

Message Five

Christ as the Image of God and the Treasure

RA Hymns: 548, 812, 510

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

- 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.

I. Second Corinthians 4:4-7 shows us that we may experience and enjoy 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 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.
- 2 Cor 4:6 Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- 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.
- 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.
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;
- E. Christ as the image of God is the declaration, the expression, of God; He declares God and expresses God—John 1:18.
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.
- 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.
Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation,
- 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.
Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

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:
John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.

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;

John 16:11 And concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

Eph 2:2 In which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience;

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 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. 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.
2 Cor 3:16 But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
- 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.
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;
- D. The image of God in Colossians 1:15 refers to the expression of God and the fullness of God, that is, Christ Himself.
Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation,
- E. The expression *the image of the invisible God* implies that although God Himself is invisible, His image is visible—v. 15.
Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation,
- 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.
John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

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.
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 4:6 Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- 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.
 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.
- E. The expression *this treasure* in 2 Corinthians 4:7 refers to verse 6, where Paul speaks of the face of Jesus Christ:
 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.
 2 Cor 4:6 Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in 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.
 2 Cor 4:6 Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
 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.
 2 Cor 4:6 Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
 2 Cor 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;
 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.
 2 Cor 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;
- 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:
 Gen 2:7 Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
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.
 Rom 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?
 Rom 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,
 2 Cor 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.
 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.
 Rom 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?

- Rom 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,
 2 Cor 3:16 But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
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.
 1 Cor 2:10 But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.
 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.
 2 Cor 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.
 5. When the Lord fills us, He does everything for us—Eph. 3:19.
 Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
- 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.
 Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
 Gal 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 in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

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.
 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.
- 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 Cor 4:7a But we have this treasure in earthen vessels ...
 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.
 1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
- 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.
 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.
- 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.