

Treasure in Jars of Clay

Introduction and Review

- Every ministry is a gift of mercy from God & completely undeserved (4:1)
- The believer must take care of [guard] the ministry given by God (4:2)
- The god of this world [Satan] hides the truth of the gospel from unbelievers & deceives them (4:3-4)
- The God of glory reveals the truth of the gospel to all who believe (4:5-6)

I. Believers Are Jars of Clay (v. 7-12)

A. The external nature of believers (v. 7)

The “treasure” is the gospel message about Jesus Christ (v. 5-6). Jars of clay were ordinary vessels for ordinary uses in the Middle East – fragile & replaceable. Believers are fragile by nature, but the power of God sustains us in useful ministry to the end.

B. The external experiences of believers (v. 8-12)

Believers experience various forms of suffering in the gospel ministry (v. 8-9) – affliction, perplexity, persecution & struck down. God’s call to gospel ministry may even involve life-threatening experiences (v. 10-12).

God uses externally fragile people as messengers of the priceless gospel.

II. Believers Have the Spirit of Faith (v. 13-18)

A. The internal strength of believers (v. 13-15)

Believers persevere in ministry for three reasons: a believer’s faith comes from God (v. 13; Phil. 1:29), faith regarding the resurrection (v. 14) & faith that other believers’ lives will be changed for the glory of God (v. 15).

B. The internal encouragement of believers (v. 16-18)

Believers find encouragement in ministry for three reasons: daily spiritual renewal (v. 16), the temporary nature of all suffering (v. 17) & the eternal glory of things yet to be revealed (v. 18).

God provides internal strength & encouragement for the success of the gospel ministry!