

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY
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Reading Lesson: Jeremiah Chapter 18:1-6

Objective: To show the strength of the Potter and the weakness of the Clay

Definition of a potter: one that forms the clay into a vessel

- I. God as the Potter
 - a. When I speak of God as the potter, I am referring to the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit). Genesis 1:26 "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...". Just as the trinity was there to create man, each part plays a role in framing man today.
 - b. God has many attributes
 - i. He is omnipotent (all -powerful).

Isaiah 64:8 "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." We (the clay) have no power within ourselves without the hand of the potter upon us. Genesis 2:7 "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."
 - ii. He is omniscient (all-knowing).
 - iii. He is omnipresent (present in all places at all times).
 - iv. He is patient.
 - v. He is protecting.
 - vi. He is nurturing.
- II. Jeremiah goes to the Potter's house
 - a. He saw the Potter working the wheel.
 - b. He saw a marred vessel in the hand of the Potter.

- i. Just as the first vessel of clay was marred, we are also marred by sin from our birth.

Psalm 51:5 "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Romans 3:10 "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."

Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

- c. The Potter made it again as seemed good to the potter to make it.
 - i. God did not discard the human race as marred vessels but provided a way that we might once again have fellowship with him and be used in His service.

Romans 5:19 "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Romans 8:3 "For what the law could not do, in that is was weak, through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

III. The Process of the Potter

- a. The Potter chooses the clay
 - i. We are the clay (formless, raw material)
 - ii. God chooses us.
- b. The Potter pounds the clay. This is not a pleasant process, but without this crushing experience, the clay will never be submissive to the hands of the Potter.

- i. This represents a person under conviction.

Psalm 40: 1-2 "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings."

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Psalm 34:18 "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

- ii. After the clay is pounded, it doesn't appear to be the same as before. Just as after we are saved, we become new creatures. The Potter makes something out of nothing.

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

- c. The Potter creates a vessel (a vessel of honor)

- i. After the clay has been crushed and broken the purification process begins. This is a slow process but crucial for the making of an honorable vessel. This process is necessary to remove the impurities found in the clay. The Potter will continue to frame us and shape us each day of our lives. This is an ongoing work because this flesh will never be cleansed from all impurities. Our children sing a song that best describes the purifying process, "He's still working on me. To make me what I want to be. It took Him just a week to make the moon and the stars, the sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars. How loving and patient He must be. He's still working on me."

I John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- ii. Jesus saves the lost sinner completely by His grace and then begins the process of molding the sinner into a vessel of honor.

II Timothy 2: 21 "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

- iii. A saved individual is the work of the Father's hand; our lives should reflect the work that God has wrought in our soul.

Isaiah 64:8 "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter, and we all are the work of thy hand."

Romans 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

I Corinthians 3: 16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

-Are we living our lives so others know that the Spirit of God dwells within? Are we allowing God to mold our lives or are we allowing the world to mold our lives? (Exp. Alcohol, drugs, sexual lusts, gossip, etc.) How does participation in these sins shape our lives? When God saves us he picks us up out of the garbage (or sin) of this world and plants our feet upon a solid rock. Then after a little while of running our race, we take our eyes off of God and we begin chasing the garbage truck. Sooner or later, some garbage from the truck will find itself on us, thus we become vessels of dishonor. We don't intentionally desire to sin. We are sinners by nature. The key is to keep our eyes on the Father and our hearts in submission to Him. If you want to be in the hand of God, you have to let Him be God in your life and you have to be the clay. Surrender yourself to the Lord. A problem we have today in our churches is that man rejects the hand of God and places themselves in the hands of men.

iv. Vessels of honor will produce fruit.

2 Peter 1: 4-8 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of your Lord Jesus Christ."

v. The Church should surely be a people not conformed to the world but set apart for the service of the Lord.

II Timothy 2:19-22 “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

d. The Potter ages the clay

- i. After the clay has been purified and molded, it must have time to dry and mature. As clay in the Master’s hands, we often resent this process. We show our impatience by desiring to immediately become a beautiful vessel. The potter knows the difference between a mediocre vessel and one of great worth. Maturing takes time.

Peter reminds us that we are to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18), and we have to remember that growing takes time.

Abraham was 75 years old when God first told him that He would make him the father of many nations. Yet Abraham and Sarah had to wait 25 years more before they had Isaac, their promised son.

Look at the example of Moses. Before he was raised up to lead a nation of three million people from a land of slavery, he was brought down to become a Shepard for forty years.

Look at ourselves as preachers: After the apostle Paul was saved and called to preach, God needed to mold him and shape him. Paul went to Arabia for three years. I believe that is why in I Timothy 3:6 God states that a bishop/pastor should not be a novice. There needs to be time to learn. A preacher needs to have experiences with the Lord.

e. The Potter fires the vessel

- i. When the shaping of the vessel is completed, it is ready for the ultimate test—the firing of the vessel. Any pot that doesn’t go through the “fire” is too soft to be of any value. It is in the fire that

the clay actually hardens into a rocklike vessel. God, the Master Potter, uses the fire to mature, strengthen and change us.

James 1: 2-4 "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

2 Corinthians 4:17 "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

I Corinthians 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

We fear the fire because fire produces heat and pain. We know that fire has the potential to destroy us, but in the hands of a sovereign God, fire produces vessels of endurance and extreme value.

Isaiah 43: 1-3 "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Isreal, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." God not only promises to be with us in the fire, but He assures us that the fire will not consume us. He knows when the fire has done its job and He knows the right time to pull us to the safety of His embrace.

f. The end result is the Glorified Vessel

- i. It is but a short time until this earthly vessel will be destroyed and we will have a glorified body.

Hebrews 12: 1-2 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before

us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith..."

Philippians 3:21 "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself"

I Corinthians 15: 42-44 "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body..."

- ii. The glory that awaits the saved will be worth any suffering they may have endured in this life.

Romans 8:18 "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

II Corinthians 4:17 "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

But until then our desire should be "Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way! Thou are the Potter, I am the Clay, mold me and make me after thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still.