

2 Corinthians 4:2-15 (NIV)

² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

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

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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.

¹³ It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of^[c] faith, we also believe and therefore speak,

¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself.

¹⁵ All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends! I greet you this morning in the name of Jesus. Now I don't know what you came to do, but I have come to praise the Lord. I want to praise Him for His goodness and mercy to me. I want to praise Him for watching over my comings and my goings. I want to praise Him cause praise is just what I do. If you want to praise Him this morning for what He has been in your life then go right ahead. Let every thing that has breathe praise the Lord.

On first Sunday I woke at about 2 am and knew I was too ill to walk across the driveway to preach. So I texted and call Melvina and she said yes and from all I have heard she did a masterful job of **leading worship, preaching the Word and presiding over the Communion Table**. On Monday I was able to cross the driveway and teach VBS to the young men of our church and their friends. Then on last Sunday I praised the young men but I was remiss in praising and thanking Melvina. Melvina, thank you very much and please forgive the failure to publicly thank you last week.

We return this morning to Paul's 2nd letter to the church at Corinth. As we noted last week Paul writes this letter with a two-fold purpose. First as a testimony to the life He is leading because God called Him and secondly to defend himself against the complaints of the congregation.

I want to be sure that we are all starting from a similar point so bear with me as I read this again from The Message

7-12 If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us.

As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at. We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken. What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he

does in us—he lives! Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus' sake, which makes Jesus' life all the more evident in us. While we're going through the worst, you're getting in on the best!

It would be very easy to declare that this portion of Paul's letter targeted the leaders in the church and perhaps other ministers that had served in Paul's absence and we would be partially correct. The message is for leaders but it is also for everyone who declares they are a child of the living God. The passage of scripture that we call The Great Commission teaches and reminds us that we have a responsibility as a disciple of Christ.

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus told us to go make disciples, baptize them and teach them. One way to look at what Paul says is to see it as clarifying how we are to take this message. We are to carry this message "in jars of clay" "in earthen vessels" "unadorned clay pots" What Paul is describing is our lives:

***' Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.
Genesis 2:7***

If you are in this place at this time I trust that it means you are trying to be a vessel carrying the message. So my question for the morning is quite simple:

ARE YOU A VESSEL GOD CAN USE?

SHALL WE PRAY! Father God, we need you this morning. Some of us are tired, some of us have some issues, and some of us just need a Word to keep us going. Please Lord, I ask that you allow us to enter into your presence in order that we might hear the Word, we need. Abba, I thank you for calling me to preach your Word, now I ask that you place the words on my tongue so I may speak as you would have me to speak. In the name of your Son Jesus the Christ we pray. AMEN and AMEN

ARE YOU A VESSEL GOD CAN USE?

There are three definitions for vessel in the English dictionary. The first says a vessel is a boat or a ship; the second says a vessel is a hollow container used to carry something and the third says a vessel is a duct or canal within our bodies to carry blood and other substances. As vastly different as these definitions are they also hold one thing in common, they are used to carry something.

If you research vessel in the Holy Bible you find another definition and distinction. There were silver and gold vessels for special occasions and clay or earthen wear vessels for everyday use. Each vessel had a special purpose and you did not use them for a purpose other than the one they were designed for.

The same is true today. We have vessels in the kitchen – dishes, pots and pans, glasses and cups – each with a purpose. We have vessels in the garage – paint cans, gas containers, and planters – each with their own purpose. We even have vessels in our cars – cup holders, glove compartments, and hidden storage compartments - different vessels, each with a distinct purpose.

But Paul is not talking pots and pans; paint cans or glove compartments. Paul is talking about the vessel that is our earthly form. These bodies were made with a purpose. Our original purpose was:

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Under the Mosaic Covenant the purpose of our vessel was to be in relationship with God. God said: "you will be my people and I will be your God". But the new covenant provided us with another purpose we are to carry the Word of God to all the nations.

It is at this point that we need to examine, what kind of vessel we are. I could compare us to vessels used in the kitchen, to vessel used in the garage or to vessels used in the car. However I might use that illustration

someone would be able to say – but Pastor Carol – that is a useful vessel – it has a purpose. So instead I want to talk about three other types of vessel, vessels that are often found in the church.

Let's call the first vessel – **THE SUNDAY VESSEL.**

comes to church

sets in a pew

maybe even serves in a leadership capacity

but the vessel has not changed since last Sunday, or the Sunday before or even the year before because a Sunday vessel is only used on Sunday. A Sunday vessel cannot teach the Word, because it does not study the Word. A Sunday vessel cannot baptize anyone because it does not witness to anyone. A Sunday vessel cannot make a disciple with their witness, because a Sunday vessel is often empty after Sunday. A Sunday vessel is much like an empty cup on a shelf. It is turned upside down and behind a closed door so nothing can get in and nothing can get out. God cannot use a Sunday Vessel.

The second vessel is – **TOMORROW VESSEL.**

Like the Sunday vessel they are in church, often serving in leadership positions and even showing up for Sunday School and Bible Study. But the TOMORROW VESSEL is always going to do what needs to be done tomorrow. They lead lives that are not pleasing to God, they say and do things that advance their individual kingdoms and not the kingdom of God, they declare one thing with their mouths and do another thing with their bodies. You can recognize a TOMORROW VESSEL by their excuses:

but,

maybe next time,

just not ready to take that on right now,

when I finish school,

when I get the kids out of the house,
when I retire.

God cannot use a TOMORROW VESSEL. They are like lukewarm water in a teakettle – too cool to make a good cup of tea, can't warm up the dishwasher and too warm to be pour on the houseplants.

¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. (Revelation 3)

Then there is the vessel I would like to call **THE EVERYDAY VESSEL**. **THE EVERYDAY VESSEL** is neither an empty teacup nor a lukewarm teakettle but an everyday vessel is made of clay and waiting to be mold and shaped by God. An everyday vessel does not look like all the other everyday vessels – some are very plain – some are glazed – some have multi colors – some have cracks that have been filled –some have smooth spots from much wear – some have flaws seen only by God the potter. But they are everyday vessels.

Everyday vessels are

feeding the hungry – clothing the naked
visiting the sick and shut in – visiting those in prison
speaking and doing random acts of kindness

Everyday vessels are

letting the light of Jesus shines in them
teaching and preaching until something happens
singing:

after I have done all I can I just stand
if I never had a problem I wont know God could solve them
I promised Him that I would serve Him till I die

I don't know about you but I am glad to be an everyday vessel for me Lord.
Because I strive to be an everyday vessel I can declare with Paul

I have been hard pressed on every side, but not crushed;
I have been perplexed, but not in despair; I have been persecuted, but not
abandoned; I have been struck down, but not destroyed.

ARE YOU A VESSEL GOD CAN USE?