

Sufficiency for Godly Living #4 - Insufficient Vessels Containing Sufficient Treasure

by Bob Hoekstra

This sermon emphasizes that while we are insufficient vessels, we contain the sufficient treasure of Christ, empowering us for godly living.

Duration: 51:16

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:5

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Treasure"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the concept of Christians being like earthen vessels, fragile and vulnerable. However, the speaker also highlights the exhilaration and joy that comes from having the treasure of Jesus within us. Life is described as a tank that relentlessly comes at us, but as Christians, we are not crushed or destroyed because of the treasure within us. The sermon also discusses the process of magnifying the treasure within us, despite facing pressures and challenges in life.

Transcript

This is the fourth of six studies on God's sufficiency for godly living. The Lord God Almighty has called us to godly living, to a life that pleases Him, a life that reflects the Lord Jesus Christ, a life of growing in the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. But where do we get the sufficient resource to progress in a life of godliness? Well, these studies are about that.

Studies about God's sufficiency for godly living. Not how godly we can make our lives, but what His resources can do in and through us to be developing a life of godliness. This study number four is about insufficient vessels containing sufficient treasure.

We'll look at that intriguing set of terms that really come right out of our passage today, but by way of introduction, let's look at the two theme verses for all of our studies and see how this study sits right in the middle of that context. Second Corinthians chapter three verses five and six. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as servants of the new covenant.

Not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. The fact of the matter is this. We are not sufficient to supply the resources needed for the life we're called to live.

But that doesn't need to drive us to despair, because our sufficiency is from God. The life God calls us to live, He's willing to supply the resources for the living of it. What a wonderful arrangement.

Well, we've been calling the new covenant God's new arrangement for living. These resources of God are available to servants of the new covenant. The new covenant of grace, as contrasted with the old covenant of law.

It's an arrangement whereby we live life not by the letter, but by the Spirit. That is not by rules to keep, but by God's Spirit to supply what we need and give us life. New covenant living, that's what God's sufficiency for godly living is about, and it does involve insufficient vessels containing sufficient treasure.

That title comes from 2nd Corinthians chapter 4 verse 7, which speaks of earthen vessels with heavenly treasure. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. God has set a pattern into the Christian life.

It has to do with earthen vessels and heavenly treasure. We are the earthen vessels. Earthen, that is made of clay.

Ordinary vessels. Earthen, frail, vulnerable, inadequate. Earthen vessels.

The scripture says God knows our frame, that we are but dust. Not gold dust, dust. Earthen vessels.

But the wonder of being a vessel is, vessels are designed to contain something. And that's where we find meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in life. Though we're earthen, we're earthen vessels.

We're containers. You could say we're like clay flower pots. It fits perfectly, really, as an illustration.

Pots, something to contain something. Clay, earthen, that's us. Earthen vessels.

Clay pots. Clay pot isn't much, but boy, you put the right flower in it, and everything is changed. The eyes get off the clay pot, onto the flower, and people go, mmm, nice fragrance, or mmm, look at the beauty.

And it's the flower, not the clay pot. Well, that's a good picture of what the Christian life is supposed to be. We have this treasure in earthen vessels.

What is this treasure? 2 Corinthians 2.15, where we have been previously, for we are to God the fragrance of Christ. That very word fragrance fits the imagery of a flower in a container. We are a fragrance of Christ.

Where does that fragrance come from? If you're going to be a fragrance of Christ, where does the fragrance come from? Not the clay pot. The clay pot just has an ordinary earthen fragrance. The fragrance comes from Christ himself, because 2 Corinthians 4, verse 10, middle of the verse, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body.

Our body, that's the earthen vessel, and the life contained therein. But the life of Jesus, that's the treasure in our life vessel. Verse 11, middle of the verse, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Our mortal flesh, that's the earthen vessel. The treasure, the life of Jesus. You may remember Colossians 1.27, says, Christ in us, our hope of glory.

That's what this is talking about. So we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that, in order that, the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. If any excellent power is seen in and through our lives, it's to be clear, it wasn't from us.

It was God residing in us. Now this is not the way humanity thinks. Humanity is generally all caught up with the earthen vessel.

Shine it, paint it, polish it, shape it, pose it, posture it. And whatever you do, don't let it perish day by day. But the outer man is perishing day by day.

There's no way to stop that process. We don't have to be all uptight about that. Hey, these vessels were only for a temporary season.

As long as the inner man is being renewed day by day, we're heading in the right path. God is having His way with us. So we have this treasure in earthen vessels of the excellency of the power.

The transcendent, extraordinary, invulnerable, fully adequate power would be of God and not of us. See, the dynamic, animating force that is to develop and drive and produce a Christian life is to come from the contents of the vessel, not the vessel itself. It's to come from the treasure, not the human in whom the treasure dwells.

It's to come from the flower, not from the clay flowerpot. Amazing picture of life in Christ. It's a picture of insufficient vessels containing sufficient treasure.

Now in verses 8 and 9, there is a process described that magnifies the treasure. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed. We are perplexed, but not in despair.

Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed. This describes earthen vessels.

Earthen vessels with treasure in them. Describes you and me. It describes a Christian life in a significant perspective.

We, we Christians who are clay pots with the treasure of the life of Christ in us, we are hard-pressed on every side. We face major pressures coming at us from every direction. Maybe you thought it was just you.

Hey, what is all this pressure? Why can't I coast through like so many others seem to? Well, that's it. They just seem to. Unless you're totally irresponsible and don't want to be told anything of reality, you realize there are tough pressures in life.

We get hard-pressed on every side. Clay pots aren't built to take pressure. It doesn't take much pressure to crush a clay flower pot.

And we're hard-pressed on every side. 360 degrees of pressure. The daily issues of life.

Just getting up, going to work, taking care of the family, meeting responsibilities, deadlines, bills, kids, a spouse. Pressures on every side. Then you've got the neighbors, then you've got colleagues at work, then you've got friends at church, then you've got foes at church.

I mean, it's tough. We're hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed. How so? If clay pots can't take pressure and we're hard-pressed on every side, hey, what's going on here? It's the treasure that the excellence of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.

What sustains us? We're to learn to be sustained by the treasure of the life of Christ that dwells within us. What else goes on in this process that magnifies the treasure? We are perplexed, but not in despair. Surely you've noticed the perplexities in life.

Constant flow of decisions and many of them tough. Many questions and the answers always seem less than the questions. Issues of life to face, priorities and everything else.

It's perplexing to be a clay flower pot in a world like this. But, though we're perplexed, we're not in despair. Sure, a lot of things not answered, but we're not driven to hopelessness.

Why? Because of the treasure. What else goes on in this process? Verse 9, persecuted but not forsaken. Persecuted but not forsaken.

Those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ, those earthen vessels in whom Christ comes to dwell when they're born again through faith in His name, they end up persecuted vessels. The world generally doesn't give you three cheers and a rah-rah when you follow after Jesus. Especially the more you walk with Him, the more He's seen through your life.

It's kind of a conviction to them, sometimes an irritation to them, like salt in their wound and light in their darkness. Well, we earthen vessels. We walk with the Lord Jesus.

We can get accused or misunderstood or sometimes even lied about or opposed and at least we end up ignored by many people. Some brother at Calvary Chapel Irvine, when I was still pastoring there in the 70s and early 80s, he said to me, he said, you know, since I got saved, my family doesn't like me anymore. He said, when I was unsaved, I was a good old boy to all my relatives.

I was the life of the party. They couldn't wait to see me coming. Now they can't wait to see me going.

Sometimes it's like that. Because earthen vessels with this treasure in, there is a persecution that takes place. But here's the amazing thing.

We are persecuted but not in despair. Persecuted but not forsaken. If the whole world says we don't want anything to do with you, we still know this.

The one who lives in me, which is the treasure in my life, which is the flower that blooms in my clay vessel, He's with me, He's for me, He'll never be against me again. So even though we are persecuted, we know we're not forsaken. Another part of the process.

Earthen vessels get struck down but not destroyed. Struck down. Doesn't take much to knock a flower pot over.

These are not the pressures of life pictured here. These are sort of the catastrophes of life. Life comes at us in a variety of ways.

Hard pressure. Perplexity. Persecution.

And if you're still standing, it'll strike you down. Forget the one-two punch, this is one-two-three-four. But here's the amazing thing.

We're struck down but we're not destroyed. How is that so? Life hits us hard. We get up and go on, not because we're survivors.

Clay pots don't survive much. Maybe a light breeze, maybe a bumblebee or two landing on it. Not because we're survivors but because we have this excellent power of God available in Jesus Christ.

And by His grace, His work, His mercy, His presence, we get up, we're not wiped out, we carry on. We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, not of ourselves. This is a whole new way to live.

In the world you're taught to make that clay pot look like an ancient Chinese dynasty Ming vase. A priceless treasure with 150 coats of shellac hand-painted. Wow, look at that vessel.

Oh, you mean that clay pot? No, no, that Ming vase. Who are we kidding? We're earthen vessels. The glory of life, the meaning of life, the joy in life, the purpose in life, the fulfillment in life is about the treasure.

Yeah, it's humbling to be an earthen vessel. Oh yes, but it's exhilarating to have the treasure of Jesus in you. That's the picture given here.

Years ago when I was teaching this subject in Dallas, Texas, when I was pastoring there in the 70s, late 60s, someone gave a little visual aid to me. It was prompted by a remark I made. I suggested that these passages sort of describe life coming at you like a tank.

And there you stand, a clay flower pot. This is not a fair match. And life does come at us like a tank, relentlessly just rolling at us and it's big and it's heavy.

And you really can't resist it. I mean, what can a flower pot do against a tank? What, brace yourself? Get that special flower pot stance? Man gives flower pot seminars. How to face the tank of life.

Who are we kidding? I mean all it amounts to is what angle do you want to get crushed at? That's all. So someone brought me this little visual aid. They had laid out a scene, life, and it was like a desert sand and they had this little tank trucking across the sand.

And where the treads left two track marks, in one of them was a little flower pot with a beautiful flower blossoming and it was standing right in the middle of the tread track. Right where the tank had been. Now see that's impossible.

Because tanks crush flower pots. But that's what's described here. Life coming at us like a tank.

And the only reason when the dust clears that we're still going on is the treasure in the flower pot. The flower blooming, fragrant, growing, and there we still are. How can this be? Tanks crush flower pots.

Flower pots can't handle tanks. Yes, but tanks can't handle Jesus. Jesus can handle tanks.

And he's the one who lives in us. It's a fantastic picture. The only thing I'd like to add to that little visual aid they gave me is all along each tread track I wish they would have put little broken smashed to smithereen parts of clay pots.

Because that's what's happening all around the world. Clay pots smashed. The only ones that can be made whole, remain whole, grow and blossom and bloom and have a divine fragrance out of their lives are those clay pots in whom the treasure blooms.

Jesus being the treasure. So that's the process that magnifies the treasure. Now we see in verse 10 that there's an attitude that the flower pots hold, carry with them.

An attitude. When you use the word attitude in contemporary culture now, what does it mean? He's got an attitude. Usually it means he's cocky, he's a little angry, he's stuck on himself, he's self-sufficient, and boy what a hero.

Got an attitude. Watch the kind of attitude clay vessels are to carry around. It's totally different from that.

Verse 10. Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. We always carry about with us in our bodies, in this human vessel of our lives, the dying of the Lord Jesus.

We carry that reality with us. We embrace it. We confess it.

We don't deny it. Why did Jesus Christ die on that cross? Because I deserve that at my best. And I carry that with me as an earthen vessel.

The dying of Jesus. That explains what I deserve and the best I could ever produce on my own. A candidate to die on the cross, alienated from the Father because of sin and guilt.

We carry that with us. Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. Boy, people talk a lot today about you deserve this and you deserve that.

You hear it all the time. Well, you deserve better than that. Well, you deserve a wife like Cleopatra and Betty Crocker rolled up into one.

Well, you deserve a husband like Arnold Schwarzenegger, but with the heart and mind of William Shakespeare. Oh, really? Whoever said? That's the way people talk today. No, earthen vessels, we carry about with us the dying of Jesus.

We say, that's what I deserve. And I don't want to ever forget it. He went there only because that's what we deserve.

He didn't go there because he deserved that. That was for you and me. And we carry that about with us.

We don't say, oh yeah, he died for the really bad people. The rest of us, he's just giving us time to see if we can improve. I mean, people almost act like that in the church sometimes, or the church world at least, religious realm.

No, we carry always with us the dying of the Lord Jesus. We cherish that. We agree with that.

We embrace that. It's like dying in order to live. Jesus said in Luke 9.24, those who try to save their life, lose it.

Those who lose their life for Jesus' sake, find it. Those who are all caught up in the earthen vessel, trying to make their clay flower pot really hot stuff and make a life out of it, they lose everything for time and

eternity. Those who renounce what the flower pot can offer by embracing the dying of Jesus, that pot needed to be nailed to the cross, they find a life now and forever, life in Christ.

So we always carry about with us the dying of Jesus. Why? That the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body, seen right through this earthen vessel. As Jesus said, if any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.

So we say no to this clay pot. We say the cross for this clay pot. We follow Jesus for any life we're going to find.

Christ, the treasure who lives in us, is our pursuit. It's like Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me.

That's our attitude. It's a humble one towards self and a hopeful one towards Jesus. Clay flower pots not only carry about with them a special attitude related to the cross, the dying of Jesus, but we also go through an action carried out upon us by God himself.

Who is that? That's earthen vessels who have come alive in Christ. See, everyone on earth is an earthen vessel. Every child of Adam is an earthen vessel.

A clay container. The difference between the world and Christians isn't that they're earthen vessels and we're now heavenly vases. That's not it.

This is about Christians. We have this treasure in earthen vessels. The difference between us and the world is they're earthen vessels without a treasure.

They're clay pots that are empty. We are clay pots learning to be filled with the blossoming life of Jesus Christ. We are those who have come alive.

We were dead in sin in Adam like the world, but through faith in Jesus we came alive. Now, we earthen vessels who live are always delivered to death. Well, that's kind of a sobering thing.

That kind of pops your power of positive thinking approach. Kind of pops the every cloud has a silver lining. We earthen vessels who come alive in Christ, we are always delivered to death, handed over to deadness.

You could say always thrust into situations more than we can handle. People say, this is killing me what I'm going through. God says, you who live are always delivered to death.

We say, I can't handle this. What's going on? God says, you who are alive in Christ are always delivered to death. Handed over into killing situations.

Has anyone ever faced anything like this? Or is everyone dead? Isn't this an amazing truth? We who live are always delivered to death. Now listen, if you're saying, well I'm a Christian and I've never gone through a killing situation, I've never gone through a deadening circumstance, I've never been thrown in over my head, well then you must have been born again last week, right? Let the rest of us encourage you. You'll join the crowd soon.

That's not morbid, that's just reality. Shame on us for making babes in Christ think it's going to be bliss and fun and yippee every day of life. Now we can rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice, but it's in

the Lord.

He's the cause of our joy, He's the source of our joy, the one who sustains our joy. When you see bumper stickers and hear people talk, you know, life is great and people are grand, you want to say, now what planet are you from? Surely not Earth. And Mars doesn't look like there's much life there.

We who live are always delivered to death, placed in things over our head. And notice, it doesn't say this just happens once or twice in the Christian life. Early on, I'll tell you as a Christian, when the first big impossibility hit me, I thought, I'm doing everything wrong, it's all over, I'll be buried in doubt and fear, and well, it sure was nice for a while, but somehow I survived it.

That is, Christ came through on my behalf. This is the end of Side A. To listen to the rest of the message, please turn the tape over now. We who live are always delivered to death, placed in things over our head.

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And I thought, boy, oh man, Lord don't ever let that happen again. But He did. And then He did it again.

And you know He did it more than three or four times? Well, it's almost like we who live are always delivered to death. We are. We have this vain hope that I'll just get it so together, that I'll be so on top of it, that all this stuff of impossibility will be a vague, vague memory back there.

That's like whistling by the graveyard. It doesn't change the circumstance. Here's the truth.

We who live are always delivered to death. This is not morbid, this is not negativism, this is just one part of reality. And I praise God for telling us the truth, not pumping us up and hyping us up, telling us the truth.

There's going to be a consistent series of impossibilities coming our way. Doesn't mean God doesn't love us, because we'll see in a moment what He does through it all is just a setting for Him to show how much He loves us. This is not to be morbid, it's to be ready.

It's to be mature, to be grown up. It's to help us stop viewing life. This may sound heretical in California, but life is not a beach.

Life is a battle zone. A battle zone. Warfare terminology fills the New Testament, here and there and everywhere.

God wants to prepare us for it. Use us in it and use it in us. So we who live are always delivered to death, but notice this intriguing statement, for Jesus' sake.

That perplexed me one day when I was studying and teaching this. I was praying and asking the Lord, Lord, how does Jesus benefit from me being delivered over to impossibility? For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake. How does He benefit from that? The Lord brought to my mind some passages of Scripture, showed me especially the context here, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh, and He brought this thought to mind that I think is the answer.

Shouldn't the one who died for us have the right to be seen in and through us? Yeah. Jesus died for us. Our life is not our own.

We've been bought with a price. Now He deserves the glory and the honor of being seen in and through our lives. How does it happen? God helps us in the process.

When things are such that we think we've got it under control, most of us most of the time, how much do we call upon the name of the Lord? We get up. Things are pretty good. Circumstances, you know, hey, not too bad.

Wow. Hey, life's grand. Today, we just go on about our business.

Then the roof caves in. It's, oh, Lord, Lord, oh, Lord. Lord, I need you now, one step.

Lord, I need you again, another step. Lord, don't forsake me, Lord. The Lord knows how to get our hearts locked on Him.

Now, we can increasingly learn that as earnestly as we call upon Him in agony, we should learn to call upon Him in the days of ecstasy, too. They should all be the same. In fact, Colossians 3.17 says, whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

All of life live calling upon His name, trusting in Him. So the Lord Jesus Christ gets seen in us most often, most clearly, when and as we've been delivered over to death, put in impossible situations. We call upon Him.

He comes through, and the life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal flesh, our human, fading humanity. Jesus is seen through us. So the attitude held by us about the dying of Jesus lets Christ be seen in and through us, and the action that's carried out on us by God turns us to Christ, and He's seen through us.

No wonder, then, that all of this has a temporal impact on others. Verse 12, So then death is working in us, but life in you. It's an intriguing statement, isn't it? This whole passage is intriguing.

So then death is working in us, but life in you. Death is working in the one going through the tough situations, but life in those who hear about it. As Paul reflects on his own walk and the difficulties his earthen vessel went through, and the team he ministered with, he says, death is working in us, but you, those in Corinth, hearing about it, life works in you.

God gave me a personal illustration of this one day that really brought it home, what this verse was talking about. In 14 years of ministry in Dallas, Texas, the Lord gave us some dear friends, and particularly this one family that have been real prayer partners, and I've often called the husband through the years as we've been back out here now more years than we were in Dallas ministering. And I'd call Shelly up and say, Shelly, I'm dying, help, pray, I need God to do miracles.

And he was a faithful prayer partner. We've prayed for one another up through this year even still. One day I called him exceedingly dying, major being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake.

And I'm crying out of the tomb, Shelly, you've got to pray for me. He said something I'll never forget. He said, oh, Bob, I'm so excited, tell me what's happening.

I said, you're excited, I'm dying. He said, yeah, you've been there before, but God always comes through for you, I can't wait to see what he does now. And it hit me, that's what this is talking about.

So death works in us, but life in you. We're aware of the dying of it, and we're crying out to God. God's working, and others see him at work, and they're revived, they're stirred, life works in them.

Again, this is not morbid, this is for the purposes of God. Shaping us and touching others. But you know there's more to it than that.

This dying and finding life in the midst of it, not only has a temporal impact on others, it potentially can have an eternal impact on us. And if it's been a hard week and a hard morning, and you're weary and would rather doze, let me just urge you, cry out to God for ears to hear this one thing. This is an astounding issue.

When God first opened my eyes, I couldn't believe I had missed it, and I realized how many impossibilities and afflictions I totally wasted in previous years. The eternal impact all of this is to have on us. Verse 17, For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Note the contrast here. Light afflictions for the moment, and an eternal weight of glory. One version translates it, momentary light affliction.

And it's contrasted powerfully with eternal weight of glory. The afflictions, momentary. The glory, eternal.

The afflictions, light. Even though they're crushing, contrasted with the weight of glory that can come, they're light. And then, their momentary light afflictions, difficulties, pressures, impossibilities, but it's contrasted with eternal weight of glory.

It's an astounding contrast. Showing the relationship between difficulties now and glories forever. Isn't it true that probably most of us, maybe most of the time, look upon the afflictions of life as number one, not momentary.

I mean, let me tell you, mine go on and on and on. I mean, they're everlasting. It's often the way we look at it.

And the tough things, momentary light afflictions, you call this light? Let me tell you about it. I'll show you what's not light. It's my troubles.

I mean, that's a common perspective. And yet God, by the Spirit, led Paul to call them momentary light afflictions. And most of us probably would think that afflictions are working against me.

Look at all this stuff that's coming against me. Hard pressure, perplexity, persecution. I get knocked down now and then.

This stuff is working against me. Notice the language God uses. Momentary light affliction is working for us.

How often do we think of the potentiality of our agonies of life actually working for us? That's God's perspective. And by faith, we can learn to walk in it too and see life that way. Momentary light afflictions producing an eternal weight of glory.

The word weight is one that has to do with fullness or heaviness or capacity. It fits the terminology of a vessel quite well. See, it's God's intention that momentary light afflictions enlarge our capacity as a vessel.

2 Peter 1 speaks of having an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. 1 Corinthians 3 speaks of rewards in heaven. Everyone in heaven is going to be so glad they're there and rejoicing and blessed.

But not everyone will have the same experience there. Some will sit at the right hand and the left, very intimate and close with the Lord. Some will be down there, and I might be down there, and go, Bob, if that's you, would you wave? He made it! Yes! And I'll be rejoicing down there, but it'll be a different kind of measure of entering into the glory of God than the right hand and the left.

Jesus said, He who is faithful in a little will be made ruler of much. Some will have galaxies to take care of. Some, half a moon might be enough.

We'll fill their capacity to serve to the glory of God. When we stand before the Lord, we'll take that vessel of our life, whatever size it is in, and say, Lord, fill this with Your glory, for Your glory, that I may enter into Your glory, knowing You, serving You, fellowshiping with You, to this dimension. Some of us will have a flower pot there, and He'll do it, and it'll be wonderful.

Some will go so enlarged that they'll have like a big planter. Lord, fill this with Your glory, for Your glory, that I might know You, serve You, enter in to the everlasting kingdom, this measure with You. Some will go there with like the Grand Canyon.

Lord, fill this with Your glory, for Your everlasting glory, that I might fellowship with You in these dimensions of Your glory. What is the difference, life to life, vessel to vessel, and experience to experience in heaven? Well, it has to do with the momentary light afflictions. But don't get confused on this.

There's a great mistake in many people's minds, I used to hold this myself, that to whatever degree life is difficult now, it will automatically be that glorious in heaven. That's not exactly what the scriptures teach. Well then, what is it that enlarges our vessel for this eternal fullness or capacity of glory? It isn't just the trials, it's what's going on in us during the trials.

Verse 18 tells us when the momentary light affliction produces an eternal weight of glory. While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Too many Christians, too much of the time, waste their afflictions and their difficulties. How so? By focusing on the seen and the temporal. Looking all the time at my circumstances, my problems, my raw deal, my bad luck, my unhappiness, my, my, my.

That doesn't enlarge our spiritual capacity. That doesn't enlarge the vessel. If anything, it diminishes it.

We're headed toward a thimble. Lord, here, fill this, would you? Shrinking up into self. Wasting the agonies of life.

Well then, when do these afflictions produce an eternal weight of glory? While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Eternal things. Those who go through their trials, not focusing on the vessel, but focusing on the treasure.

The Lord Jesus, His kingdom, His plans, His sovereignty, His faithfulness, His adequacy, His sufficiency. Those lives are enlarged. Their momentary light afflictions are producing for them an everlasting capacity to enter into the fullness of the glory of God.

This is an astounding view of the Christian life. We would never, ever imagine this if God had not revealed it to us in His Word. Being insufficient vessels containing sufficient treasure fits right into God's sufficiency for godly living.

Let's face it. We're clay flower pots. Oh, that's humbling.

It's good to be humbled before the Lord. God gives grace to the humble. Seeing the inadequacy of our vessel, our human life, throws us upon the grace, the goodness, the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is life itself. Finding in the treasure, this blooming, fragrant life of Christ in us. That's what life is all about.

That others might see Him in us. That He might be glorified. That they might be touched.

And that along the way, we might be enlarged for fullness of life with Him evermore. In your holy name, amen. you you

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