

HWMR: EXPERIENCING, ENJOYING, AND EXPRESSING CHRIST (2) (Week 17)

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

Christ as the Image of God and the Treasure

- 2 Cor 4:4 In whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them.
- 2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.
- Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation,
- Heb 1:3 Who, being the effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substance and upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
- John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

Day 1

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 - And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those who are perishing, In whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them.

John 1:18 - No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

In 2 Corinthians 4:7 Paul says, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.” God’s shining in our hearts brings into us a treasure, the Christ of glory, who is the embodiment of God to be our life and our everything. Because of the shining in our hearts, we have this treasure, a treasure that is wonderful, precious, and marvelous. The treasure in the weak earthen vessels is the very God in Christ shined into us. But we who contain this treasure are earthen vessels, worthless and fragile. A priceless treasure is contained in worthless vessels! This has made the worthless vessels ministers of the new covenant with a priceless ministry. This has been accomplished by the divine power in resurrection. The excellency of the power is surely of God and not out of us. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 312*)

Day 2

John 14:30 - I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and in Me he has nothing;

2 Corinthians 3:16 - But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

I. Second Corinthians 4:4-7 shows us 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.
- D. According to **Hebrews 1:3**, **Christ** is the **effulgence** of God's glory; that is, He is the **expression** of the image of God.
- E. **Christ** as the image of God is the declaration, the expression, of God; **He declares God and expresses God**—John 1:18.
- F. **Colossians 1:15** speaks of Christ as “the image of the invisible God”; the image here is not a physical form but an expression of God's being **in all His attributes and virtues**.
- G. Our mind needs to be **renewed** to such an extent that we have a **clear view** of **Christ as the image of God**—Rom. 12:2.

II. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul speaks of “the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”:

- A. In this verse Paul also informs us that the **god of this age**, the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2), has **blinded** the thoughts of the unbelievers:
 - 1. The god of this age is Satan, the ruler of the present age, who dominates today's world and hunts for people's worship by **blinding their mind and thoughts**—2 Cor. 4:4.
 - 2. All people today, whether primitive or highly cultured, have been **blinded** by the god of this age.
 - 3. We need to **pray**, “Lord, I trust in You to defeat the god of this age; apart from You, I do not worship anyone or anything.”
 - 4. If we pray in this way, the divine **light will shine**, and we will receive **revelation**.
 - 5. If we **drop** our concepts and **turn** our heart to the Lord (3:16), the veils will be taken away, and the god of this age will have no ground in our being.
- B. The **gospel of Christ** is the gospel of His glory that **illuminates and shines forth**.
- C. **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**.
- D. The image of God in **Colossians 1:15** refers to the **expression** of God and the **fullness** of God, that is, **Christ Himself**.
- E. The expression *the image of the invisible God* implies that although God Himself is invisible, **His image is visible**—v. 15.
- F. 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.

If we would receive the revelation of the Son of God, we need to drop our concepts. Every concept, whether spiritual or carnal, is a veil. I have spent many years groping in my search to learn how to have revelation. Eventually I discovered that to have revelation we need to drop our concepts.

With respect to receiving revelation, there is no problem on God's side. On His side everything is ready. The problem is altogether on our side. We need to drop the veils, that is, to drop our concepts. It is important for us to pray, "Lord, help me to drop everything that is a veil." If you hold on to your concepts while reading the Bible, you will be like the ancient Jews who had a veil on their mind whenever the Scriptures were read. But if you drop your concepts as you read the Word, you will read it with an unveiled face. Then the light will shine into you subjectively.

The light is here, and it is shining. Our problem is that our heart is turned away to many other things, and therefore we are covered with layer upon layer of veils. This enables the god of this age to have ground in us. As a result, our thoughts are darkened, blinded, and hardened, and we cannot receive revelation, even though we may read the Bible and listen to messages. Oh, how we need revelation!

If we would see such a revelation of the living Person, we must begin by dropping our veils, our concepts. Second, we need to turn our hearts to the Lord. According to 2 Corinthians 3:16, when the heart turns to the Lord, the veil will be taken away. The more you turn your heart to the Lord, the less ground the god of this age will have in your life and in your being. Then you will be under the shining of the heavenly light, and you will receive the revelation of the living Person.

(Life-Study of Galatians, Message 4)

Day 3

2 Corinthians 4:7 - But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

2 Corinthians 2:10 - But whom you forgive anything, I also forgive; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for your sake in the person of Christ;

Second Corinthians 4:7 opens with the words, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." The word "but" indicates a contrast with what has gone before. In verse 6 Paul says, "Because the God Who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One Who shined in our hearts for the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." The phrase "this treasure" refers to verse 6. Because of the shining in our hearts, we have this treasure, a treasure that is wonderful, precious, and marvelous. However, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, in something that is not at all marvelous. Because the treasure is in earthen vessels, Paul opens verse 7 with "but."

All of verse 7 reads like this: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." The Greek word for excellence also means transcendence, surpassingness, exceeding greatness. The fact that we are earthen vessels proves that the excellence of the power is of God and not of us. Here Paul seems to be saying, "I am nothing more than an earthen vessel, low and worthless. In myself I am sinful, fallen, and low. How can such a person manifest the truth and shine forth the glory of the gospel? I do not have the power to do this. The excellence of the power is not of me—it is of God. Although I am a worthless earthen vessel, God has shined this precious treasure into me. Now this treasure becomes the source of the power energizing me and enabling me to shine forth God's glory and to manifest the truth."

Do you not have a divine motor within you? The marvelous treasure is now a heavenly motor empowering us from within. This motor may not trouble us while we are sleeping, but during the rest of the day it bothers us. Preachers often tell others that Christ will give peace. In my experience, He often does not give me peace. He gives me joy, but instead of giving me peace, He bothers me. If I do not go along with His inward bothering, I cannot have peace. Sometimes I cooperate with His bothering and have joy, but still there is no peace.

According to your experience, can you sit quietly at home and enjoy peace? Is it not true that the Lord often bothers you inwardly? Christ is a bothering One. This treasure is a living and active treasure operating within us. This treasure even constrains us to do certain things. According to 2 Corinthians 5, the love of Christ constrains us. Christ not only bothers us; He constrains us, pushes us on. This is the power, the source of strength, for the apostles to behave themselves in such a way as to shine the gospel and manifest the truth. (*Life-Study of 2 Corinthians, Message 10*)

Day 4

Romans 9:21 - Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?

2 Corinthians 13:14 - The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

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:

We often say that Christians have to grow, but what is the Christian growth? Our Christian growth begins with knowing that God is in us. When we were saved, Christ came into us. However, our eyes need to be opened one day to see that Christ is truly the treasure. This glorious Christ, the God of glory, is living in us; He is our life. This is the first step of the Christian growth.

Our Christian growth is dependent on our knowing Christ as our life. What is a Christian? In short, a Christian is one who has two different lives—his own life and Christ's life. Once a person receives Christ, he is no longer simply himself, but he has Christ within him. Christ and he have become one. This simple word reveals to us the highest, most glorious, and most mysterious fact—Christ is in us as our life.

Every saved one has the life of Christ. Therefore, every saved person has two lives—his own life and Christ's life. These two lives live together. If you truly are a saved person, many times you may have an experience in which you sense that apart from yourself there is another person within you. This is the wonderful thing about being a Christian. You have no need to consult people outwardly, because there is One in you who is very wonderful, and you can come near to Him. When you have a problem, you can trust Him. When you encounter something that you do not understand, you can ask Him. When you are sad and sorrowful, and no one sympathizes with you, this One in you, as a voice or a thought, will comfort and cherish you. When you are about to lose your temper or to commit a sin, this One will urge you not to do so and will stop you from doing so. In addition to yourself, there is another person in you. This person is Christ, God, and the Spirit.

(The Crucified Christ, Chapter 3)

Day 5

Romans 9:23 - *In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,*

Galatians 2:20 - *I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

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.

Man was created as a vessel to receive and contain God. This is fully revealed in Romans 9:21 and 23 and 2 Corinthians 4:7. In Romans 9 we are told that God is a potter, and we are the clay. The Potter made the clay vessels, and He made us vessels of mercy, vessels unto honor, and even vessels unto glory. Our being vessels to contain God is not because we are so good and preferable to God; it is altogether a matter of God's mercy. God had mercy upon us, and He wanted us to be His vessels, so we are the vessels of mercy. We are vessels of honor because we contain the God of honor. Eventually, we all will be filled with God's glory and glorified in the glory of God to become the vessels unto glory. Thus, God created us as vessels—vessels of mercy, vessels of honor, and vessels unto glory to contain Him.

We must see that God's creation is to make us vessels to contain Him. We must stress this one point in this message—that man was made a vessel with a human spirit as a receptacle to receive God. This is the first message concerning life in our training. We have to make it so clear and so impressive to all the trainees that the creation of man was just to make man a vessel with a receptacle, that is, our spirit, to receive God into us as our life.

(*Basic Lessons on Life*, Chapter 1, by Witness Lee)

Day 6

1 Corinthians 15:45 - So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul"; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Ephesians 3:19 - And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

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. 15:45b.
- 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—2 Cor. 4:4.
- 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.

If we read the entire Scriptures carefully, we will realize that they reveal only one main item: the economy of God and the mark of God's economy. The main item of the economy of God is that God's intention is to work Himself in His triune person into all the parts of our being. I have the burden to tell the Lord's children a thousand times, if need be, that in the whole universe God's intention is nothing else but to work Himself into human beings. For what purpose did God create man? It was for the unique purpose of making man His container. A container is a vessel, like a bottle or a cup. Romans 9:21-23 and 2 Corinthians 4:7 tell us clearly that God created us with the intention that we may be vessels, containers, to contain God Himself. We are nothing but empty containers, and God is the unique content.

A drink such as Coca-Cola needs a bottle as a container. Soda bottles are very definite and specific containers, because they are made with a definite and specific purpose. We human beings are also made in a very definite and specific way. If a bottle made purposely for Coca-Cola does not contain Coca-Cola, it is meaningless, good for nothing. We human beings were made purposely to contain God. If we do not contain God, if we do not have God as our content, we are meaningless persons. Regardless of how much education we have, what kind of position we have obtained, or how much wealth we have in our hands, without God we are still meaningless, because we were made purposely as containers to contain God. God is the very content, so we have to receive God into us.

This word may seem very simple, but it is the precise way to speak the central point, the main item, of the entire Scriptures. The whole Scriptures simply tell us one thing: God is the very content, and we are the container to contain this content; therefore, we must receive God to be filled with God. This is the basic teaching of the Scriptures. There are many things mentioned in the Scriptures, but all those items are not the basic item of the Scriptures. The basic item of the Scriptures is that God's intention is to put Himself into us as our content. (*Dealing with Our Inward Parts for the Growth in Life*, Chapter 2)