

every objection that can be produced, will be brought in its worst form to bear against the truth. The servants of God who bear the message must be prepared to remove these objections, with calmness and meekness, by the light of truth. Frequently opposers talk to ministers of God in a provoking manner, to call out something from them of the same nature, that they can make as much of it as possible and declare to others that the teachers of the commandments have a bitter spirit and are harsh, as has been reported. I saw that we must be prepared for objections, and with patience, judgment, and meekness, let them have the weight they deserve, not throw them away or dispose of them by positive assertions, and then bear down upon the objector, and manifest a hard spirit toward him; but give the objections their weight, then bring forth the light and the power of the truth, and let it outweigh and remove the errors. Thus a good impression will be made, and honest opposers will acknowledge that they have been deceived and that the commandment keepers are not what they have been represented to be." *Early Writings*, 102.1.

In the example of preaching the gospel we see very clearly that the earthen vessel may be simple, imperfect, and weak, and yet it still reveals an inward purity.

Practical Consequences

What practical consequences arise for gospel order from this principle of placing the treasure in an earthen vessel?

The Jews rejected the Son of God because He came in a vessel that they did not expect—they wanted a vessel that would be more acceptable to them. Because Christ did not meet their expectations they rejected the Treasure and the vessel. We should learn from their experience that it is not our task to choose the vessel, but God's alone. No one can influence God's choice. When some of the Pharisees tried to do this very thing Jesus said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out." *Luke* 19:40. In other words, If you are bothered about praise coming from such simple vessels as these children, then how surprised you would be if it should come from mere stones. I can choose whatever messengers I wish.

The Lord does not choose what we would normally choose. "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are de-

spised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are." *1 Corinthians* 1:26–28. "For My strength is made perfect in weakness." *2 Corinthians* 12:9.

The Treasure in the Field

No matter which vessel the Lord chooses, we must accept it for the sake of the treasure within. Jesus explained this principle in a parable.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." *Matthew* 13:44.

During earlier times when there was no banking system, people often secured their treasure by burying it. If no one else knew of the hiding place, when the owner of the valuables died the treasure remained hidden until someone discovered it. A man who had rented a field found just such a treasure as he was plowing the earth. His friends must have thought him crazy when he sold everything he had to buy the field, without giving any explanation. But the man knew what he was doing. He bought the field because of the treasure it contained.¹

Similarly, we too should accept the vessel with all our hearts for the sake of the treasure, and this means that we must surrender our own opinions and concepts. Whoever accepts the vessel in this way also accepts the treasure. Whoever rejects the vessel also rejects the treasure hidden within it. Whoever accepts the messenger accepts him for Christ's sake, and whoever rejects him rejects Christ.

"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward." *Matthew* 10:40–42.

"If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ." *Testimonies to Ministers*, 97.1.

"We look upon the Jews as inexcusable because they rejected and crucified Christ. But today the messages that the Lord sends are often received in a manner similar to the way in which the Jews received Christ's message. If the instruction of the Lord does not harmonize with the opinions of men, anger takes control of reason, and men play

¹ See *Christ's Object Lessons*, chapter 8: "Hidden Treasure."