

EARTHEN VESSELS

1

Object of this sermon is to increase our desire and ability to fulfill God's purpose for us.

God has a desire – He doesn't want anyone to perish.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance

Jesus came here to this earth for that reason.

Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

We know Luke 2:52

Luke 2:52 – And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

But what did he start out with?

What was the first thing we have recorded about Jesus?

What did he tell his mother in the Temple?

Luke 2:49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

If we lay claim to God being our father, then **WE** must also be about our Father's business.

John 8:42 "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me:"

And if we love Jesus, what?

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Is there any urgency to this? Is there any compelling reason?

Do we really have to get up from our couch?

Consider, there are many dread and deadly diseases in the world.

Smallpox - 30% fatality rate

Cholera - 50%

Flesh Eating Bacteria – 30%

Pulmonary Anthrax – 85%

Ebola – 90%

And that's if you catch the disease, many don't.

But what about sin? Who catches it?

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

EARTHEN VESSELS

And untreated, what is the prognosis for sin?

James 1:15 - "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Sin – 100% death, and it's not an easy death either, it's eternal ...

2 Thess 1:8-10 "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁹Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; ¹⁰When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

Sit up! Pay attention! What if you heard:
WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST
THERE IS A WORLDWIDE PLAGUE!
EVERYBODY IS INFECTED. IT IS 100% FATAL.

But God has given us the cure

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

It's 100% effective – but **only** in those who take it.

How is the cure, the Gospel transmitted?
ONLY THROUGH US! THROUGH THE CHURCH!

We have a job to do, a ministry, spreading the Gospel so people may hear and obey.

2 Cor 4:1,7 "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; ... ⁷But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

This treasure will save men.
It has been entrusted to US – earthen vessels, to carry to others.
We don't faint at the load because WE have obtained God's mercy – we are debtors!
We don't carry it as a favor to God. No! we are bound under debt to carry it!
We have been bought!

Acts 20:28 " ... the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

He points out another problem – US!
We are earthly vessels – made from earth.
Clay flowerpots – leak!

We need to carry the Word of God – and not add anything to it, nor take anything away – we can't leak.

To do that, we must rise above our earthiness to Godliness!

John 3:31 “He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all”

We need to learn of heavenly things, that’s why it is so necessary for each and everyone of us to attend our Bible classes

And we need to mind and obey the heavenly things we learn, else

Philippians 3:19 “Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

If we understand this, Our minds must and should be in heaven. If we realize and acknowledge in our being what God has done for us, we will rightly judge – and act

2 Corinthians 5:14,15 “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: ¹⁵And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

We are constrained – held back from doing what we want to do, by the love of Christ – unless we are totally ungrateful reprobates.

God has chosen us as earthly vessels to carry the Gospel to save men. (2 Tim 2:20,21 – purge ourselves – be vessels unto honor)

The Apostles are examples of this.

God takes ordinary men and uses them in the greatest cause of all time.

Not just incidentally,

They are the FOUNDATION of the church!

Yet what were they?

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

But God has a plan for them – and for us!

Ephesians 2:19-21 “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:”

Whose building is it – GODS!

Who made the plans – GOD DID

What does it mean to be the foundation? The thing on which building is built.

What are we? We are the building. What role do we play? We need to be fitly framed together, holding each other up in the work – following the plan, and making the building grow and take shape. Each needs to do his part.

1 Peter 2:5 “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

Sacrifices – what we offer to God. Things we have that we give up for Him.
Spiritual – eternal, what’s more eternal than souls saved by the Gospel (including ours)

We have the mission – preach the gospel to every creature. – **Mark 16:15,16**
We have what’s needed – the gospel. – **Romans 1:16**

We have to be confident and use what we have!

Hebrews 13:5,6 *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. ⁶So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

How do we obtain this boldness, this confidence?

Through use!

Hebrews 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil

Here’s an example. Say you’re visiting someone. You want to help. You offer to bake a cake, but all they have is a Convection oven, not a regular one. It’ll do the job fine, and in a jiffy too – but you’ve never used one.

What’s likely to happen? – You’ll look for something else to do.

Why? Lack of confidence.

But what if you were familiar with it – you’d use it.

Only through use and practice will we obtain the confidence we need to be bold and use what God has given us.

Knowledge -> Confidence -> Action (boldness)

This boldness is what the Apostles **wanted**:

Acts 4:29,31 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, ³⁰By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. ³¹And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

It must be what WE want as well. We have the SAME WORD OF GOD THEY HAD!
We can do the same work and have the same result.

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Remember Peter and John, unlearned, ignorant men.
But what did they have? BOLDNESS!

He tells us both these things ...

We are earthen vessels – but we are enough! That’s what Paul told Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:1-2 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

We are earthen vessels – made of earth, but we are transformed, made stronger by Christ. Just as clay pots can be made stronger by glazing and other work.

And we have to be confident enough in what we have to be able to teach it to others.

And stronger we must be, for we have an enemy, we are in a warfare:

2 Timothy 2:3-4 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

We must lay aside the things of this world we have grown up with, and get on with the Master’s, our Father’s business. Our reward? The Lord will know us as His:

2 Tim 2:20,21 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. ²⁰But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. ²¹If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, *and* prepared unto every good work.

How does God know us? By our works, not by our words.

Do you love Jesus?

You should, He came and died for you – to cure you of sin.

Has any one else done that much for you?

So, do you love him? Then keep his commandments.

Do the work he has set out for us to do.

Be about your Father’s business.

But for God to be your Father, you must be His child, he tells us how to do that:

Galatians 3:26,27 “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Faith in Christ that produces obedience is how we “call on the name of the Lord”.

Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

- Ed Kelleher 1/30/2011 West Columbia church of Christ SC