

JARS OF CLAY

2 Corinthians 4:1-12

Awareness

Before listening, reflect:

- What do you think is necessary to make the gospel message engaging?
- Do you have an opinion about the effectiveness of preaching?

There's nothing wrong with a musician repeatedly practicing her part or a writer editing his draft, unless, of course, their pursuit for perfection prevents them from ever performing or producing a final draft. The same goes for our witness and evangelism. Pastors should consider their audience, tweak sermons, and be diligent in exercising their preaching gifts. Likewise, we should study scripture, pray, and even rehearse the gospel message so we are ready to bear witness when the Holy Spirit calls on us. But Paul cautions that we should never let perfection, ideals, or imposed expectations prevent us from simply being ourselves so that God and his gospel message shine through us.

Reflection

After listening, consider:

- In segment 1, hosts Dave Bast and Scott Hoezee describe “razzle-dazzle” or “bait-and-switch” preaching and ministry. Have you ever witnessed or experienced this kind of preaching? Describe the situation and reflect on how you felt during and after the experience. Did you ever take the time to figure out what felt uncomfortable or what did not agree with your theology, doctrine, or understanding of the Bible?
- Has the Holy Spirit ever prompted you to talk about faith or pray with someone who wasn't a believer? Did you follow through or shy away, why?
- Do you worry about how eloquent you are or how strong your arguments are when you talk about the gospel message of Jesus? Does this interfere with your ability or willingness to talk about Jesus or your faith?
- In his commentary *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians*, N.T. Wright says that Paul is very concerned that there is no mistaking the servant for the master, pointing to Paul's emphasis on unembellished preaching and on using simple vessels, like jars of clay, as evidence. Similarly, in segment 3, Dave Bast stated, “*Don't put on airs, and let the attention go to the treasure—to the Gospel itself; and that, Paul says, will prove that it is God's power that actually saves. I mean, if you are saved by human eloquence, you can be unsaved by human eloquence.*” How can being aware of your humanity/ordinariness, help prevent your weakness or fears from getting in your way of sharing the gospel? Similarly, how can it help you keep your strengths from leading to pride and distracting from the gospel?

Related Passages

- **Ezekiel 37:1-14**
- **1 Corinthians 1:18-31**
- **Romans 8:1-17**

Conclusion

Spend time in prayer. Confess the times you may have ignored or questioned the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Honestly bring your hesitations before the Lord and lay them at his feet. Pray for increased openness to opportunities to share the gospel, for attentiveness to the movement of the Holy Spirit, and for the confidence in Christ to be ready as his jar of clay.

Finally, pray that both your giftedness and imperfections would fade away and the treasure of his gospel message would shine through you.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/jars-of-clay>

Printed on April 24, 2024