

On Clay Pots and Crystal Vases

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (**II Corinthians 4:7**, ESV).

Jar of clay! Who wants to be a jar of clay? I want to be a crystal vase. I want to be beautiful in my own right. I want to be precious and special because of how great I am. When I have this attitude, I want to prove to God how great I am. “Hey, God! Look at how I sparkle and shine.” And every once in a while, I can even convince myself I am that good. When I compare myself to really evil people, I can deceive myself into believing that I’m not a clay pot, but am instead a crystal vase.

However, when I’m honest, when I let the light of the Son shine on me, I see my earthenware nature. Then I want to hide myself. I want to hide from God. I want to hide from you. I don’t want anyone to see how awful I am. And yet, what Paul explains and what I’ve learned is only those who are honest about being clay pots allow the real strength of God to work through them. As Paul says later in **II Corinthians 12:10**, “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (ESV).

How many Bible stories are described by **II Corinthians 4:7**?

Remember Moses? When he supposed that the Jews would know God was using him to deliver them, they did not recognize it. He had to run for his life. He spent 40 years in the wilderness shepherding sheep, an abomination to his upbringing. But then God called him from a burning bush. How did Moses respond? “Who am I?” Moses simply could not imagine that God could use him. There was a time when he thought he was a crystal vase. But he came to know he was just a clay pot. God couldn’t use the crystal vase, but He did use the clay pot.

What about David? Here was a young man. He was no warrior. He had no armor. He was only a shepherd boy. He made no pretense about human strength or physical prowess. He didn’t saunter onto the battlefield proudly proclaiming that big things come in little packages. He didn’t taunt Goliath saying that he would be surprised at what a warrior he really was. He went out in the strength of the Lord and declared that God would use him. He was a clay pot and he knew it. But God was able to use that.

Then there was Gideon. His clan was the weakest in Manasseh, and he was the least in his father’s house. He was no crystal vase. He was just a clay pot. But take that a step further when Gideon was going to lead 32,000 men against the Midianites. But God did not want them to think they were accomplishing this on their own. So He let 22,000 leave because they were afraid. Then He whittled the army down to 300 with a drinking test. What kind of army is 300? Not a crystal vase army. Oh no, that’s a clay pot army. But God used them to win.

Then there is the exception that proves the rule. Consider King Saul. When he was first called to be king, he hid among the baggage. He declared that God brought the victory. He was a clay pot and God did great things through him. But he let those great things turn his head. He began to think too much of himself. He forgot he was a clay pot and started thinking he was a crystal vase. He offered sacrifice when he wasn’t authorized. He disregarded God’s will. He became useless and had to be replaced by a man after God’s own heart.

We are not crystal vases. We are merely clay pots. But that is okay. Because God uses clay pots. He simply smashes crystal vases. We have this treasure in jars of clay to remind us that it is God’s strength and power, not ours, that accomplishes anything.

Praise God!

--Edwin L. Crozier