

The Potter - Part One

The Potter's Wheel of Life

by

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all Scriptures quoted from the NASB

Jeremiah 18:1 - 6

- (1) The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying,
- (2) “Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I shall announce My words to you.”
- (3) Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel.
- (4) But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.
- (5) Then the word of the Lord came to me saying,
- (6) “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.”

This is one of the classic passages in the Bible where God reveals how he deals with human lives. God is the potter and we are the clay. We are on the wheel and God is shaping us into the individual vessels that He wants us to become. We are literally clay in the Potter's hand. This is, and should be, a humbling thought. However, we often think of ourselves as much more than ordinary clay. In fact sometimes we don't even think of ourselves as clay at all. Instead, we see ourselves more in the role of the potter than the clay.

The passage starts out with Jeremiah being sent to the potter's house where God will speak to him. So Jeremiah went down to the potter's house where he watched the potter working with clay on his wheel. We don't know how long Jeremiah was at the potter's house, but we do know that God did not speak to him right away. Jeremiah was given time to watch the potter for a while before God spoke. Jeremiah, who was apparently a patient man, watched and waited for God to speak.

How many times have we found ourselves in a situation where God wants us to watch and wait? Do we patiently observe what is happening in front of us, and wait for God to speak? Or do we get impatient while waiting for God, and move along, missing the opportunity to hear, and see, God's message for us? How often have we missed a message or “a word” from God simply because we were in hurry? Something very interesting happened while Jeremiah was waiting for God to speak.

While Jeremiah watched, the clay vessel was spoiled, or ruined in the potter's hand. The vessel

was not ruined *by* the potter, but rather by imperfections in the clay. This is important because the Bible does not say the potter ruined, or spoiled the clay. The clay became ruined while it was spinning in the potter's hands, but it was not ruined *because* of the potter's hands. It is also interesting to note that the potter did not throw away the ruined clay. The potter simply started over with the same lump of clay. The potter pounded the clay back into a lump and began the process again. The Bible gives the impression that the potter then shaped the clay into a different vessel than before. The clay was remade into a vessel shaped by the potter's will.

There are a couple of things I learned in this story that I want to share with you:

The clay is completely dependent on the potter to be shaped.

The clay itself did not pick the shape in which it was fashioned. The shape was picked by the potter simply because it pleased the potter to pick that particular shape. We often decide what we want to be, what we want to do, and come up with the timetable we want God to do it in. In other words, we want our will to be done and not God's will. The clay however has no say in what shape it will eventually take. The potter knows what *he* needs and what *he* wants, and shapes the vessel as *he* pleases.

The potter shapes and molds the clay; the clay does not shape and mold itself.

What would happen if the clay decided it didn't like the shape into which it was being molded? The clay would probably become spoiled, ruined, or marred, while spinning on the wheel. The potter would then have to pound the clay back into a lump and start again. Does this sound familiar? Has this happened in your life? Have you been pounded back into a lump so that the Potter could start over? Clay is not supposed to have a will of its own. Only the Potter's will is important.

It becomes a question of sovereignty; God's sovereignty. A simple definition of sovereignty is this: God is God, and you are not. It is that simple. What this means is God gets to shape the clay, and only God gets to shape the clay. Clay shaped by the potter becomes a useful vessel. It becomes a vessel useful for the Master's purpose.

The clay cannot stop the wheel from spinning and get off.

All of us at one time or another has wanted to stop the wheel from spinning and get off. None of us have been successful yet. We often forget that God is in control of the wheel. Not only does he make the wheel spin, but he also controls the speed at which it spins. When we are on the wheel being shaped, God is in complete control. We need to learn to trust the Potter, for He is

making us into vessels of His design and purpose. While we are on the wheel we do not know what the outcome will be, or how long it will take. We must trust the Potter. We must trust Him completely and totally. Unfortunately, this is often a difficult thing for us.

Everything God does in our lives, he does to make us dependent upon Him.

This is a simple, yet profound truth. Just as the clay is dependent upon the potter to be shaped, so also are we dependent upon God to be shaped. Romans chapter eight reveals that we are being shaped into the image of Jesus. When we go through a crisis in life, God uses it to shape and mold us. Sometimes he has to pound us into a lump and start again, but it is God who is in control. He desires to make us into vessels useful for His own purposes.

Let us view the potter's wheel as a time of opportunity. It is a time to grow. It is a time to be shaped into a useful vessel. We will not always be on the potter's wheel. The time always comes when the potter is finished shaping the clay. The vessel is then put into service. All of us lumps of clay should look forward to the time when we are put into service by the Potter. The Potter already knows what the finished product will be. God is in control, so let the wheel spin. Let His hands shape this lump of clay.