

## Introduction

- We've had the "Wow" of the gospel
  - now Paul is continuing to work through what ministering that gospel looks like on the ground
- The thread that has come to the fore for me this week has been the sense of guarding against wrong, unbalanced methods or mindsets
  - righting a boat imagery...

## Superhero or "It ought to be..." Christianity?

- Gospel is the answer to everything, and therefore everything **will** be good...
- Prosperity gospel, healing always happens claims, revival in **our** time...
- Guard against manipulation etc
  - *we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. (v.2)*
- Guard against preaching ourselves
  - *For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (v.5)*

## Woe is me Christianity?

- In the other direction there can be a **woe is me** gospel:
  - perhaps expressed in terms of spiritual warfare, and the power of Satan to attack and disrupt plans is emphasised...
  - perhaps in terms of a remnant, a faithful few who cling on to the gospel in a little holy huddle against the on-rushing tides of the World

## Realistic Christianity!

- *Jars of clay!*
  - treasure...
  - ...in weak, breakable containers
- Such an expression of Christianity is able to act with honesty, not needing to "polish up" the truth to make it more acceptable:
  - because it is about the Lord within us, not about how shiny we appear
  - Such an expression of Christianity is able to cope with suffering and trouble, not despairing, because we are weak vessels, subject to the cracks and chips this broken world can inflict
- v.13 refers to Psalm 116:10
  - a Psalm of crying to God in time of distress, even in face of death
  - (citation in the Bible works by "**bringing in**" the whole thought of the passage quoted...)
  - Psalmist has placed his trust in God, therefore he brings his trouble to God - he **speaks to God** out of his **trust in God**

## Conclusion

- Reflection:
  - what kind of faith do I tend to express, at home or at work or at school or wherever...?
  - do I tend to try and put on the mask of "all is well"?
  - do I tend to slide towards despair?
  - **or am I learning the art of bearing treasure in jars of clay?**