

The best place on earth to find treasure

2 Corinthians 4:5-7

“For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

Paul likens us to ordinary clay pots that contain a glorious treasure. Terracotta pottery is not strong - it chips and cracks and breaks easily. And like it, we are knocked by the arbitrary blows of life and are damaged by sin, and buffeted and beaten by our own weaknesses and sickness.

We can get a bit down in the mouth sometimes about the consequences of being creatures of the earth. Given a choice, we would choose to be robust and masters of our own lives. However, back in Genesis, God pronounces his fragile earth-based creation good. To the Corinthians Paul explains that, though we're just like work-a-day items with a limited life span, we are nevertheless, to use one of the politicians' phrases, “fit for purpose”. As the Living Bible puts it: **“this precious treasure - this light and power that now shine within us - is held in a perishable container, that is, in our weak bodies. Everyone can see that the glorious power within must be from God and is not our own.”**

We have a friend who has terminal cancer; his is truly a weakened body. Recently he was offered a bed in a hospice for a couple of weeks' respite. Walking is difficult for him, but when we went to see him, we found him in the corridor coming back from a walk in the garden with a nurse and chatting with two other nurses. They were all smiling. He always makes it his business to bring cheer to others, and everyone in the hospice knew him. When he was asked about how he was, he would reply that his faith sustained him, and everyone knew this too.

Like a clay lamp holder illuminating a room, he proclaimed the power of the Light of the world to strengthen him. To the resident chaplain, who nowadays ministers mainly to unbelievers, he explained that he was already dead and alive as well, his life hidden with Christ in God. The chaplain would have cheerfully cloned him!