

**2 Corinthians**  
**Verses 4:1-12**  
**Jars of Clay**  
**July 17, 2011**

**I. Loosing Heart**

**4:1** Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

Loosing heart is first used in the following passage. An analysis of this first passage can help us understand this verse as well.

**Deut 1:28-30**

**28** Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, "The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there."

**29** Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them.

**30** The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes,

"Loosing heart" appears nine times in the OT and used in one of two ways:

-The believer, trusting in God, should not lose heart.

-The non-believing, not trusting in God, will lose heart.

"Loosing heart" is used five times in the NT. Twice in this chapter admonishing the believer to trust in God. It also appears twice in Hebrews 12 referring to our reaction to God's discipline. While the NIV does not translate it as "loosing heart," it is also used in Luke 18:1 as an introduction and statement of purpose concerning the "Parable of the Persistent Widow."

**II. Going Forward**

**4:2** Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Paul renounces three wrong ways to share the word of God and then shows what he does do in chiasmic form:

**WRONG WAYS**

Secret (or hidden) ways

Use deception

Distort the word of God

**CORRECT WAYS**

Sight of God

Plainly commend ourselves

Manifestation of truth

If you debate non-believers long enough, eventually they will claim that you are distorting the word of God (based on what they see in the passage). The Christian has no need to do distort God's word. He can even learn from the non-believer. If God is in control, there is nothing to fear from our own inadequacies. We can proceed in confidence!

In what ways can a religious person distort the word of God? Why would he do it?

### **III. Veiled to Those Who are Perishing**

**4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.**

**4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

What does this mean?

Why is the non-Christian unable to understand God?

### **IV. Darkness, Outside; Light, Inside**

**4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.**

**4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

**4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.**

The reference in 4:6 is an allusion to Gen. 1:3-4.

How does "jars of clay" describe us?

Paul and we are only jars of clay. Jesus is the light. Therefore, we should preach the light that is inside us. By ourselves without God, we are only "darkness." If we preach ourselves, then we hide the true light.

### **V. The Life of Jesus**

**4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;**

**4:9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.**

**4:10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.**

	<u>IS</u>	<u>IS NOT</u>
1.	Hard pressed	Crushed
2.	Perplexed	Despairing

- 3. Persecuted                      Forsaken
- 4. Struck down                      Destroyed

The “is” column indicates that Paul was under attack. The “is not” column indicates that he has not given up but is fighting on.

Verse 10 can probably be interpreted best by Gal. 2:20:

**Gal 2:20**

**20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

**NIV**

What does Paul call his suffering? Why?

### **VI. The Work of Life and Death**

**4:11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.**

**4:12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.**

What does verse 12 mean to you? It is the conclusion for these 12 verses.

Because of the life of Jesus, we live. Because of Paul's death with Christ and Christ living through him, he is able to proclaim Christ and we (i.e. the Corinthians) obtain new life as a result. The NLT translation is: “So we live in the face of death, but it has resulted in eternal life for you.”

What value does Paul see in his suffering?

### **VII. What does it mean to die with Jesus?**