“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair.”

What image comes to mind when you think of jars of clay? Maybe something goopy? Maybe some cheesy pottery gift for your mom? Or maybe that day you got to play with Play-Doh in your kindergarten classroom? In the ancient world, “jars of clay” was a known metaphor for weakness. Often, weakness is perceived to be bad. The reality is we are all weak. In a greater sense, to be a Christian means to be weak; it means to be like Christ. And as the stress and weight of work, tests, and the multitude of assignments pile, there will be times that weakness will seem to prevail over all that you do. Undoubtedly, there may be times in life and even on this day when you will be tested and tried. But, the Christian faith does not leave us hopeless—does not leave us “driven to despair.” In fact, the Christian faith gives us comfort in our weakness and suffering. For in our sufferings, we are being transformed and shaped like clay to be more like Jesus. It is the gospel that gives us hope that “the surpassing power belongs to God” and that at the cross and through the resurrection God has dealt justly with sin and is working on our behalf. So, when you struggle, feel weak and worthless, turn once more to the gospel and cling to the hope found in Jesus and suffer well.

Life Question: When you are feeling weak, what things do you cling to other than Jesus? As you reflect, pray this prayer that God might make and shape you in your weakness to be more like his son Jesus.

Prayer: Father, You are great and mighty, sovereign and in control of all things including my sufferings and weaknesses. So I ask that you teach, form, and shape this clay heart to wrap itself, like a blanket, in your grace, that I might continue to feel the warmth of your loving embrace. Cut and score me from my imperfections, and make me more like your son Jesus, that all such things might bring you a greater glory and honor. All this I pray in the name of your son, through whom I am redeemed and my soul has been purchased. Amen.

Nick Chase, Class of 2016