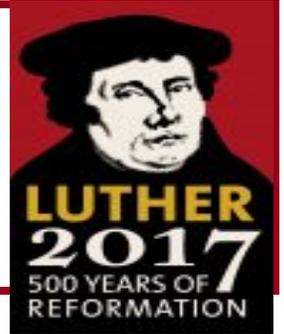


Jars of Clay

1 Peter 5:5b-11 2 Corinthians 4:1-10 Matthew 5:1-10

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Martin Luther died on **February 18, 1546 in Eisleben, Germany** when he was 62 years old. It appears he died of heart issues. His last series of words were all confessions of faith in Christ. He was surrounded by his sons and some colleagues when he died about 3:00am.

One interesting thing about his death is that he died in the **same city** he was born and baptized in 62 years before. *It's as if his life came full circle when he died in Eisleben.*

A second interesting thing about his death is what they found in his pockets. There was a piece of paper in Luther's pocket, probably notes for an upcoming sermon. Most of it was written in Latin except one phrase written in German. The German phrase was:

WE ARE BEGGARS: THIS IS TRUE.

We are beggars: this is true. It is a confession of humility before God -- that all we have and all we are is a gift from His good, gracious, and generous hands. It echoes what Jesus said: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Matthew 5:3

WE ARE BEGGARS: THIS IS TRUE... they are words of humility.

HUMILITY before the Lord means that you hear and believe what God's Word teaches --- especially when it tells us that we are poor sinful creatures who need Jesus as our Savior. **Humility** believes that sin has corrupted us so much that we are separated from God and we will die in our sin. **Humility** also trusts God's Word that He sent His Son Jesus to be our Savior. Through His death and resurrection, we have been redeemed and brought into God's family. Our sins are forgiven, we are given eternal life, and we find our value in God. **Humility** renounces and rejects sinful pride.

***We are all poor, sinful beggars before God, this is true.
God is gracious, good and kind to each of us in Christ, this is also true!***

St. Paul teaches about humility using a picturesque image to help us understand it better: he says that we are like “*jars of clay*”.

We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7

The “**JARS OF CLAY**” are us and our bodies. This image highlights our weakness and emphasizes God’s power. In the book of **2 Corinthians**, Paul uses this metaphor of “*jars of clay*” in two ways.

The first is that God works through us weak “jars of clay” to proclaim His powerful Gospel and bring salvation to others.

The treasure that has been placed with us – *jars of clay* -- is the Good News about Jesus. We have heard, learned, and believed ourselves that Jesus is the Savior of the world. His death and resurrection has led us to repentance and the forgiveness of sins. The Gospel is the most valuable thing in the world: it is the priceless treasure of eternal salvation. God has opened our hearts so that we know and believe the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.



God has given the **treasure** of the eternal Gospel to people to proclaim...including you and me. Even though people are weak, frail, and vulnerable --- like “*jars of clay*” --- yet God has chosen and given us the most important thing in all the world to proclaim: the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

- † He gave it to **Paul** – God made him an apostle on the road to Damascus, and sent him to preach the Gospel and plant churches; even though he was a *jar of clay*
- † He has given it to **pastors and teaches** ever since, and that is how we have grown in faith throughout our lives as faithful pastors and teachers have used the Word and the Sacraments to teach us the Gospel; even though they are *jars of clay*
- † He has given it to **you personally**, so that you can be a witness to your family and neighbors of the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord; even though you are a *jar of clay*

We have the treasure of the eternal Gospel in our “jar of clay” --- to show that anything good that God works comes from Him and His power, not from us, our sinfulness, and our weakness!

**We have this treasure in jars of clay,
to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.**

The first thing that we learn is that we are witnesses to Christ: He has given us the most important thing in the world: the words of eternal salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ --- even though we are weak and frail “**jars of clay**”.

**That is humbling to consider!
WE ARE BEGGARS: THIS IS TRUE.**

A second way that St. Paul uses the “**jar of clay**” image is when troubles and hardships enter our life.

The troubles and hardships --- *whatever they may be* --- **the pain, the problems, the stress** -- they all come because we are “**jars of clay**”. We are weak, frail, and vulnerable --- like a “**jar of clay**”.

But yet, **God’s surpassing power is at work within you** so that you are not crushed nor destroyed by your pain, problems, or stress. God sustains you and helps you!

But we have this treasure in JARS OF CLAY, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-9

God’s surpassing power is at work in your life when you feel “hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, or struck down”. God comes to your side and helps you. He comforts you and delivers you. He promises to be with you and make everything work for your good. **He uses His mighty power to sustain you and strengthen you so that you are NOT shattered to pieces like a broken clay pot!**

**God’s mighty and surpassing power is at work when
problems, pain and hardships enter your life!**

Because God's power is at work in your life, you do not lose heart, you do not abandon your faith, you do not become bitter with God, and you are not overcome with despair and depression. **He uses His mighty power to sustain you and strengthen you so that you are NOT shattered to pieces like a broken clay pot!**

God's mighty and surpassing power is at work when problems, pain and hardships enter your life!

Here are some ways that the Bible reflects on this:

We do not lose heart, though outwardly we are wasting away. 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16
Jesus said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
2 CORINTHIANS 12:9
"When I am weak, then I am strong." 2 CORINTHIANS 12:10
I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. PHILIPPIANS 4:13

All of these verses get to the same thing: **God's mighty and surpassing power is at work when problems, pain and hardships enter your life!** God's power and presence is at work within you --- especially when you feel like a "*jar of clay*". You will not be dashed to pieces like a clay pot; you will not crumble and fall apart --- **God's power and presence is at work within you so that you can glorify Him as you trust His word and promises.** His strength enables you to patiently endure any suffering, pain or stress.

A second thing we learn is that

God's mighty and surpassing power is at work when problems, pain and hardships enter your life!

We are **JARS OF CLAY!** This is true!

This is a **humbling** way to look at yourself. But that is how God teaches us to think about ourselves. When you are a "**jar of clay**", then the focus is no longer on you and your weakness --- the focus is on God, and His Son Jesus Christ -- Whose surpassing power is at work within you to **bear witness to the Gospel;** and to **patiently endure all hardships and trials.** AMEN!