

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Spring Term of 2024**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE CRUCIAL POINTS OF THE TRUTH IN PAUL'S EPISTLES—
SECOND CORINTHIANS**

Message Six

**Christ as the Image of God
and the Treasure in Earthen Vessels**

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 4:4, 7; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; John 1:18

I. Second Corinthians 4:1-7 shows that we may experience and enjoy Christ as the image of God and the treasure:

- A. The image of God refers to Christ as our outward expression, whereas the treasure refers to Christ as our inward content.
- B. We should bear Christ as the image of God without, and we should have Christ as the treasure within.
- C. We need to enter into the rich and full enjoyment of Christ.

II. “The illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”—v. 4:

- A. The gospel of Christ is the gospel of His glory that illuminates and shines forth.
- B. God is invisible, but Christ, the Son of God's love, who is the effulgence of the glory of God and the impress of His substance (Heb. 1:3), is His image, expressing what He is.
- C. The image of God in Colossians 1:15 refers to the expression of God and the fullness of God, that is, Christ Himself.
- D. The expression *the image of the invisible God* implies that although God Himself is invisible, His image is visible—v. 15.
- E. The invisible God has a visible image, and this image is Christ:
 - 1. John 1:18 says, “No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”
 - 2. Although God is invisible, He is expressed by a living person, that is, Jesus Christ, the Son of God—3:16.

III. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels”—2 Cor. 4:7a:

- A. Christ as the life-giving Spirit in us is the One who shines and works; this is the treasure we have in us.
- B. God's shining in our hearts (vv. 4, 6) brings into us a treasure, the Christ of glory, who is the embodiment of God to be our life and our everything.
- C. Because of the shining in our hearts, we have a treasure that is wonderful, precious, and marvelous.
- D. This treasure, the indwelling Christ, in us, the earthen vessels, is the divine source of the supply for the Christian life—v. 7.
- E. The expression *this treasure* in 2 Corinthians 4:7 refers to verse 6, where Paul speaks of the face of Jesus Christ:
 - 1. The shining of God in our hearts is to illuminate us that we may know the glory of God in Christ's face.

2. The glory of God manifested in the face of Jesus Christ is the God of glory expressed through Jesus Christ; to know Him is to know the God of glory—v. 6.
3. Literally, the Greek word for *face* in 2 Corinthians 4:6 is the same word translated “person” in 2:10, which refers to the part around the eyes; the look as the index of the inward thoughts and feelings, which shows forth and manifests the whole person.
4. This indicates that unless we have the index of Christ’s face, He cannot be a treasure to us in reality:
 - a. We will not sense that we have a treasure within us until we see the face of Jesus Christ.
 - b. On the one hand, we can all declare that we are the earthen vessels and that Christ is the treasure within us.
 - c. On the other hand, we need to see that it is only when we are living in the presence of Christ, looking at the index of His being, that we will sense that He is a treasure to us—v. 10.
- F. The first step of God’s procedure in fulfilling His purpose was to create man as an earthen vessel to contain Himself as life—Gen. 2:7:
 1. God chose us so that we may be vessels of honor filled with the Triune God—Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 13:14.
 2. The New Testament shows us that God wants believers as vessels loving Him and keeping themselves open to Him—Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 3:16.
 3. If in the depths of our being we are not open to the Lord, He cannot dispense Himself into us and make His home in our heart—1 Cor. 2:10.
 4. An open vessel is doing nothing but keeping itself open to be filled by the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity—2 Cor. 13:14.
 5. When the Lord fills us, He does everything for us—Eph. 3:19.
- G. We are weak because we are earthen vessels; however, a treasure within us, the vessel, enables us to keep ourselves open to the Lord, giving Him every opportunity to do everything He wants to do; this is the proper and genuine Christian life—v. 17; Gal. 2:20.

IV. “That the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us”—2 Cor. 4:7b:

- A. The fact that we are earthen vessels proves that the excellency of the power is of God and not out of us:
 1. In ourselves we are nothing more than earthen vessels; we are sinful, fallen, and low.
 2. As such, we do not have the power to manifest the truth and shine forth the glory of the gospel—v. 4.
- B. Although we are worthless earthen vessels, God has shined the precious treasure into us:
 1. Now this treasure becomes the source of the power energizing us and enabling us to shine forth God’s glory and manifest the truth—v. 7a.
 2. This treasure has the power, and this power is excellent.
- C. Outwardly, we are earthen vessels, but inwardly, we have a priceless treasure—Christ as the embodiment of the processed and consummated Triune God to be the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45.
- D. Within us, we have Christ as a wonderful treasure; outwardly, we bear Christ as the image of God, the expression of the Triune God.
- E. When we believed in the Lord Jesus, we received more than simply a Redeemer; we received the most excellent One in the universe.
- F. We need to experience and enjoy Christ as the treasure within and the image without.