

Sermon

2 Corinthians 4:5-12

‘Treasure in jars of clay’



‘Treasure in jars of clay’

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)

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



‘Treasure in jars of clay’

“On councils and churches” (1539)

Now when the devil saw God building his holy Church, he took no holiday but built his chapel next door, larger than God's church. ... Oh, he is equipped far more than God with sacraments, prophets, apostles, evangelists; and his chapels are far larger than God's church; and he has far more people devoted to his holiness than God has. ...



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“On councils and churches” (1539)

... Moreover, people believe more easily and more gladly in his promises, in his sacraments, in his prophets, than in Christ’s. He is the great god of the world. Christ calls him “prince of the world” (John 12:31), and Paul speaks of him as “god of this age” (2 Cor 4:4).

What Luther says (p. 465)



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2 Corinthians 4:5-12 (NIV)

5 For what we preach is **not ourselves**, but **Jesus Christ as Lord**, and ourselves as your **servants** for Jesus’ sake.

doulos: servant, slave, minister



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2 Corinthians 4:5-12 (NIV)

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 God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.

6 The Scriptures say, “God commanded light to shine in the dark.” Now God is shining in our hearts to let you know that his glory is seen in Jesus Christ.

(CEV)



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2 Corinthians 4:5-12 (NIV)

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



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2 Corinthians 4:5-12 (NIV)

What do you think Paul means when he says, “we have this treasure in jars of clay”?

Discuss with someone sitting nearby ...



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“God shames the proud devil” (Luther)

God places a poor vessel into the midst of enemies. It would be an easy task for the devil to ruin an entire country in a moment. This is why he is angry when God undertakes this matter in a way that is so foolhardy and opposes him with a poor vessel. ... If I were a strong man, I, too, would be angry if someone wanted to make a fool of me with a wisp of straw. ...



'Treasure in jars of clay'

"God shames the proud devil" (Luther)

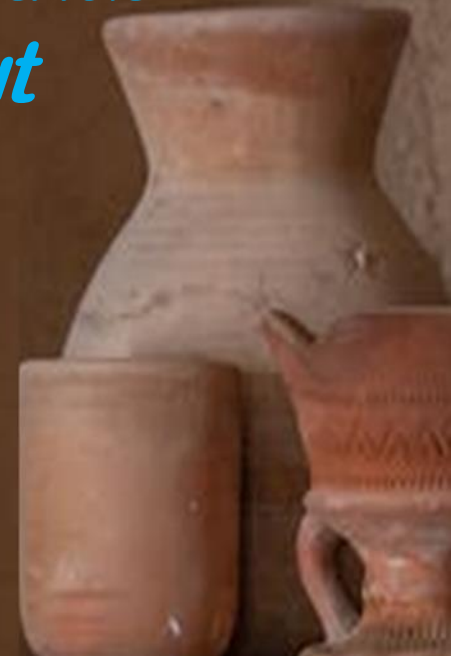
... If a great spirit were his opponent, he would not be so angry. But it irritates him greatly that a poor carcass, a paltry vessel, should sit there and bid him defiance. A weak vessel pitted against so powerful a prince! God has laid His treasure (says Paul) into a poor, weak vessel (2 Cor 4:7). For man is ... handicapped by other frailties whereby the devil can shatter the vessel before long. ...



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“God shames the proud devil” (Luther)

... For if God had permitted it, he would very soon have broken the entire vessel. With false doctrine he breaks many vessels. Now all this happens, says Paul, that we may know that matters do not depend on our might but upon the might of God. ...



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“God shames the proud devil” (Luther)

... So God bids the devil defiance and says to him: You mighty spirit, I shall place a poor, weak vessel before you; I challenge you to attack him. – This annoys the devil immeasurably; hence he goes about as a roaring lion and would love to break and shatter the weak pots and vessels.

What Luther says (pp. 400-401)



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Romans 8:31-39 (NIV)

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered
as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are
more than conquerors through him
who loved us.



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2 Corinthians 4:5-12 (NIV)

8 We are

hard pressed on every side, but not crushed;

perplexed, but not in despair;

9 persecuted, but not abandoned;

struck down, but not destroyed.

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.



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2 Corinthians 4:5-12 (NIV)

11 For 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.**

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



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