

Hope in Uncertain Times by Nigel Coles Part 11: Treasure

2 Corinthians 4

“⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. ¹²So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.”

The word I want to highlight for you all today is the word ‘treasure’. Like every passage from the Bible I flag up on The Fuelcast, there’s loads more which could be said, but this one thing from this passage is really special.

You have treasure within you. That’s not something you need to question, because it’s not about whether we deserve it or not (I know I don’t), neither is it about a few of us reaching a particular standard. No, this is God choosing to place **his treasure in you**.

Hope is a precious commodity. Hope is genuine treasure.
The treasure Paul refers to here is ‘the gospel’.

That’s a word which as Christians we’ve used for two thousand years and it sums up what it means to accept the truth of Jesus Christ (who he is and what he’s done; not simply for the world in general, but specifically for you) and welcoming him to be your Lord and Saviour. That is, the One who you freely hand over the reins of life to and accept his ability to save you from all those areas where you simply cannot save yourself. It literally means the ‘**good news**’ of Jesus Christ.

When I first placed my life into the hands of Jesus, I had very little idea of what the implications might be. That was over forty years ago, now, but I’ve increasingly become aware of more and more of the implications over the years. I guess if I had to sum up what I’ve learnt over that period, my answer would be two things:

- i. There is a God
- ii. It’s not me

There’ve been times and there will still be moments I’m sure, when I get things out of balance and it’ll be the same for you.

Paul’s description of what’s going on here helps. He says: ‘**we have this treasure in jars of clay to show this all-surpassing power is from god and not from us**’.

Now even if you’ve not been a Christian for very long or perhaps never read the Bible for yourself very much, you heard (or read) me say that the treasure Paul is talking about is the gospel or good

news of all Jesus is and what he's done. Yep ... you're probably ahead of me – this means you and I are the 'jars of clay'.

One day I'd love to learn how to throw a pot. There's just something wonderful to me, about creating clay pots on a potter's wheel.

In Paul's day clay jars were everyday objects to hold all manner of things. The clay would be shaped and moulded and then baked until it was hard. Then they might be decorated or glazed in some way. Some uses were every day and functional, but most interestingly they were often used for things of real value, such as sacred scrolls or valuable documents. They might be hidden away or even buried in the ground for safe-keeping. Whatever their function, however ornate, beautiful, or otherwise they might be, they all had one thing in common: they were **breakable**.

In verse 4 here Paul highlights, it's in people like us: beautiful, functional and breakable, God has placed his treasure, that is: "the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ".

An alabaster jar – it's beautiful, but very fragile and easily broken. It's seen at its best when a light is placed within it, so it shines through.

A treasure contained in a clay jar, something so brittle, fragile, breakable, may be an unsettling image for you at first. But think about it more deeply: people need to believe the Hope of God can be theirs too.

How can they believe that? Most easily when they see it shining out through someone who goes through the same stuff they do:

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; so death is at work in us, but life in you."

In other words, Paul is confessing his experience and the experience of all Christians, all clay jars which contain Christ's Gospel - we will suffer affliction, persecution, even death, but these things will not have the final word over us – Jesus Christ will.

Take good care of it.

Take care of yourself!

To watch the video, go to: <https://www.thefuelcast.com/>

「 T H E 」
F U E L
「 C A S T 」