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2 CORINTHIANS 4:7

2 Corinthians Series

[PRAYER] Lord, we use the words coming into your presence to describe our attitude in our heart. We know we can never be away from your presence, but there's a sense in which we come into your presence with our attitude and with our heart open. So right now, Lord, we come into your presence recognizing that it's a solemn place, recognizing that it's a place where we need you and we need to be touched and there's awesome power awaiting us as we enter into your presence. We do that by worship, we do by fellowshiping with each other, and exchanging stories of your grace. And we do that by looking at your word. So we're going to look at this one verse today and I ask that you would speak to people this week as you've spoken to me this week through this passage. Lord, I pray that you would inspire us today. Help us to be changed people and to go out empowered to live the life you've called us to live. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

We're in a series in 2 Corinthians 4. All of 2 Corinthians is about the power of God, but we're going to zero in on that power today. As we do, I'm going to ask you stand. I just want to read one verse from God's word today. Would you please stand with me in honor of God's word? We're going to read this one verse from 2 Corinthians 4:7, which is our text. So you can look at it in your Bible. In my Bible there's one word that's different than this one, but this version I like the picture that goes along with it because it describes it and illustrates where we're going today in the passage.

So take your Bible or look at the screen as we read 2 Corinthians 4:7. *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*

I really loved having Frankie come up here and talk about the superpowers that his little Pokémon guy has. I was flying back on the airplane from California and they offer movies on the plane. I was surprised at how many of them have to do with superheroes. There's Wonder Woman, and Batman, and Superman, and then Batman against Superman. And you've got all kinds of other ones. I'm not even aware of what they are, but there's all kind of superhero movies out today. Marvel has a lot of different superheroes and they're trying to display them in their movies and entertainment.

I'm not really interested in those kind of movies, but I was when I was a kid. I really liked Batman and my brother and I played Batman and Robin and played around the house with towels around our neck and with our utility belt with string on it and other things that gave us this ability to spy on people and check things out. We kind of liked that a lot.

So I realized in the midst of all of this as I was thinking about it this week, there's something inside of every one of us that loves heroes, that loves the superpower idea. Now maybe you're not into the adventure movies or the action thrillers like the ones that are out today, but still we like the superhero movies or maybe a romance where someone, either the guy or the gal, does something out of the ordinary in order to either woo the other person or just in life it starts to happen in the midst of that. Or a drama movie where there's a hero who goes beyond what's expected to do something that brings about life change in other people.

Heroes. There's something about heroes that's very attractive to us. I was just meditating on that this week as I was looking at this passage we're going to look at today because in the passage it's talking about superpowers. That's really what it's talking about if we look at the verse itself.

Some people make life really look easy, right? You look at some people and go, "Man. They've got it so good. I wish I could be like them. My life is so complicated. I've got so many things going on."

It's like the mom who's got it all together. The dad says to his wife, "Look honey. I can take care of the kids. You go on the women's retreat at the church."

She says, "Are you sure?"

"Yeah. Yeah. You can go. I can take care of it." He's thinking to himself, "If she can do it, I can do it," kind of thing. So she's at the retreat and he sends her this picture and that's the picture of dad saying, "Ah! Help! I need help!"

Why? Because life is complicated. It's not as easy as we often make it out to be. Whether it's parenting or, marriage, or work, or personal lives, or finances, or whatever, life is a challenge. We all need superpowers in order to deal with life, I think. So when we come to this passage of scripture it comes very helpful.

I'm going to take us into the words. Mostly we go verse by verse in our teaching through a passage. Today we're just going to go verse and we're going to word by word because in this passage the words themselves are just so deep. I'm going to share with you some of the Greek words and what they mean. I want to take you into this passage because if you'll meditate on these words, it will change your life.

My goal today is that God would inspire you. You know what inspire means. It means to breathe life into. To breathe in. My goal is that God would inspire you to live beyond the ordinary now in your life. That you'd be able to take what you have and go beyond what you have to do something more with it. Because of the power of God. That's what this passage is all about. Let me take you into some of these words and show you what we're talking about. I'm going to take them one at a time here.

Let's take the word treasure. The Greek word there is the word *thesaureon* where we get our word thesaurus. A thesaurus is a book that every writer uses. Nowadays it's an electronic built into Microsoft Word, or you can google a word and get the meanings. But everyone who is a writer uses a thesaurus. The reason we do that is because we know the idea we want to share, but the right words might be missing. So we have an idea of the word, but we'll get a better word

that will communicate it in a more effective way, a more powerful way. So we look into the storehouse or the treasure of words there and pick out the ones we need for the moment. That's what a thesaurus does. It allows us to choose out of the treasure of words the best ones that we want for our communication.

Now you take that idea and put it into the passage and he's talking about there's a treasure. *This treasure*. The word *this* is referring back to the previous three verses. If you look in your passage you'll see them. He's talking about Jesus Christ being the light. We have this light within us and there's this power that comes with the light. It's this understanding of who Christ is that gives us something, and that is the treasure.

So it's this treasure, this blessing, this storehouse of blessings that we can draw upon when we need something in life. Just like in a thesaurus, we draw upon the word in order to communicate better. When we understand this treasure, we can dig into this storehouse in order to get the pieces we need to deal with life situations. Your book that you're writing is different than the book that I'm writing. But we can all go to the treasure storehouse and grab that treasure and take the pieces out of that that we need.

Treasure is an important word. The word *treasure* is used elsewhere in the scripture. The idea is that treasure can be connected to our heart. In fact when Jesus Christ came to earth He preached a sermon. We call it the Sermon on the Mount. In that sermon He communicates more about the kingdom and what the kingdom is. The message that He wanted the people to understand that it wasn't just about the law and obeying the law and Judaism, but there's this bigger message about the kingdom that Jesus wanted us to understand. So as He's communicating this He wants us to understand the treasure goes with heart.

So as He's sharing these words, He shares it this way in Matthew 6: *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* Why? Because that's where your desires are, that's where your values are. When your values are in the right place, then good things can happen.

So he's trying to reorient the compass of our lives in this passage. Jesus is saying be careful where you're orienting your life. Because if you're finding the treasure, the thesaurus of your life, in earthly things, then you're going to be disappointed. I have a new way of presenting life, Jesus says. You want to be thinking about the kingdom.

In the kingdom we invest differently. If you're just thinking about money, I think you're missing something here. Because yes, it may be talking about things in the first part of the passage here where it's talking about money and things that we have because we invest on those things here on earth. But how do you invest in things when we're talking about heaven? He says *store up for yourself treasures in heaven*. He's not talking about money there. He's talking about the things that we do, the things that we value, the things that are important to us. That's what we're going to invest in. When we invest in those things that God has designed for us, then we're building

this treasure in heaven. How are you going to do that? Well your heart needs to be set on those values and then you're drawing from the treasure.

In our passage in 2 Corinthians 4 there's this idea that there's this treasure we need to be aware of. When we understand this treasure, then it can help us a lot in our daily lives. So we go back to our passage. It says we have this treasure. When we talk about this treasure, the treasure is Christ. But if you're only thinking about Christ as the one born in Bethlehem, the one who was at the temple, the one who died on the cross for us, who rose from the dead, who's coming back again, all of that is great theology. But how does that help me live today? We have to look at Christ as this one who holds all things together. We have to recognize that Christ wants to be intimately involved in my life today. He wants to help me know how to live and what to do because He gives me this all-surpassing power in order to deal with that.

So there's this treasure. Get the treasure first. If you understand that treasure that God has provided through Jesus Christ and you recognize the power that's in a Christ-centered, Christ-following life, then we can go on to the next part. We first have to know the value that we have in the treasure of Jesus Christ. When we have that then we can go on.

So let's take it to the next part of the verse where we talk about this idea of jars of clay. The word used for *jars of clay* is a common jar. He's not talking here about a fancy jar that you put in a palace. There are places in scripture that talk about how valuable we are, that we're created in the image of God, that we all have a spiritual gift, that God picked us out from the beginning, that He died for us, He loves us so much. All those talk about our value. Those are great passages and we need to understand the value that God has for us. But that's not what's taught today. In the passage today we're just clay jars.

That's really important to understand because when you understand you're just a clay jar then there's some humility that comes on us. Because we identify with that, don't we? We're just ordinary people doing ordinary things. But yet God wants to do extraordinary things in our lives. But He takes ordinary people, like you and me to do those extraordinary things. So we have the ordinary, common things.

Some would even call some of the ordinary things junk that needs to be thrown out. You know you're driving by the side of the road and you see junk on the side of the road thrown out and you go, "Wow. A lot of junk." Some people all they see is junk. There are other people who see that junk and they see it as a treasure.

I really admire John and Maria Snee for a lot of different reasons. Well let's focus not on John today. Let's focus on Maria because Maria finds junk and turns it into beautiful things. I asked if you'd bring a couple pieces with you. So today these are things that came from Maria. These are things she made from things that she found on the road.

This headboard she found on the side of the road or someone did. It was found on the side of the road, given to her, and she turns it into something that's in her house that's a beautiful decoration.

This was a chest that was on the side of the road. She turned it into a coffee table. Her whole house is like this.

Somebody gave her a broken window. Most of us throw the broken windows out and they get smashed up by the trash truck. She gets this broken window and she has this in her house. They're all over the place. She loves taking broken windows and turning them into something special.

I think Maria is an example of God. God does the same things with us. He takes common things, things that we sometimes think, "Oh I'm just junk. I can't be used by God. God can't use me. I'm so broken. I'm so common. I've got so many problems. I'm overwhelmed with so many..." And God says, "No. I've got something special planned for you." And He turns the junk of our lives into something beautiful. Wow. I just love that picture.

So Paul's describing that idea here for us when he talks about jars of clay. We're the common jars of clay. We're not the fancy decorations. This gives us a recognition of humility, certainly, but also of compassion. There are a lot of people today who just feel like they're just common, and they are. They need something more. The beautiful thing is we have the something more that we can offer. There are people right around you that are common, ordinary people, but they need something from you; you have it and God has empowered you.

That's what Paul is saying in this passage. He's helping us understand this idea so that we can grasp it and pass it onto others. We have this treasure of Jesus Christ in these jars of clay, this commonness of who we are in order to show that surpassing power.

Now the word *surpassing*, or in my translation it says *all-surpassing*, is the word *hyperbole*. The word *hyperbole* is the Greek word. We get our English word 'hyperbole' from that.

Do you know what hyperbole is? You probably use them all the time. Hyperboles are things that accent our vocabulary to make our conversation interesting. When you say, "I have a ton of homework," the idea is I'm exaggerating. I don't really have a ton of homework. When you say, "I have a ton of homework," you're saying a hyperbole. It's an exaggeration of what's happening in order to make a point. A hyperbole. "I've told you a million times" is another hyperbole. "That joke is so old the last time I heard it I was sitting on a dinosaur." That's a hyperbole. Or the grandpa who's saying to his grandson, "When I was your age, I had to walk to school fifteen miles in the snow uphill both ways." That's a hyperbole. It's an exaggeration. When we add those exaggerations to our speech, it makes them more interesting. It makes them more flowery. It just is better.

Now what he's saying is let's take that idea and take it back into our passage and saying the all-surpassing. The hyperbole means to throw beyond. Hyperbole. To throw beyond. The idea is that it's all-surpassing. It's bigger than you can imagine.

The word *dunamis* is the word where we get dynamite from. That's the word *power*. So it's this all-surpassing power. Don't miss this. It's this all-surpassing power that changes the life of a person.

We like to listen to testimonies of what God has done in people's lives and I'm sure in 2018 we'll hear a lot of them. I love to take testimonies and allow you to hear the testimonies that people share because you get to hear about the power of God in their lives. But God changes people's lives in amazing ways. We have seen marriages come back together that seemed disastrous. We've seen people who are addicted who couldn't overcome that addiction, but by the power of God, they were able to come clean. They stand up and say that it's only by God's grace that I can stand here. Many of you have stories of the struggles that you faced in the past because of the pain that you've experienced in your life.

God's power changes people. This idea that it's God's power you have to realize that because the point being made here is that God has this treasure in jars of clay in order to show that this power comes from where? From God and not from us. Because we tend to say, "Oh I'm so great. God used me to help this person. I prayed for them and they got healed and look at that. I did amazing things." He's saying here the power belongs to God and not to us. I'm just so impressed by this. God's power is at work around us every day. Often what we're doing is just sharing with people connecting points. You can connect to God's power in this way.

Next month I'm going to train another batch of coaches for the National Center for Biblical Parenting. In our coaching program we use biblical truths. We've laid out a systematic way of using biblical truth to help parents work with their children. It's really shockingly amazing what happens in the lives of family. Parents regularly say, "This is a miracle that took place in my home." Now that's not because we at the National Center for Biblical Parenting did something amazing. It's because what we did is we laid out God's principles and said, "Here, let me show you how to apply this one to your life. Now let's take this one and apply it to your life." When these parents start applying these principles to their lives, amazing things happen. The all-surpassing power of God takes place.

So when I start these coaches, I say to them, "Amazing things are going to happen." Some of these coaches come on board – "I don't know if I can do this." I feel like saying, "You can't. But just start working in this and start watching God work." Other coaches just feel really confident. They go in there and amazing things happen, as we expect they will do in the lives of a family, and they start feeling like they did something. But then there's those times that we get into a family that's just so complicated with all kinds of challenges and kids yelling at parents and parents yelling at kids. It's not even the parents that are raising them. It's the grandparents raising them, or they're in a foster home or something, and it's just so complicated what's going on. A coach will call me and say, "I don't know if I can do this." I'll say, "Just take the principles and start allowing God to work. God's power is at work in our world today. Let it happen. Let it work." They'll start working in families and amazing things start to happen in the lives of those children. It's just amazing what God can do in the lives of people who obey His word.

This power is something we need. This all-surpassing power is not just something you need occasionally. I'm telling you, we need it every day in our lives. We need to get through the situations that we're facing right now.

In February we're going to do a Financial Peace University program. I encourage you to get involved in it. You're learning about the biblical principles of finance. It will revolutionize your life. It's a video-led program and Melissa is going to lead it. As she leads that, amazing things will happen in your life. It's not because of Melissa. She's trained, she's got some good ideas about finance, but that's not what's going to change your life. What's going to change your finances is taking the biblical principles and applying them to your life. It's the power of God built into His word that's available to us. We take that treasure and it's this all-surpassing power that God uses to change a person. God use us to change others through us. All-surpassing power. Hyperbole power. Great power of God. The all-surpassing power that belongs to God and not to us.

Dr. Harry A. Ironside says: "In order for a light to shine out of a vessel, it has to be broken." You can think of a clay pot. If it were used to be a lantern, it would have to have holes in it or it would have to be broken. One may know all about the way of life and never communicate light to others because that one has never been broken in the presence of God. There's something beautiful about being broken. If you're feeling today like you're broken, you've got to know this is a great opportunity for God to speak through your life.

I think about the times the brokenness or the idea of being broken is used in the scriptures. When Jesus broke the bread it multiplied greatly and fed five thousand people. Sometimes in your brokenness you'll be able to far exceed your influence on people than you would if you were whole.

The alabaster jar that Mary brought in and broke in the presence of Jesus created this beautiful aroma that spread through the whole room. As you might imagine the beautiful smell. When we're broken and allow God to work through us then there's this beautiful aroma that spreads and just blesses so many people.

Next week we'll celebrate communion. When we do, it says that this body that Christ had was broken for us. In the midst of that brokenness we have the victory in Jesus Christ. I know that some people are broken today with challenges in their lives. The brokenness is an asset because it's an opportunity for the all-surpassing power of God to flow into the jar of clay.

In the Old Testament there's a story about Gideon who had 300 men go and attack this vast army. They had these clay jars. Inside the clay jar was a light, a flame. When at a certain time all of them were around the hillsides and they all broke their jars together and the light shined and it scared the army so bad that they were easily be able to come in with just 300 men and conquer that army. A small group of 300 to conquer this huge army that was there.

I'm telling you, the power of God is like that. When you have the power of God accessed in your life, then you move beyond the ordinary of being the clay jar to being this clay jar that's broken, but empowered by the light of Christ. This all-surpassing power is revealed because of the treasure. Not because of you. So you can go through all the self-help materials that you want, you can watch all kinds of videos about how to be a better person, but what we really need is we need to embrace the power of God in our lives. What that does is it gives us something that other people need.

So I would suggest I need it, you need it, other people need it. I want to ask this question: How are going to give it to them? How are we going to share this message with others?

I'm going to share with you four practical ways because what we like to do here at Calvary Chapel is we're going through the scriptures and asking this question: How can we take Jesus home? So what? So we've got all this stuff. How does it apply to me? How can I use it? I'm going to share with you four ideas that I hope you'll write down or jot down or take a picture of it when we're done here and apply these in your life because if you do then this is how you get this power at work in your life.

Number one: Listen to the Lord. If you listen to the Lord He will speak to you and guide you. See, I don't think we listen to the Lord enough. I think in our prayer time we talk to Him a lot. But if we would just be quiet sometimes and listen to Him, He wants to speak to us. So if you're getting up in the morning, you're saying, "Lord, speak to me." He will do that. He will guide you. He will say, "That person needs a little care. That person needs a little help. That person needs someone to come alongside and do something for them." When you listen to the Lord then the power of God is revealed in you and then you can do something about it. You can share it with someone. You can help that person. You can reach out and do something in someone else's life that's really needed. Listening to the Lord is so important because when you listen, God speaks.

Another thing that you can do is to work where God is working. This was the secret to Jesus' success. We're told in the gospel of John that Jesus says, "I don't do anything by myself. I do what the Father is doing. I work where the Father is working." We can do the same things. When you see someone who's hurting over there and you say, "Wow, God must be doing something in that person's life," and you go over there and help them and encourage them, you're working where the Father is working.

I tend to think that sometimes when we see someone tell us a story about something that's going on in their life, instead of working where the Father is working, we want to work where we're working. "Well that reminds me a story..." and we run off somewhere else instead of caring for the person who has just shared part of their heart with us. Whenever a person shares a part of their heart with you, it's an opportunity to see God at work and to allow God to work through you to affirm what God is doing or to encourage that person. See, I think we can live above the ordinary and move to the extraordinary because of the power of Christ in us. Because we have this power of Christ in us, we see what's going on. We're listening to the Lord. We're working where the Holy Spirit is working or where the Father is working and good things happen.

The third I would suggest is we want to realize that the power of God is at work all around us. We just need to let it happen. We don't have to create it. It's not our job to save people. God saves people. It's our job just to share the message of the gospel with people so that they know it. It's our job to do those things that bless people. Sometimes it means listening to someone. Sometimes it means just letting it go. Those are great words – let it go. It could sure help us a lot if we just let it go. The things that bother us get us all strung out and unhappy and frustrated and so on. If we'd just let it go then we can go forward. The power of God helps you do that.

That power that God has is like a treasure hidden in a jar of clay and we're the jar of clay. It's this superpower that exists in the midst of that that we get to experience. It's there. It's all around us. So you don't have to create it. Just realize it's out there and then as we're interacting with other people then we're able to share it, encourage people, or use it to bless other people.

I would suggest fourthly to care about other people. Have the Father's heart. The Father wants to care for people as a loving, heavenly Father. We want to have that same kind of a heart with people to care about them, to go the extra mile to do things that are helpful.

I like this idea of superheroes, so as I was kind of forming this in my mind, to be a superhero we can do that by listening to God, by taking initiative to work when the opportunity comes, and revealing His power in a way that reveals the Father's heart. But it's not your power, according to 2 Corinthians 4. It's God's power. When we get these ideas going here, it can really do some amazing things inside of us.

God can change us. He can help us to be the person He wants us to be, and He does that through the superpower that's available to every one of us. But we have this treasure (Christ) in jars of clay (that's us) to show, to reveal that surpassing power that comes out of us really comes from God and not from us.

That is a powerful verse of scripture to be followed by some other great verses. The next one is really powerful too and that's what we're going to zero in on next week. Because in the midst of trying to do this, you find yourself discouraged – "I can't do this, I'm overwhelmed." The word 'overwhelmed' is what the next verse is all about. That's what we're going to talk about next week. Because we all get there at times. We all feel stressed.

So next week's sermon is only for those who are stressed out. If you're not stressed out, you don't need to come. But you might want to come just to gather the data and the information because you might get stressed out some time in your life. We're going to learn more about what that looks like as we come to God's word in our verse next week.

I trust that God is speaking to you today. I want to encourage you, don't live the ordinary life. Make a difference. I want to make a difference in this world. You can make a difference. I can make a difference. That difference is often in the ordinary things right around us, where we're touching people here, touching people there. God wants to do amazing things. He uses jars of clay, like you and me, to do amazing things.

Let's stand together.

[PRAYER] So heavenly Father, we ask that you would empower us this week to see more than we currently see. Give us eyes to see that you're at work. Give us eyes to recognize the power that you have. Lord, I pray for the young people that are here. That you'd use these young people in ways that would bless those parents, that they'll bless those students around them. They'll see themselves as assets because of what you're doing in their hearts and you're building that inside of them. I know that there's other people here who are just overwhelmed with their own lives

and they can't really think outside of themselves right now because they've just got so many burdens inside. So I'm asking that you would reveal your power there too in dramatic ways and powerful ways. Show us, Lord, each one, that you are the almighty God, the El Shaddai, all-powerful God. We worship you and thank you for that. In Jesus' name, amen.