

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

BIBLE TEXT : Jeremiah 18:1-12; Romans 9:21-26.

LESSON 394 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "He shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use" (II Timothy 2:21).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Jeremiah 18:1-10

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 thee to hear my words.
3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.
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*.
5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.
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.
9 And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*;
10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

Romans 9:21-26

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and

Bible References:

Notes:

Obedience

One day the Lord told Jeremiah to go to the house where pottery was made. God said that He would give Jeremiah a message there. God can talk to a person anywhere. Some people have tried to get away from the voice of God and to hide from Him, only to find that God is everywhere. Jeremiah himself wrote, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:24). The Psalmist David asked, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Psalm 139:7). Then David answered from his own experience — wherever he went God was there to talk to him (**Psalm 139:8-10** ⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰ Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.). But God had a particular lesson to teach Jeremiah at the potter's house, a lesson for him to take to the house of Judah.

When God told Jeremiah to go, he went. Jeremiah did not question why. He did not give any excuse, but was obedient. Jeremiah had tried to tell the people to obey God. He knew of the many blessings that come with obedience. The Children of Israel had been told if they obeyed God, "then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). In the New Testament Jesus told of those who shall enter Heaven: "He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

At the Potter's House

God had a purpose in sending Jeremiah to the potter's house. A potter is one who makes pottery — pitchers, vases, bowls, and other vessels of clay. God wanted Jeremiah to learn a lesson from the potter as one learns from a parable, which is an earthly story to teach a heavenly lesson. It must have been interesting to Jeremiah to watch the potter working the clay. First of all, the right kind of clay had been chosen and prepared before it could be used. Perhaps you have played with clay and found that if it was too dry, it would crumble; if it was too wet, it would stick to your fingers. Some clay is mixed with dirt and has to go through a process to separate it from the dirt. The Bible tells about the potter treading the clay (**Isaiah 41:25** ²⁵ I have raised up *one* from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as *upon* mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.). All this preparation, even before the clay is ready for the potter!

Pardon

As we think of Jeremiah standing there watching the man make a vessel of clay, let us consider how we are like the clay. The Lord has chosen us to be His children. Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). Then, because "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) we must have the sin taken out. This is not done

another unto dishonour?

22 *What* if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,
24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

26 And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

in the same way that the clay is prepared but by the remission of sins. To grant remission means to pardon, to forgive, and to blot out. Jesus said that His Blood was "shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

When one repents of his sins and asks Jesus to forgive him, when he has faith and believes that Jesus does forgive him, then he knows that he is saved and his sins are blotted out by the Blood of Jesus. Are you saved? Have you prayed for the Lord to prepare you like the clay?

Moulded

As Jeremiah watched, the potter shaped the clay. There was no machinery, but the potter worked the clay with his hands. He worked at wheels, like round tables, no doubt one above the other. The lower one being moved by his foot would cause the upper one to move around so he could work the clay on all sides.

First of all, there had to be a good base on which to build the vessel. So we need a good foundation — salvation through Jesus Christ. We read that no other foundation will do: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11).

As Jeremiah watched, the potter moulded a vessel, perhaps a vase or a water jug. No doubt it looked like a fine piece of pottery; but to the one who had made it, it was not good enough. The piece of pottery was not perfect. It was spoiled as the potter made it. Then the potter crumbled it, as you have crumbled clay to make something else. The potter began again to make a good vessel.

Marred

Sin will mar our lives so that they will not look good to our Maker. Sin spoils the life just as the vessel was marred in the hands of the potter. Sometimes one's life might look pretty good outwardly, but in his heart there might be sin. There is help for such a one. Like the potter who broke the vessel to remake it, so the Lord can make our lives better. Because sin has marred lives, God permits them to become as broken pieces or fragments so that He can refashion them.

Broken Pieces

In Psalm 51:17 we read: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." The potter did not throw away the pieces and start with new clay; he used the broken pieces to fashion a good vessel. A songwriter has written how the Lord uses the pieces of broken lives to make vessels of honour.

God gathers the fragments of broken lives

Lying scattered on highways of sin;

And none are too worthless, none too stained,

For the Saviour to bring them in.

Fragments, just fragments,

But the dear Lord knows their worth,

And he gathers them up with a loving hand,

From the highways and byways of earth.

Broken Promises

As Jeremiah watched the potter use the pieces to make good pottery, the words of God came to him. This was the lesson God showed Jeremiah: the Children of Israel should be in God's hands as the clay was in the potter's hands. Israel was stubborn and would not yield. Israel had sinned and was marred. God warned them that He would not do good to them as He had promised, unless the Children of Israel repented. They had broken their

promises to obey God and so He did not have to keep His part of the agreement.

To Honour God

God is our Maker, and He demands our love and honour. The marred piece was no honour to its maker, nor do sinful lives honour God. God warned the people to beware, because the breaking might come suddenly. Isaiah also prophesied in this manner: "And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare" (Isaiah 30:14). The Psalmist said, "Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:9).

Oh, that the people had prayed the prayer of Isaiah: "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" (Isaiah 64:8). We cannot all be the same kind of worker or vessel but we can yield to His fashioning and become a vessel of honour that He can use. God gives each one a place to fill and we want to fill that place to honour God.

QUESTIONS

1. What is a potter's house?
2. Why was Jeremiah at the potter's house?
3. What was wrong with the vessel in the potter's hands?
4. What did the potter do to the marred vessel?
5. How are people like clay in God's hands?
6. Why should we obey God?
7. How does the Lord take away sins from our lives?
8. How can we be vessels of honour?
9. What did Jeremiah say would happen to the Children of Israel if they did not repent?
10. How did the Word of God come to pass in regard to the Children of Israel?