

Holy Fire in Jars of Clay

Fuego Santo en Vasijas de Barro

Anchor text — 2 Corinthians 4:7–9 (ESV) · Pastor Sabas Jimenez

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7–9 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION

The Year of Transformation Continues

We don't want to forget that 2026 is the Year of Transformation. God continues to transform us daily. How are you doing with that transformation? Today I would like to apply the Word to the transformation that is continuing in our lives.

God has always desired to dwell with people

God's desire has never simply been to visit us, but to place His presence within us. And the amazing part is not only the treasure — it's *where* God put that treasure. God placed something heavenly, holy, and powerful inside ordinary, fragile human beings.

We are the jars of clay

We are clay — imperfect, sometimes wounded, still being molded and healed by the Potter. Yet God still chooses to use us. So why would a holy God place His holy treasure and fire inside such fragile and unholy vessels?

The vessel is a jar of clay — but what it carries is holy. God has chosen fragile, imperfect, human vessels to carry something that does not originate from humanity. We need molding. We need healing. We need purification. We need restoration. Yet God still chooses to place His treasure within us.

Why would God put something so valuable inside something so fragile? To carry His glory!

POINT I

We Have This Treasure in Jars of Clay

A. Why did Paul say “jars of clay”?

Paul says: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay...” These clay vessels were common, inexpensive, fragile, and easily chipped or shattered. The jars of clay could be used to:

- Carry water
- Store household goods
- Hold oil — the fire of the Holy Spirit (Elijah and the widow: jars for oil)
- Function as simple lamps

The container itself wasn't particularly valuable.

The jar's importance came from what it carried.

B. That's Paul's picture of us

We are the vessel.

- **We are not the treasure** — we are the container.
- **We are not the source** — we carry God's treasure.
- **The power does not originate in us.**

That is why Paul says: “...to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”

POINT II

What Is the Treasure?

To understand verse 7, we must look at verse 6.

“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

2 CORINTHIANS 4:6 (ESV)

A. The treasure is Christ and the gospel

The treasure isn't my talent. It isn't my personality, my title, my ability, or my reputation. The treasure is the glorious knowledge of Jesus Christ, the gospel, the fire of the Holy Ghost! And through His Holy Spirit, God places heavenly treasure into ordinary human beings.

The value is in the content — not the container.

B. Why would God choose clay?

Paul answers: “...to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” The expression behind “surpassing power” speaks of extraordinary, exceeding, surpassing power. Look at the contrast: **ordinary vessel, extraordinary power.**

God chooses weak vessels so nobody confuses the vessel with the Source. When God does something extraordinary through ordinary people, everyone should recognize: “That power didn't come from the jar of clay!” It came from God.

POINT III

Clay Must Go Through Fire

“...Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand...”
JEREMIAH 18:6 (ESV)

Clay requires forming

The fact that God uses broken people does not mean He wants us to remain broken. There are areas He needs to heal, mold, correct, purify, and restore. Since God wants you to carry His fire and His oil inside of you, He will continue to work the clay — and you are that clay.

The process: the fire prepares the vessel

Raw clay cannot become a useful vessel without going through heat. The firing process transforms fragile clay into something capable of carrying what is placed inside.

1. The vessel must first be dried (pre-heating)

Before clay enters the kiln, it must be completely air-dried — “bone dry.” If too much moisture remains, steam can build up and damage the vessel.

Application: Before God takes us through certain seasons, He often prepares us through surrender, emptying, and dependence upon Him.

2. The fire permanently changes the clay (the first fire)

Under sufficient heat — roughly 660°F to 932°F — clay undergoes chemical changes and becomes ceramic. It cannot simply return to soft, moldable mud again.

Application: Some trials change us permanently. We come out of the fire different from the way we entered it, and we are never the same!

3. Peak heat strengthens the vessel

As firing progresses into 1,800°–2,400°F, the clay particles bond more strongly together, making the vessel harder and capable of holding what is placed inside.

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you...”
1 PETER 4:12 (ESV)

The fire is not always there to destroy you. Sometimes the fire is preparing you to carry something you could not carry before.

4. Even after the fire — it is still clay

This is the paradox. Firing makes pottery stronger and useful, but it does not make it indestructible. A clay vessel can still crack and break when exposed to sudden cold air. The fire must die down — cool naturally — so the clay can lock in its new strength.

The fire can strengthen the vessel, but the fire never makes the vessel the treasure. We can mature. We can survive trials. We can become stronger. We can be used mightily by God. **But we are still clay.** That is why our confidence can never be in the strength of the vessel. The fire prepares the vessel. The treasure gives the vessel its value. And the surpassing power still belongs to God.

God knew we were clay when He called us to be used

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. *The trial:* King Nebuchadnezzar made a giant gold statue and ordered everyone to bow down to it. These three young Jewish men refused. *The fire:* The angry king ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal — the flames killed the guards who threw them in. *The outcome:* The king saw four figures walking around unharmed instead of three, the fourth “like a son of the gods.” They walked out without even smelling like smoke.

As you go through the firing process, God will be there with you making sure you are safe in the midst of the fire!

Daniel in the lion's den. Rivals tricked King Darius into banning prayer to any god except the king for 30 days. Daniel kept praying openly anyway and was thrown into a pit of hungry lions. He spent the entire night there, but God protected him — “My God sent his angel, and he shut the lions' mouths” (Daniel 6:22).

The vessels got stronger! They became vessels of honor. Your trial is not there to destroy you, but to make you a better vessel to carry holy fire!

C. God called us knowing we were clay — and still anointed us

- Called — and still being formed
- Anointed — and still being healed
- Gifted — and still needing correction
- Used by God — and still being purified of our impurities and sins

God doesn't need a perfect vessel. He needs a surrendered vessel!

POINT IV

The Vessel Is Clay — But the Fire Is Holy

The vessel is human. The vessel has weaknesses. The vessel needs work. **But what God places within the vessel belongs to Him:**

- His holy Word
- His holy calling

- His holy presence
- His holy gifts
- His holy purposes
- And His Holy Spirit — fire!

B. Don't confuse real fire with a perfect vessel

Sometimes we think and say: “The fire is still burning, so everything must be okay with the vessel.” Not necessarily. You can have:

- A gift — and need healing
- A calling — and need correction
- Anointing — and need accountability
- Fire — and still have cracks in the earthen vessel

We still need God!

POINT V · ILLUSTRATION

The Vessel That Survived the Fire

Imagine walking into a potter's shop and seeing two clay vessels. One is still soft clay. The other has been through the heating oven. You ask the potter, “Which one can I fill?” He points to the one that has been through the fire. Why? Because now it can carry what it was made for!

The fire prepared the vessel to hold what the potter wanted to put inside. Sometimes we want God to fill us, but we don't want the fiery process.

- We want the treasure without the testing.
- We want the anointing without the process.
- We want God to pour more into us without preparing us to carry more.

But sometimes God allows the heat because He knows what He intends to place inside the vessel. The fire is not always punishment. Sometimes the fire is preparation. And when we come out, don't boast about how strong the clay became. Remember: “...the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” The fire prepares the vessel — but God provides the treasure.

How is your clay? How are you right now?

POINT VI

What Happens When the Clay Gets Hit

Paul has told us: we are clay. We carry treasure. The power comes from God. Then Paul says:

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8–9 (ESV)

Why does Paul say this immediately after talking about jars of clay? Because now he shows us what happens when pressure hits a fragile vessel carrying the treasure of holy oil — holy fire.

A. "Afflicted in every way — but not crushed"

That's pressure against the vessel. The clay feels it. *Afflicted*... But then comes: "but not crushed!" Why? Because the fire inside the vessel is greater than the fire pressing against the vessel. It's holy fire!

The climax — I am clay, but what I carry is not clay! The vessel is fragile; that's why I can be afflicted. But the treasure is not fragile.

CONCLUSION & ALTAR CALL

You Are Still Clay — And the Fire Is Holy

Maybe you've been broken. Maybe you've been wounded. Maybe you've experienced pressure and fiery trials. Maybe there are still cracks God is repairing. God knew you were clay when He called you — and He wants to perfect your jar of clay!

Altar call — Lord, keep the fire and mold the vessel

- Lord, mold this vessel.
- Heal this vessel.
- Purify this vessel.
- Correct this vessel.
- Repair the cracks in my vessel.

We have this treasure in jars of clay. The vessel is earthen. The treasure is heavenly. The power belongs to God. And the fire is holy!