is Paul painting himself as a “hero” who overcame suffering and pain?
- ❑ Is Paul a stoic, looking in at his suffering and pain with dispassion and detachment?

The secret to Paul's resiliency ?

- ❑ the “power of Christ’s resurrection”
- ❑ Paul – tough Realist with unwavering trust in God
- ❑ “There is no magic immunity for the Christian from troubles any more than there was immunity for Jesus from the cross. But remember, the resurrection comes after the cross ... and those who are willing to experience death with Jesus can also experience His resurrection power now.”

FIGURE B





Cracked clay pot ...

- ❑ held together by “supernatural glue”
- ❑ will be made whole and restored
- ❑ Through faith, Paul sees God at work in the midst of his troubles, especially through them

The long game : an eternal perspective

- seen ↔ unseen
- inner self ↔ outer self
- present world ↔ future world

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.
¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor. 4: 16-18; NLT)

Do we want in on Paul's life and ministry ?

“Paul wants [us] to realize that evaluating truth simply on the basis of physical appearance is foolish. Paul's opponents may be flashy. They may register observable signs of success in healthy bodies, fine clothes, and cultured speech. Does the visible equate with the eternal? Based on what Paul has just said, doesn't his battered body and tenacious, outspoken message suggest the eternal truthfulness of his message and ministry?”

Celebrity or Clay Pot (cracked and under pressure)?

- To live for Jesus Christ is ...
- to be involved in His work is ...
- to be fragile clay pots containing the greatest treasure
- to experience the power of God working in us and through us
- **The choice is ours. Choose well!**