

Underlinings in the Letters of Paul
Clay Pot Faith
Week Two Study Guide
April 18, 2021



2 Corinthians 4:7-12

7 But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. 11 For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you.

In his introduction to 2 Corinthians in *The Message*, Eugene Peterson describes the Corinthian church this way: *The Corinthian Christians gave their founding pastor, Paul, more trouble than all his other churches put together. No sooner did Paul get one problem straightened out in Corinth than three more appeared.*

Last week in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul confronted the conviction of some in the church that there was no resurrection from the dead. He addressed that and several other issues in his first letter which prompted an unfriendly response from some in the church. They didn't like his meddling in their church life in the tone of *Who is this guy, Paul, to tell us what to do and believe?* They attacked his leadership. So, in 2 Corinthians, Paul humbly lifts up his leadership and in doing so shows us how to exercise leadership in our world. In short, it's not about us. It's about the power of God at work in and through us.

1. For sake of context, read the first paragraph of the chapter, vs.1-6. What is the "treasure" of v.7? Read a couple of different translations to get at this question.
2. A clay jar, or clay pot as some translations have it, was the most common of all containers in the ancient world. They were a dime a dozen, easily breakable, ordinary. Back then, if you had something precious to hold on to, you'd put it in something sturdier like a vessel made of stone. Yet in this remarkable passage, God's treasure is stored in *clay pots*—us!
3. Reflect on the ways of God. He entrusts his precious treasure—the Gospel's power to change lives—in dime a dozen, easily breakable, ordinary people like us. What does this tell us about God? What does it tell us about us?
4. Remember, people in Corinth are questioning Paul's authority, attacking his leadership. What does this paragraph say to that faction in the church? How does this paragraph instruct us today in how we go about leadership?
5. In what ways might you compare yourself to a clay pot? Think about the wonder of God at work in and through *you*. How might this change how you approach this very day?