

CHAPTER I

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY

I had been on a business trip to Spokane Washington for a few days and was due to change planes in Salt Lake City on my way back to Dallas. We missed our connection, so I was waiting for the next flight – about 4-5 hours later. As one outgoing flight was loading, I noticed a little girl with her mother. They had been talking and the girl was very excited to be going to see her grandmother. That is, until they approached the narrow, dimly lit gateway. The little girl became fearful and fought her mother's efforts to get her to go down toward the plan. She was crying hysterically – all the way through the narrow walkway.

Are we like that? We talk about the Kingdom of God and get very excited – until we find out what we have to go through to get there. We have doubts. We begin doubting what is on “the other side”. We balk. We may even turn away – unless the Holy Spirit's push is strong enough to guide us down the narrow path.

Ian Hufton sermon -

1. follow the best example (Jesus)
2. pay close attention to what God wants
3. believe Christ will judge your work
4. plan now for more good works in the future
 - a. Could you write a letter to God about your works?
 - b. “Dear God - here is a list of the works I have done for You: ...”
5. replace what is inside of you with the mind of Christ (a transplant)
6. treat every person you meet as if Christ were sitting on their shoulders
7. spread the word

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

“Have Thine Own Way, Lord”

Text: Adelaide A. Pollard, 1862-1934

Music: George C. Stebbins, 1846-1945

Tune: ADELAIDE, Meter: 54.54 D

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Thou art the potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after thy will,
while I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway.
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me!

CHAPTER I

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

When we sing that song, do we really mean the words “mold me and make me after thy will”? Are we “waiting, yielded and still”? Do we really want God to “hold o’er my being absolute sway”?

Let’s look at the origin of this thought.

Jeremiah 18:

- 1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying:
- 2 "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words."
- 3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel.
- 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.
 - Expositor’s Commentary
 - “... too many have misunderstood this parable because they have seen God in the light of an arbitrary sovereign ... the deeper meaning speaks of God’s grace ...
 - The potter’s house was ... on the slopes of the Valley of Hinnom ... where water and clay were found.
 - The potter was making a vessel on the wheels, the upper and lower discs made of stone or wood. The lower one was worked by the foot of the potter and was attached by an axle to the upper one, on which the clay was formed.
 - As happened frequently in the daily life of the potter, the clay did not turn out right... some defect would become evident. The potter rolled the clay into a lump to begin his task again to make a more suitable product.
 - The chief point here is the power the potter had over the clay. The clay was in his hand and under his control. The defects were in the clay, not in the hand of the potter. The potter’s perseverance must not be overlooked ...
- 5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:
- 6 "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!"
- 7 "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it,
- 8 "if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.
- 9 "And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it,
- 10 "if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

CHAPTER I

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

- Expositor's Commentary
 - Just as the potter remade the clay to conform to his purpose, so the Lord's will and power continue to mold the nation until it is conformed to his plan. The Lord will never be defeated ...
 - Repentance can always change the Lord's decree of judgment. His threatenings are never unconditional ...
 - Upon a person's repentance God can rework him or her into a vessel of honor.
 - ... no man is free. But God ... has ordered it so that humanity can choose. God treats all of them with grace.
- 11 "Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.'""
- 12 And they said, "That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart."
 - Expositor's Commentary
 - Responsibility clearly rests on them. When the Lord says he is 'preparing' calamity for Judah, the Hebrew verb is the same as the word for potter; so there is a play on words...."

JEREMIAH 19

- 1 Thus says the LORD: "Go and get a potter's earthen flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests.
- 2 "And go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the Potsherd Gate; and proclaim there the words that I will tell you,
- 3 "and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle.
- 4 "Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this place with the blood of the innocents
- 5 "(they have also built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind),
 - Expositor's Commentary
 - "The Lord commanded Jeremiah to buy a clay jar.
 - Because of the jar's narrow neck, it could never be repaired.
 - Chapter 18 taught the sovereignty and patience of God, this passage treats the irreversible judgment ...

CHAPTER I

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

- 6 "therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that this place shall no more be called Tophet or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.
- 7 "And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hands of those who seek their lives; their corpses I will give as meat for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth.
- 8 "I will make this city desolate and a hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its plagues.
- 9 "And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his friend in the siege and in the desperation with which their enemies and those who seek their lives shall drive them to despair."
 - Expositor's Commentary
 - The imminent calamity
- 10 "Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you,
- 11 "and say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Even so I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot be made whole again; and they shall bury them in Tophet till there is no place to bury."
 - Expositor's Commentary
 - There is a clear distinction between the acted oracle in this chapter and that of the potter's house. Clay can be shaped and reshaped, but broken jars are cast away.

ISAIAH 29.15-16

- 15 Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, And their works are in the dark; They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?"
- 16 Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made it, "He did not make me"? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

ISAIAH 64

- Isa 64:8 But now, O LORD, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand.

ROMANS 9

- 14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!
- 15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."
- 16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

CHAPTER I

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

- 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."
- 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.
- 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"
- 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"
- 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?
- 22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,
- 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,
- 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?
- 25 As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved."
- 26 "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."
- 27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved.
- 28 For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth."
 - Expositor's Commentary
 - "God's freedom to Act in His Own Sovereign Right
 - ... God is not bound to show mercy to any.
 - If God acts unilaterally ... does this not remove all basis for judgment, since man is not in a position to resist the divine will? Why, then, should man be blamed?
 - (Paul) ... is insisting on the right of the potter to make whatever type of vessel he chooses."
- 29 And as Isaiah said before: "Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah."
- 30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith;

ROMANS 12

- 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

CHAPTER I

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

- 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.
- 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,
- 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.
- 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;
- 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;
- 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.
 - Expositor's Commentary
 - The will of God ... is identical for all believers in respect to holiness of life and completeness of dedication. But what that will involves for each one with respect to special service in the church may be considerably diverse.
 - ... new capacities for service are not native to those who exercise them but come from divine grace.
 - He seems more intent on emphasizing the need for exercising the gifts and for exercising them in the right way
 - A prophet is not to be governed by his emotions or by his love of speaking but by entire dependence on the Spirit of God.
- 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.
- 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;
- 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
- 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;
- 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.
 - Expositor's Commentary
 - Even under persecution one should not allow himself to be so preoccupied with his own troubles that he becomes insensitive to the needs of other believers.
- 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
- 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
- 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.
- 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.
- 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

CHAPTER I

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

- 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.
- 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."
- 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

1 CORINTHIANS 12 = diversity of gifts

- 1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:
- 2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.
- 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.
- 4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.
- 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.
- 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.
- 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:
- 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,
- 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,
- 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.
- 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.
- 12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.
- 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.
- 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.
- 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?
- 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?
- 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?
- 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.
- 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?
- 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.

CHAPTER I

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

- 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."
- 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.
- 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,
- 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,
- 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.
- 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.
- 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
- 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.
- 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?
- 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?
- 31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

What is our responsibility?