

Lessons from the Potter's House

Jer 18:1-10

Introduction:

1. Jeremiah has been called "the weeping prophet" with good reason.
 - a. He loved God, loved his people, faithfully proclaimed God's Word
 - b. Many to whom he preached refused to hear the Word of the Lord.
 - c. Those he loved, whose salvation he sought, considered him an enemy
 - d. Actually, their rebellion was not against Jeremiah, but against the Lord
2. In chapt 17, the faithful prophet faithfully exposed the sins of his people, warned them of the judgment of God, and called them to repentance.
 - a. **Jer 17:23 But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction.**
 - b. Still he called them to repentance, urged them to believe God; but they continued in their obstinate rebellion and unbelief.
 - c. Then God told his prophet to go down to the potter's house and learn the ways of God.
3. I want us to go with God's prophet down to the potter's house and learn the ways of our God. -- Read Jer 18:1-10
 - a. God sent his prophet to the potter's house to receive God's message to deliver to God's people.
 - b. The potter had a lump of moist clay on his wheel which he shaped, quickly and with great ease, according to his own will.
 - c. But something was found in the clay, a stiffness, a pebble, or some displeasing quality – and the vessel was marred – vs 4
 - d. Though the vessel was marred, the potter exercised great patience and persistence and remade the vessel to suit his purposes
4. To God's people nothing in all the world is so comforting and satisfying as the assurance of God's total sovereignty.
 - a. We need to learn the lesson God taught Jeremiah in the potter's house!
 - b. As the potter has an absolute right to do with the clay what he will, so the Lord has the absolute right to do what he will with his own ←
5. Many are the schemes of theology and philosophy which deny the free grace of God and to limit the power of the Almighty.
6. Our great God appoints and over rules all things in glorious, absolute sovereignty and He declares to all men everywhere, as he did to Israel, "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand!"
 - a. This we know, "the Judge of all the earth will do right."
 - b. God is too wise to err, too good to do wrong, and too strong to fail
 - c. God does not give an account of his works to men.
 - d. Let us never doubt for a moment that our God always does right.
7. Now let's go to Jer 18 and the potter's house. There is much to be learned

I. THE POTTER AND HIS MISSION – vs 1-3 ←

A. The Potter's Intentions

1. The Potter has a singular purpose.
 - a) *He plans to take clay and from that clay produce vessels.*
 - b) *He wants to make vessels that will reap a profit; that will be found useful; and that will bring honor unto him.*
 - c) *The vessels are intended to be used by him and others.*
2. This is God's intention as well.
 - a) *He excels in taking old worthless clay and transforming it by His grace into vessels of honor and glory.*
 - b) *Jesus saves the sinner by His grace and then He begins the process of changing that vile sinner into a vessel that will produce a profit for the Kingdom of God, one that will be useful to Him in His work, and one that brings honor and glory to His Name.*
3. God takes the worst and changing it into the best Heaven has to offer
4. God's elect, sinners chosen to eternal life, are vessels of mercy, made and prepared by God to be filled with mercy.
5. But there are some men and women in this world who are vessels of wrath whom God leaves alone

B. The Potter's Ingredients

1. The Potter must work with materials that leave much to be desired.
2. Clay as it is found in the ground is not suitable for use.
 - a) *It is dug out of the ground and brought to the potter and dried*
 - b) *The dry material is then dumped into a wooden trough and soaked*
 - c) *The lumps soften and are stirred in the water until all have disintegrated and a thin slimy mud or "slip" has been formed.*
 - d) *The slip is drawn off into settling tanks and impurities are left*
 - e) *The plastic-like material is worked by treading with the feet.*
 - f) *The prepared clay is packed away another six months before using, during which time the quality and the plasticity improve*
3. The clay, as it is taken from the ground, is worthless.
 - a) *It must be transformed into a useable state and this is a process that takes time and energy on the part of the Potter.*
 - b) *This is a portrait of those lost in sin – worthless to God*
 - c) *However, He is able to see the vessels that we can become.*
 - d) *He begins the process that will bring us to a place of usefulness.*
 - e) *He digs us out, washes us clean and dries us up.*
4. This is a picture of the process a sinner goes through prior to salvation
 - a) *The heart is pricked and the conviction of God begins to work*
 - b) *The sinner is led along in little baby steps until he reaches the place where he receives Christ as Savior.*
 - c) *At that point, God begins the molding process.*

II. THE POTTER AND HIS MINISTRY – vs 4

4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

A. A Problem With The Vessel

1. Even in the Potter's hand, things can still go terribly wrong.
 - a) *The fault is not with the Potter, but with the clay.*
 - b) *There are times when even with the best of care, the vessel still gets out of shape.*
2. Isn't this the way our lives seem at times?
 - a) *We are going along just fine and we are growing in the grace of the Lord, then along comes a temptation or a trial and we are thrown off balance and we become marred in the Potter's hand.*
 - b) *Every turn of the wheel makes the blemish more visible.*
 - c) *It becomes evident that God cannot use us in our present shape*
3. Never be guilty of believing that this cannot happen to you.
 - a) *Many start out running well for the Lord, but along the way they got weak and out of balance in their lives.*
 - b) *They never planned it that way, but it happened just the same. So, never think that it can't happen to you - 1 Cor. 10:12*
 - c) *The Bible is strewn with the wreckage of lives that began well and ended poorly*
 - (1) Hymaneus and Alexander - 1 Tim. 1:19-20;
 - (2) Demas - Phm. 1:24; Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:10

B. The Perception Of The Potter

1. Because his hand is resting on the vessel, the Potter knows instantly when a problem arises.
2. He senses the changes in the clay and begins taking whatever steps are necessary to correct the problem.
3. The same could be said for the Lord.
 - a) *He knows everything about us and because His hand rests on our lives, He is instantly aware when things aren't as they should be.*
 - b) *He takes the necessary steps to get us back in usable condition*
 - c) *Never think that you are going to hide something from the Lord*
 - d) *He is aware of every thought, every deed and every motive and will allow none to pass before His gaze unchallenged.*

C. The Patience Of The Potter

1. Though the clay is misshapen and deformed, it is still in His hand
2. The Potter takes the marred vessel and begins again
 - a) *This time, the vessel may turn out well, but it may also be deformed once again.*
 - b) *As long as the clay is pliable in His hand, the Potter will rework it until he is able to produce a vessel that satisfies Him.*

3. This is a picture of the work of our heavenly Father in our lives.
 - a) *There are many times along the way that I can look back to and see myself deformed and misshapen upon the Potter's wheel.*
 - b) *At those times, He loving pressed upon me with His hands and began the process once again.*
4. This process is not always pleasant!
 - a) *The Lord may have to bring His chastisement into our lives.*
 - b) *He does this because He loves us and seeks His best in our lives.*
5. When the vessel is marred, the Potter does not throw the clay away
 - a) *He has already invested too much time in preparing it for use.*
 - b) *He has a vested interest in what happens to the clay.*
 - c) *He can afford to be patient and to keep working in the clay until it begins to resemble that image that He desires it to bear.*
6. Sometimes the clay becomes no longer pliable to the Potter's touch
 - a) *The Potter has no choice but to set aside that hardened vessel and chose another lump of clay with which to work.*
 - b) *That is not losing one's salvation, but it is being shelved*
 - c) *There are times when the Lord removes His hand of blessing and places us aside and uses another vessel instead.*

III. THE POTTER AND HIS MESSAGE – vs 5-6 ←

A. A Message About Sovereignty

1. Throughout the Bible God identifies himself as one who has and exercises total control over all things, at all times, and in all places.
2. His will, purpose, his plans, his works, and his power are irresistible
3. You and I are clay in the hands of God.
 - a) *We belong to God.*
 - b) *And God has the right to do with us what he will.*
 - c) *He says, to you and to me, "Cannot I do with you as I will?"*
4. He is no more a debtor to us than the potter is debtor to the clay.
5. God exercises his sovereignty with the greatest ease.
 - a) *We cannot resist him.*
 - b) *He's the Potter. We're the clay.*
 - c) *He's God. We're just men!*

B. A Message About Compliance – vs 7-9

1. God dispenses his favors sovereignly and unconditionally.
2. Salvation is unconditional, without works. Grace is free.
 - a) *But wrath, judgment, and eternal damnation are conditional, based entirely upon the works of wicked men.*
 - b) *Vessels of mercy are "prepared for glory" by God.*
 - c) *Vessels of wrath are "fitted for destruction" by their wicked works*

3. If you are saved, forgiven, and an heir of eternal life, if you go to heaven, that is all God's work
 - a) *He chose you.*
 - b) *He redeemed you by the precious blood of Christ.*
4. But, if you are lost, if you die in your unbelief and sin, if you go to hell, that is all your own work and your own fault.
 - a) *You earned it. – You deserve it. – You chose it.*
 - b) *And you shall eat the fruit of your own ways and be filled with your own devices (Pro. 1:23-33).*
5. When God threatens wrath, if the sinner repents, he will be merciful

Jer 18:7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; (8) If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

 - a) *God cannot and does not change his mind; but he does change his course of action, at least as it appears to men.*
 - b) *We see this repeatedly in the Book of Judges.*
 - c) *Whenever the nation of Israel repented of their evil and turned to the Lord, he forgave them and delivered them.*
 - d) *Certainly, God's dealings with Nineveh, in the Book of Jonah, shows this in a remarkable way.*

Conclusion:

1. As you fly around on the wheels of life, are you confident that God's will is being done in your life as it should?
2. Can you sense the hands of the Heavenly Potter and He patiently, lovingly molds your life into His image?
3. If you are a vessel that is refusing to yield in your life, here or there, there is no better time than the present to take care of that need.
4. Will you come to Jesus today and place yourself afresh and anew into the miracle working hands of the Heavenly Potter?
5. Will you allow Him to work His will in your life so that you can be a vessel of honor and glory unto the Lord?
6. If you have never been saved by God's grace, you need to know that God loves you and that He will save you if you will come to Him through Jesus Christ His Son.
7. He wants to take your life and make it into a thing of beauty for His glory. Will you come to Him?

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