

2 Corinthians 4:1 - 18 (NASB)

¹Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,

²but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

⁴in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

- *The gospel is open and revealed to everyone except those who refuse to believe. Satan is "the god of this age." His work is to deceive, and he has blinded those who don't believe in Christ (see 2 Cor. 11:14-15).*
- *The allure of money, power, and pleasure blinds people to the light of Christ's gospel. Those who reject Christ and prefer their own pursuits have unknowingly made Satan their god.*

⁵For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. ⁷But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

- *People keep treasures in safety deposit boxes and vaults. But God places his glorious treasure—the message that frees people from sin—in fragile, cheap, and ordinary clay jars. In Paul's day, clay pots had many uses. Made cheaply, these pots held everything from food to fuel. They could be seen just about everywhere—in window openings, near cooking fires, and in marketplaces. If they broke—and they broke easily—they would be discarded.*

Jars of Clay

- *Fragile earthenware jars were common in Paul's day. Thus, they provided an apt metaphor for illustrating the fragility of human messengers in contrast to the valuable treasure of the message of salvation.*
- *The light of the gospel is the treasure that even Satan cannot take away. Clay pots leak, they chip, and they aren't very attractive. By design they are simply functional. Their plain appearance doesn't detract from their contents. Often, we are discouraged by our imperfections. Feeling inadequate, we feel ineffective.*
- *This verse teaches, however, that our imperfect humanity is no hindrance to God's holy purpose. A person's flaws, scars, chips, and cracks allow the presence of an all-sufficient God to leak out.*

⁸we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;

⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

¹⁰always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

¹¹For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

¹²So death works in us, but life in you.

Paul triumphed not by escaping adversity but by successfully enduring it.

1. He was **afflicted in every way, but not crushed**. **Afflicted** is from the verb *thlibo* and refers to being under pressure. Paul was under constant physical and spiritual pressure—so much so that he wrote earlier in this epistle, “We were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves” (2 Cor. 1:8-9). But despite that pressure, Paul was **not crushed**. **Crushed** is from the verb *stenochoreo*, which refers to being confined to a narrow, tight place. The pressure he faced could not keep Paul’s ministry bottled up.
2. Paul was **perplexed, but not despairing**. The Greek text contains a play on words; the participles translated **perplexed** and **despairing** are from the verbs *aporeo* and *exaporeo*, respectively. Paul was at a loss but not at a total loss. He was at his wit’s end, but there was still a way out; he was at the brink of defeat but not defeated.
3. Paul was **persecuted, but not forsaken**. **Persecuted** is from *dioko*, which means “to pursue,” or “to hunt.” Paul’s many enemies stalked him day in and day out (cf. Acts 9:23-24, 28-29; 14:5-6, 19; 20:3; 23:12). But despite that, Paul was **not forsaken**, deserted, or abandoned. The Lord never left him to face an impossible difficulty on his own.
4. Finally, Paul was **struck down, but not destroyed**. **Struck down** is from *kataballo* and means “to strike down,” as with a weapon, or “to throw down,” as in a wrestling match. **Destroyed** is from *apollumi*, which could also be translated “ruined,” “lost,” or even “killed.” In modern boxing terms, Paul may have been knocked down, but he was not knocked out.

MONDAY MORNING MOMENT: ACTION STEP - “The important thing about a vessel is that it be clean, empty, and available for service. “

Each of us must seek to become “a vessel unto honor, sanctified [set apart], and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:21).