



THE POTTER'S
HOUSE

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The Potter's House

Table of Contents

The Potter Chooses the Clay	1
The Potter Treads the Clay	7
Kun	13
Be Centered on Jesus Christ	18
Pressure and Shaping	24
The Fire	32

The Potter Chooses the Clay

Open your Bibles to Jeremiah 18:1,

***“The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,
Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.
Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.”***

The word *work* is a Hebrew word involving the employment of something put into service and done on the wheel. The Potter is actively involved in this because he wants to put us into service. As I have said before, the word for *work* in the New Testament is *ergon*. There are also other words, but this particular word means *the employment of something*. For example, in the business world it means to be employed in whatever you are involved in. When it comes to the service of God, it is employing the Word of God and what surrounds it. God is employing a work on you and God is employing a work on me for service and everything else we do throughout the week. Most Christians that I talk to do not realize we work not just to feed our family and pay our rent, but also work in the employment of the Word of God so others can hear it if you are involved with some ministry. Verse 4 continues,

“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.”

Understanding this is if the clay is human beings—people, you, me. Back in the beginning, Adam became marred so He had to put the clay back on the wheel, but before that happens the potter had to do something. Most people that preach on these verses or write about it forget a very important component before we get to the wheel, before we even get to the potter's house. I will get to it, but for now, read on in verse 5,

***“Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
O house of Israel...”***

Who is writing to the house of Israel? Unfortunately most preachers think this is only written to Judah because Jeremiah was living in the time when Judah went into bondage or captivity, but Jeremiah did not. He eventually would go with the house of Israel and he went to build and to plant, but that is another subject for another time. I want you to personalize it. Read verse 3 again,

“Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.”

These scriptures indicate three necessary elements that Jeremiah was sent to observe:

1. The Potter – God, the Lord Jesus
2. The clay – us
3. The process – to make something desirable, something useful, something valuable

That is why ***“he wrought the work on the wheels”*** means He is employing what He does to put us into service to make us desirable to Him, useful to Him, and valuable to Him. Of course, we understand that God is the potter; we are the clay; and the process is used by the potter to make something desirable, useful, and valuable.

Research shows there were five steps to make pottery in Jeremiah's day. Now, you might know something about how to make pottery today with all the modern techniques and instruments, but put yourself in Jeremiah's time period. Some of the steps are no longer necessary today, but remember Jeremiah is painting a picture of what God wants us to understand about the truths in these particular scriptures. After you understand Jeremiah went to observe who the potter was, who the clay was and the process, there were basically five steps. Look up the history of any sources you can find. I do not want to get into everything that the potter did in the process of making clay vessels. Remember to keep this in context to the time period so you get the full understanding here of what Jeremiah is painting with words because it is very important to understand what he went to observe and how important the process is to God in order to obtain the clay. You do not see it here. We jump into this after Jeremiah was given the instruction to go down to the potter's house to see the work on the wheel, but there is something very important when you understand the process to make a finished product. The first of the five-step process is:

1. Choosing of the clay

In order to obtain the clay, a potter first must take a trip to the pit. In this case, the pit represents the world to which Jesus came in order to find us. To get a better understanding of this first step read Psalms 40:2,

“He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.”

Some translations say this is a pit of noise, and the world is like a pit of noise. Everybody has a formula, the solution, or some know-it-all understanding of how you should live your life once you become a Christian, including a lot of preachers. In these days, they also try to stop you from understanding what these processes are and what you are going to go through starting, in my opinion, the very first day. However, before you were chosen Christ already went down to that pit to pluck you out.

Remember, in Jeremiah's day, as well as David's and even Jesus' day, there were no craft stores to go buy the clay you wanted. I know here in Southern California one of the craft stores is Michael's. It has all sorts of arts and crafts stuff and clay. Hobby Lobby is one that has been in the news lately. There was no Hobby Lobby or Michaels in Jeremiah's day. There were no arts and crafts stores in Jesus' day to make a simple purchase where you could find all kinds of clay to mold and work with. That is why I said to put yourself in this time period. At that time a potter had to go down to the pit to choose the clay. Preachers often quote Isaiah 51:1, which are comforting words to Jerusalem, but I want you to personalize them,

“Harken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”

In this verse we are following to be right with God by trusting and faithing in Him. You might be important in this world, you could be the richest or most famous person with what the world thinks has everything going for you, but if you do not have Christ and you are not His disciple, you are in the pit with everyone else. Material things and fame might give the illusion of being special, something desirable, and something valuable, but that is only temporary, not eternal. I teach eternal things, although it does affect the here and now, but I look to our eternal future. And I know to get there we must remain faithful and obedient as disciples of Jesus Christ. You have heard many times when the circumstances get tough, the tough get going, but that is when I press in closer to Jesus Christ, keep trusting, keep faithing, and keep being obedient.

One of the most discouraging things as I go through some circumstances is to see the lack of communication. Because I could not teach live one night and I gave my health as a general reason why, many of you disappeared. Then, I started questioning myself wondering if you are just a bunch of quick-fix listeners, followers of Jesus Christ, who just want the next best thing. I know where you attend church for who have shared with me, and you are not even getting half as much teaching there as you get here, but you would not hesitate to step up if there was a need. I was surprised Wednesday night to see that not even after the first 15 to 20 minutes everybody disappeared and went to do something else. Why were you not able to even dedicate one hour to keep emailing, saying I am praying for you? Make phone calls and say it.

I know the teaching here is precious, but you are demonstrating over and over that just sending money is enough. Keep your money if that is your attitude. I am like Jesus, and if you listen to the giving series Where is Your Heart or read the two volumes, you know you ought to have done that any way because giving is mostly for your benefit because you are accumulating eternal rewards. Yes, giving will affect others here, but you get its benefit. Christ is accumulating all your benefits up there and He is eagerly waiting to see what you are going to do with it while you are in the here and now. You should have done it anyway, so do not give me that excuse. Will I stop this ministry? No, but it is sorting out people. With that understanding, return to Isaiah 51:1,

“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”

In order for the potter to obtain the clay, he had to go down to the pit, and the pit represents this world Jesus came to in order to rescue us from that pit. He found us. We did not find Jesus, He finds us! It is like any other pit, the more you dig the end result or the continuing result is that the pit gets deeper. People around this world without Jesus, even Christians without being disciples of Jesus Christ, are digging the pit and it is getting deeper and deeper. The deeper it gets, the darker it gets. Eventually it gets so dark the only illuminating light is the light coming from straight above. Jesus has been our light. He has rescued us.

Even though it is not mentioned here in these verses in Jeremiah 18, it is interesting to note that certain things must happen first and the first step in the process is choosing the clay. We are the clay! No matter how much you try and how much you seem to accomplish with yourself in your own eyes if Christ did not rescue you from that miry pit, if He did not pull out that chunk of clay,

which is you and me, that clay cannot get out of the pit on its own and place itself on the wheel. The potter does that and even if you could you cannot make anything valuable to Him if you leave Him out of the process! You will not become a prize vessel because the world falls short. There are no self-made vessels in the kingdom of God, even though there are too many preachers giving that illusion these days. There are no self-made vessels in God's kingdom. The only value the clay possesses to the potter is that it is raw before God chose us and pulled us out. You might think you are a pretty decent form, but to God it is nothing but raw clay yet to be formed.

Looking at the other verses that I read in both Psalms and Isaiah, you have to stop because there is something interesting about the pit to note in your Bible. That is that the pit was a dangerous place. It might not look like it, but it was a dangerous place for the clay to live out its existence without hope. This is about hope and now once you are rescued, the eternal hope; the bigger picture. The pit is also dangerous for the potter. When people preach through these messages they forget that or they preach a different type of message, but I think it is important enough to stop to remind us. Even for the most faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, we all need to be reminded on occasion. It was also a dangerous place for the potter because he had to venture down to the pit to get a piece of the miry clay, which was not an easy task if you understand the process in those days. It was at the risk of life in some cases for the potter to obtain the clay in the miry pit. When you think about it and piece it all together, that the step first step Jesus did for us that ultimately cost His precious life. Christ came to earth to get a chunk of us and call it His possession. All this has already been played out when Christ came on the scene. He is the master potter now not me or some other preacher, priest, or pope. We are teachers of God's Word, but Christ is the master potter here. The clay does not choose the potter. Instead, the potter chooses the clay which is the first step in the process.

I have been to John 15:16 before. It is marked in my Bible, and you have heard me preach on it many times about Jesus being the vine. ***“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you...”*** This is why I hate the signs that say “choose Jesus today”. They are stupid, plain stupid! And this is where most people tune out because they do not think they are preachers or ministers. They are not *ordained* so it does not really concern them. This word is a bad translation. *Appointed* is a better translation, so the verse should read, ***“I have chosen you and appointed you...”*** We do not choose Jesus, we do not choose God; He chooses us.

In all the research about this period in history, there was a process the potter would go through to choose the clay based on what the potter was going to make, what he needed, and what he wanted to make. Remember we are the clay. When the potter foresees or envisions the vessel he wants to make, he then looks for the clay which has a certain kind of touch. It has to feel right to the touch. That is why we do not choose Jesus, and He chooses us. No matter what you might think, the clay is chosen by Jesus Christ and He is looking for the right touch of clay because when the potter—Christ being the potter—touches the clay, He imagines what it might become. I never imagined when Jesus chose me what I would be doing today, but He did. The same goes for you. He is not done with any of us. He can imagine what it might become because He is touching it, He is feeling it, and He is molding it. He knows what others cannot see, including what I cannot see about myself and what you cannot see about yourself, but He sees it. God is the potter, we are the clay and there is a process that begins with the potter when he chooses the clay.

The first step is the clay comes out of the pit, but getting out of the pit is but the first step. There are more steps to come before the clay is at its place of what God intends us to be, which is making something desirable, making something useful, making something valuable as His disciple of His Son Jesus Christ.

We all came from the pit of this world. Because of that it is very important that we remain thankful to God who sent His only begotten Son to yank us out of the miry pit where the only hope was not to sink any deeper and realize that Christ came to rescue us. His only Son Jesus went to this pit to find us and to rescue us folks. We are nothing, we are not going anywhere, and we are just dust. Look in the mirror if you cannot imagine it. We are just dust waiting to die, but a hand reached out and touched us. You do not see it, but it is important to understand the hidden truth behind these verses about the process and what was sacrificed for you and me. Jesus Christ pulled us and snatched us away from this world. What the world offers goes nowhere but to a dead end. I do not know how much simpler I can make it. We are just dust waiting to die, but Jesus reached out and grabbed us, He touched us. God saw something and Christ saw something in us that we could never have imagined ourselves. Have I driven that point home as I start on these verses? Jeremiah 18:4 reminds us that God makes us into instruments and that are being put to use according to His design. The tough part is that it is not necessarily according to our desires. You may not want to hear that, but who does?

One of the problems I have been facing myself is feeling like I have been on the wheel going round and round and round and I cannot read. I can hardly even function. He knows my situation and my circumstances. As I have said before, He is the Great Physician. He could heal me with a snap of His fingers and I am trusting He will, but so be it if He chooses to go down the doctor/specialist route. I am healed. That is what I am claiming because the last time I checked Jesus is still in the healing business. I hate to put it that way, but He still heals. He is the God that heals.

We need to remember where we came from. We need to be aware of where we are, but we need to have a healthy hope, a healthy faith and even a joy. It might seem hard at times and believe me I have faced many hard times recently, but I do not believe God is finished with me and God is not finished with you. For many of us, our journey began when we came out of the pit and today we are still in the process of being made into a vessel to honor God's glory, or something that is made desirable to Him, useful to Him and valuable to Him. I do not know if you have been chosen out of the pit. If you have not, now is the time to recognize Jesus is the one who can bring you out of that pit. You cannot bring yourself out, but Jesus can and once He does do not return to it. That has been the tragedy of too many in this supposed Christian world. Too many are sucking on milk when they should be chewing on a good T-bone steak. Too many churches today are teaching on topics like how to have a better sex life, how to have a better family relationship, how to have a better this and a better that. Stick around with this ministry, one thing I am interested in is becoming a better disciple of Jesus Christ. God knows how to deal with everything else if I turn it over to Him. Do not return to the pit. Do not continue if you are living in the miry clay of this sick world. Think about the hand of God reaching down from the heavens and His illuminating light shining on me and on you. Do not resist His hand.

There will be pressures and all kinds of circumstances along the way in our journey and some heat will come with it. I am preaching to myself in this message as a reminder because every disciple needs to remember that God through His only beloved begotten Son reached down and gave His life to rescue us from this horrible pit. Do not resist His hand. No matter how hot it gets and how much pressure it feels on your life, God is in control. He knows the process. He has a design for you and He knows what He is making according to His plan for His purpose concerning you. He is the potter and we are the clay. The process is to make something desirable, useful, and valuable. You might not think so but God is directing your life. Just because it is not exciting all the time do not think He is not producing something desirable, useful, and valuable in your life. He would not choose you if this were not His intent and it is just the beginning. Do you get it?

In this series, I really want to take a look at these first four verses in Jeremiah to understand everything about them in context and putting ourselves in Jeremiah's day to bring out the truth that is there for our understanding. Once it is brought to our attention it will only build faith. This is the *pisteuo* level of faith, the amen faith, the so-be-it faith. God said it and I have all my trust and confidence in Him, so to hell with this world. It can stay in the pit if that is what they choose, but He pulled me out of it, and I will keep preaching to the pit about you. If that is where they choose to stay, I am moving on. I will not go back, I will not turn back, I will not slip and start sinking so deep into the miry clay again that I will possibly never see the illuminating light coming from above.

This is a simple message, and one I do not preach that often because I try to get into the deeper things of God's Word that nobody else dare touch. All that can be said about that is they are cowards and who just sit back and criticize because they do not have the courage to preach on those subjects. Even though, I believe some of them know it to be true even if they cannot agree with me or someone who preaches like me. That is why I believe God is not done with me yet, not by a long shot. But as I go through my circumstances and pressures of life, I am asking for round the clock prayer for God to either heal me or direct my paths to get the healing. I prefer the first, but He is in control. After all, He is the potter. And it is no different whatever the circumstances and pressures are in your life. He did not choose you out of the pit of the world, the miry clay, to abandon you. It is just the opposite actually. He has plans, He has a design, and He has something that will bring honor and glory to Him through me and through you to make something desirable, something special, useful, and valuable. Do not let anyone tell you differently and that is where I will pick up next time.

Continued...

The Potter Treads the Clay

Open your Bibles to the Book of Jeremiah, chapter 18:1 - 4. In verse 1 it begins,

***“The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,
Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.
Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.”***

In these verses, the clay was already on the wheel, although in the last chapter I talked about where the potter got the clay in the first place. There are also three important points to remember:

1. The potter is God or Jesus Christ
2. The clay is us
3. The process is to make something desirable, useful, and valuable

The process the potter takes produces something that makes the clay desirable, meaning He will make us desirable, useful, and valuable for His purposes. However, the process is not seen in verses 1 through 4, which begins with choosing the clay.

It is important to understand that there is a process. In fact, this is just one of many steps the potter takes in the whole process concerning the clay; not just what is eventually on the wheel, but the whole process from beginning to end. When choosing the clay the potter went down to the pit, a miry pit. I also went to Psalms 40:2. I love this verse. I could read it all day and never get tired of it. That is how I feel, but personalize it for yourself because we were all in this pit called the world sinking in the miry clay and we can say now Jesus brought us up. Psalm 40:2 reads,

“He brought me up also out of a horrible [or noisy] pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established [or made firm] my goings.”

The world is a pit full of noise. Nevertheless, He came down to this miry pit in Psalms 40:2 looking for the clay He needed to make a vessel that He desired and envisioned. God sent Jesus down into the pit of this world to rescue me, and the same can be said about you.

I am with David, He brought me out, He yanked me out of that horrible pit, out of that sinking miry clay, and now my feet are steadfast. We all start in that pit because there was nothing good about me. Many individuals think they are good enough because they act a certain way or do certain things. Sorry, but that is not acceptable in God's eyes. Only through Jesus can we be made good. When He went down to that pit, He knew what was in me, this lump of clay that He chose and this lump of clay you are looking at. The most amazing thing, at least I can say for myself is He chose me anyway.

Someone wrote in wondering why God chose them, but do not forget His only begotten Son saw something in you. Therefore, do not doubt yourself once you have been rescued by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. I have heard preachers pontificate that we should feel bad about ourselves

and that we are not worth more than the dirt on the street. That is insulting my Jesus and if I had you in front of me I would give you a verbal spiritual slapping. Do not ever do that. You disgrace what Christ came to do for us. Do not let anybody ever do it to you either. Do you think I do not fall short? Do you think I do not have shortcomings? Do you think I am already molded into the perfect vessel and nothing else needs to be done? If you do then, I have you fooled, but I have not fooled Christ and I have not fooled myself. Do not let anybody say that about you either. He chose us anyway knowing the filth that existed, the bad. Have you ever asked yourself why? The most obvious answer is God loved the world that HE sent His only begotten Son. He saw the potential in you and in me and He knows what He is going to do with that potential according to His purpose and His plan.

This is not a difficult message to comprehend or understand. He will make us into desirable, useful, and valuable vessels for His purposes! Others might get a glimpse of it, but He is the only one who sees and believes in your potential because He is mastering and molding us. A God who created the universe works on us to make us into something desirable and purposeful for Him. If you do not think so, then why you are a Christian?

With that introduction, let's move on to the Potter's next step:

2. Preparing the clay

Once the potter chooses the clay [us], the next step in the process is to wash the clay to remove the exterior dirt, the mire, and the surface impurities. Remember, at this time, we could not go to Michaels or Hobby Lobby and get the clay ready to go. Back in Jeremiah's day there was a process. Keep this in that context. This was not the clay we find today in a hobby or craft stores. A whole different process had to take place where the clay was washed to remove the dirt, mire, and all the impurities from the surface. Also, that initial washing was not the last time we would see water used with the clay as part of cleansing.

So now I want you to put aside how an earthly potter would prepare the clay through a water cleansing and put a spiritual tone and understanding to this because hopefully there is a cleansing going on daily in our lives. We know we have been washed by the blood of Jesus Christ from the impurities, the guilt and sin, but we also know the Word cleanses us on a daily basis. For instance, in Ephesians 5:26 about half way down the chapter, Paul starts teaching about husbands and wives. He gives the illustration of the church with Christ as the head of the church, but first back up to verse 25,

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify [literally set apart] and cleanse [or make clean] it [us] with the washing of water by the word....”

Here in Greek, word is *rhema*, the spoken word. The same reference is used in John 15 in the New Testament. We have been there many times. Remember to put a spiritual understanding here. In the earthly sense, the potter would wash the clay of all the impurities, mire, and dirt. Just the same, we know we have been washed by the blood, but we have also been washed by the water. In John 15:3, we are told,

“Now ye are clean [from the pollution of guilt and sin] through the word [logos, also the spoken word] which I have spoken unto you.”

Once you become a disciple what a wonderful thing to understand, apply, and teach others. Then I John 5:5 ties together both Ephesians and the Gospel of John,

“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.”

We are washed not by water alone. See, there are a lot of people who hear and hear the water, the Word, but they really do not respond or if they do, there are some pockets of Christianity who do not even believe that Christ had to die on the cross to shed His blood for remission of sins. Now there are not many, but there are still some. There was a requirement, if you do not get the water, the Word, how will you ever know what Christ did for you in the first place? He rescued you by spilling His blood. He paid the full price for your redemption as required. The Old Testament lists in many different books what that requirement was, and He stepped in and fulfilled every jot and tittle of the requirement so we could be washed clean from our sin, our guilt, our impurities by His precious blood.

Without the spoken Word being delivered to us we do not just know that we have been rescued by the blood of Jesus Christ. It is silly to even think that. How many times have I used the illustration for *pistis*, the hearing that leads to a persuasion? Hearing is still an action that had to take place because if you do not go through that act then you have deaf ears or you do not want to listen. Believe it or not, even that takes action. Once that process takes place, you either respond negatively or respond by saying, “Yes Lord, I surrender to you. I understand now what you have done for me. Cover me with your blood and wash me clean.” A washing of the spoken Word, God's Word, had to take place before any of that ever happened. We must be told, either by parents or a preacher, or by searching some way or somehow so the information was delivered. Then we could respond to what He so graciously and precious offered to us as a free gift or not. Returning to I John 5, verse 6 continues,

“This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.”

Christ could have preached the Word all He wanted, but if He did not go to the cross and spill His blood, it was all for naught. So to put a spiritual understanding to the water in this story of the potter's house, the representation of spiritual water is the Word of God that prepares the clay to receive from that point whatever the potter obviously wants us to receive. It is found in John 5:26, John 15:13, I John 5:3, and other places.

Water was used not only to begin this cleansing process, but also to soften the clay and keep it workable. It has all been kind of wonderful up to this point, if you really think about it, but now the treading process begins. Oh, my Lord! This is probably where you want to stop reading if you really do not want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. In Jeremiah 18, the potter begins directly

working the wheel with the clay already on it, but before the clay ever made it on to the wheel it had to go through a treading process. This began by stomping on the clay, jumping up and down on it, making it pliable to get the pockets of air out of the clay. This mixing and treading balanced the consistency of the clay to help identify anything that needed to be removed such as any dangerous foreign objects while producing something desirable, useful, and valuable, a useful vessel. This is not specified in the verses leading up to Jeremiah 18:1, but before the clay ever gets on the wheel these processes must take place.

Without water continuously used throughout the processes, the clay could dry up. So the water was used to keep the clay pliable and workable for the potter. God has His hands on us, which is the good news. All this treading sounds awful, but He has his hands on us. Then He begins to knead the clay with his hands, first beating it, slapping it, applying more water, and then folding it over and over. He would even throw it up in the air and slam it down as hard as He could, to produce workable, pliable, and useful clay for what He wants to produce.

For myself, lately I feel like He has been beating and slapping me around. I feel like He has thrown me up in the air and I landed pretty hard and I said, “Lord, take me to the wheel fast! I have already had enough of this. Move me to the next process.” Be careful what you wish for because most people who read this story or heard it preached do not quite understand everything involved to make a useful and pliable lump of clay. I am a witness that the pounding can seem intense, but I must keep reminding myself, and also remind you, that the Potter knows what he is doing. The Potter, God and Jesus Christ, know what they are doing.

When I was a kid, my grandmother made bread the old school way, not putting it in a bread maker like today. She would get all the ingredients and I would knead it over and over, fold it over, knead it some more, add a bit more water, knead it some more. I used to hate going through that process, but I liked the result. I was part of this bread making process from the age of 7 to 13. There is nothing like fresh bread coming out of the oven with some butter on it. You just cannot beat fresh homemade bread old school style. I did not like the process and I was the one doing the beating! So in a sense, I was playing God on the dough. Well, that is what God is doing to us and we are probably saying, “What is going on! Do you know what you are doing? Do you have a clue? Okay, enough is enough.” In the last few weeks, I have said that to the Lord over and over, but I have to keep reminding myself that the Potter knows what he is doing. It might not seem like it, but that is what is happening and the finished product is something He can envision. Maybe you cannot, but He can and it is something that will be desirable, something that is useful, and something that is valuable.

Water is necessary all along the way in this process of preparing the clay. However, it is not without some type of measure so we do not get too much water, but this does not mean we get too much of God, so listen closely. Do not misinterpret me. Yes, along the way water is necessary and will be added, however the water will be measured out. If there is not enough water and the clay will dry out, so the watering process is necessary. In the spiritual sense, we will dry up and be totally useless. However, if there is too much water, the clay will become unusable, sloppy, and un-moldable, and if you wonder how that can be, I will show you in scripture. Again, do not misunderstand me. We need a steady diet of the Word of God daily, but it must be applied, not just listened to or read. This does not mean we have done our duty by reading a few scriptures

each day. I know Christians like that who just read a chapter or two or memorize a verse each day, but there is no spiritual application whatsoever in their lives. That is when too much water is added where we become the sloppy *agape* Christian. With too much fluid and the clay cannot be molded. A very familiar verse for most of you is II Timothy 3:7. This concerns the last times, so how much more true it is today for all you molds out there. About them it says,

“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Do you remember the Greek word *epignosis*? This is the same word here for *knowledge*. What it means literally is *the precise and correct knowledge of God's Word*. The precise and correct knowledge of God's Word for application, not just to memorize the Bible, not just say we did our duty today by reading a few scriptures. No! He wants to see it applied. Too many people have too much water, and are ever learning, and become sloppy *agape* Christians. They are overtaken by the fluid ***“and never able to come to the epignosis”***—*the precise and correct knowledge of the truth* of God's Word. So listen closely because it could be taken out of context and words can get twisted here. A sloppy *agape* lump of clay is useless to God—useless! That is why a steady diet of the Word is necessary. The Potter knows what he is doing. He has a vision for each lump of clay which is us. He already knows what the finished product is. He has already envisioned it in his mind before the process even started and He knows what it takes to get you where He wants you to be.

Even though this treading process is not easy, one of three things usually happens in our walk. Hopefully it is not happening to you, but you are going to see it with others. Unfortunately, I have seen it many times. Those things are:

1. God/Christ, the Potter, continues treading, beating, slapping, and folding you, purifying the clay while He is producing the molded vessel.
2. The Potter can deem you unworkable and discard the clay, or
3. You can decide to make a cheap, weak vessel of dishonor because the clay is inferior, which I do not think He will do. I see nowhere in this book called God's Word, the Holy Bible, where He has done that.

There are more choices than that, but I just gave three. The only choice is to continue the treading process, continue preparing the clay, and continue to mold the clay. We really do not get off the wheel until our commission is done. What happens next is in verse 4 in Jeremiah 18,

“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.”

He keeps remolding us. He deals with something He sees that is not supposed to be there, including if He has to taking us back to the treading process to start all over again. Now in a sense, He has done that with us because Adam became marred, but now through Christ we are an un-marred piece of clay. However, that does not mean everything will go just according to plan because unfortunately He gave us a will to choose. Sometimes we choose to lean left or lean

right or whatever direction you want to lean, and even though we are in the Potter's hands, it throws the whole mold off. Then He decides to start all over again or where He left off before you got off track. If He has to, He will start treading us down again, He will start beating us, He will start slapping us around, He will start throwing us up in the air and slamming us down. ***“For whom the Lord loveth, he trains;”*** meaning He will not let go. He has a hold of you.

We are in His hands during all this process. All during this preparation, the potter is gauging the purity and consistency of the clay. It does not mean we are pure white snow with no sin. He knows what is there. That is why I said we are a work in progress, but He will work those things out. When I try to do it on my own, I always fail and fall flat on my face. It is the goal of the Potter, our Lord, to prepare the clay so the mixture is just right and ready to be placed on the potter's wheel for shaping. This may be the most important time in the preparation process for the clay to become something useful, something desirable, something valuable, and something beautiful that the potter envisioned when He first went down to the pit.

Remember as tough as it might be sometimes, all of us must be prepared for use and to submit ourselves to the cleansing and the kneading process of God. No one is excluded. He knows what He is producing; He knows what his intention is for us. Thank God we have been cleansed by the blood and the water—the water and the blood—because that is part of preparing the clay now to be molded.

I will continue with step 3 in the next chapter. To review: First is choosing the clay. Next is preparing the clay and everything else that I have preached. Thank God we are in our Master's hands, the one who knows what He is doing. Thank you, Jesus.

Kun

Open your Bibles to Jeremiah 18, verses 1 through 4. Just about every preacher has preached this very popular message. Authors have written scores of material about this chapter in a more personalized way about how the Potter deals with the clay. A quick review is:

1. The Potter – God or Jesus Christ
2. The clay – us
3. The process – make something desirable, useful and valuable

The reason why the Potter even takes us to the wheel is to make something out of us and some steps needed to be taken during this process. The first step is choosing the clay. The next step is preparing the clay. Once again, we are the clay in these steps. The third step which the potter takes is in Jeremiah 18:3 where He centers the clay on the stone, the wheel to make something desirable, something useful, and something valuable for His purpose, His honor, and His glory. Verse 3 tells us,

“Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.”

This is where we continue in this chapter on the potter's house. If you look at these verses, when God sent Jeremiah down to the potter's house and said, ***“I will cause thee to hear my words”***, God intended to draw something from this that Jeremiah would experience here in these scriptures. He would draw some distinct parallels between the Potter's processes of making clay vessels, me and you, and all the steps in the process that God employs in making human vessels to carry out His will. When you analyze everything I have preached we are the clay in this hear-my-words narrative that Jeremiah was to experience.

As I pointed out in the second step of preparing the clay, once the clay is brought out of the miry pit and washed, cleansed, tread on, folded over, kneaded, stomped on, slammed down, all the necessary things that needed to happen to soften and prepare the clay, it finally gets placed on the wheel, ***“and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.”*** I also went to Psalms 40:2, a Psalm I could read all day, every day. So much jumps out, it just excites me. Hopefully it excites you too. It tells us,

“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit [or a noisy pit], out of the miry clay, and [He] set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.”

This clay is set on a potter's wheel. Remember to keep this in context and picture what was used back then, not how we make pottery today even though it is similar. Once that lump of clay has been washed, cleansed, stomped, kneaded, all the things that needed to happen, it finally gets put on a stone, a rock, to be worked. Also, in this verse the Hebrew word for *established* is **kun** and has amazing definitions. It can mean *fixed, ordered, directed, determined, make ready, to prepare something*. There is something I want to point out about this word **kun**. In this verse,

“set. . . upon a rock, and established my goings”, what do you think is happening here when this Hebrew word is used, not just in this verse in Psalms 40, but in other verses also throughout scripture in the Old Testament? Let me read something about this word.

“The main idea is to bring something into existence.”

Before we were rescued by Jesus Christ from the pit, we may have believed we were special, but we were not. Unless we are rescued by Jesus Christ, we are headed to a terrible existence here and sooner or later time will catch up with us and we start realizing what we have done. What a miserable feeling that could be. I cannot even imagine having no eternal hope.

“The main idea is to bring something into existence. This process passes through five phases.”

Those five phases begin with formation, which we see in Psalms 40:2, *“... and set my feet upon a rock, and [He] established...”* or *makes firm, makes you ready, prepares, fixes, orders, or directs*. Any these words can define the word *kun*. Additionally, when *kun* is used, it comes with a greater definition than in most Hebrew dictionaries because there is a process this word takes us through, with a deeper meaning and understanding of what God has done for us, what He is doing, what He is making us ready for throughout our life and beyond. Formation is the initial preparation stage.

The second phase is interesting as it is *an actual preparation for a future event such as a military campaign*. I am sorry to those who do not want to hear this because it is not an easy road. This may cause a few to stop reading at this point, but yes, this is about spiritual warfare again. Listen, I try daily to leave it out just to give myself a break from it. That is how stupid I get on occasion so you are not alone. Let me read it again, the second phase is *an actual preparation for a future event such as a military campaign*.

I have preached on I Timothy 1:18 so many times you probably have it memorized. In both letters Paul is reminding Timothy of the warfare.

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;” which is *kun* in the Hebrew.

These processes bring a deeper understanding of how God establishes us, obviously by formation, the initial preparation, and now a preparation for a future event from the time He called and chose us, such as a military campaign for a spiritual preparation *“that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.”* The word *war* means to lead soldiers into war and battle. God is molding us for a spiritual war that goes on in the unseen that we must be prepared to fight against, not by our might, but by His. He is doing the molding and He is preparing us, and He knows what He wants us to accomplish in this spiritual fight we are in. How many times have you heard me preach on II Timothy 2:3?

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs [the things] of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

It is a very unique word here in the Greek which means to *enlist into active service other soldiers*. That means participating in something, either preaching it or helping the preacher get the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others so they understand they need to come out of the miry pit and they cannot get themselves out of it. Only by and through Jesus Christ will that happen period.

The third phase of *kun* is that **God established** [or fixed] **the heavens. One can be sure that God created the world and has it under control.** He has it under control, so He establishes things whether it is the heavens or you and me. We are under His control. He has *kunned* us.

Kun also comes with the understanding that **it refers to an establishment of a dynasty.** If you study or read history, or have heard a teacher or professor teach about past dynasties, emperors or kingdoms have tried to develop an everlasting dynasty. The Bible calls them beasts in some cases depending on what dynasty it refers to. None ever have developed this everlasting dynasty. They eventually all fail. But when God orders it, He is establishing our goings because He knows how He wants to see those things turn out, including being a joint heir. Because of Jesus Christ, He has established us in His dynasty! **Without God, no human line** [in the secular world throughout history] **can be perpetuated forever.** They tried and it all failed, but with God it will succeed because we are in His dynasty ruler-ship. We are His, but it does not mean your children or grandchildren are part of it. They must come to the same conclusion as you did that Jesus is the only way. If they do, they are in the dynasty also; the dynasty that God has established and part of the kingdom of God.

The last interesting phase that comes with *kun*, and I will add some verses with it, is **the deep satisfaction and a sense of well-being comes from the certainty that our hearts are fixed upon God; we can be confident that He will direct our paths.**

Before I show what this has to do with the potter's house, go to Psalms 112:7. This verse tells us,

“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:”

This verse gives the reasons why before that, but this includes whatever we are facing now or in the future. I can think of one right now, a young person who has to deal with something. This verse says we shall not be afraid if we are centered on the wheel because God has placed us there and He knows how to do the centering.

“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:” Whatever anyone is facing including myself because, ***“his heart [mine, yours] is fixed...”*** Fixed means *kun* in the Hebrew. *Kun* is trusting in the Lord. This is a type of trust that brings on confidence. Let the evil tidings come, my God is greater and He has established my goings. It might not be a smooth road I am traveling on and it might have some bumps on it, but I know Jesus Christ is driving this vehicle. He is my potter and He knows how to mold me, He knows what He eventually wants to see of me, how to put me to use, and He knows He can deal with anything that comes in its path to interfere with that process. There are always repercussions and responsibilities with mistakes, but it does not mean that God does not take that lump of clay [including myself] and knows how to center us back on the wheel to keep

molding us as He works out those problems for us and as we face those problems according His desire and will. If He can **kun** the heavens, establish the heavens, I think He can do anything in our lives. Otherwise, do not believe any of God's Word.

Psalms 37:23 tells us,

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.”

First, the word *good* is not in the original, so scratch it out. This verse should really say,

“The steps of a man [or woman] are ordered [or kunned] by the LORD:”

And this is with all the definitions including all the process of understanding what this word means behind the definitions applies in each of these verses.

“The steps of a man are kunned by the LORD:”

Has anybody asked how the Lord is directing your path? Well, He is **kunning** us, but the problem is sometimes we do not want to be centered on the wheel. We are eccentric; we are off-centered. To drive the point home, Proverbs 16:9 tells us,

“A man's heart deviseth his way:”

How many times have we tried to figure out how to get out of our problems and circumstances? How many times do we just seem to think we know better than God? How many times have you said to God [and maybe you have not, but I admit I have], “God, you should listen to me on occasion. After all, I am in this tent of human flesh. Listen in! Take some of my advice.” I can hear God now saying, “Stupid fool” and that is probably putting it nicely.

“A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.”

We think we have it all figured out and know the path we are going down. We think we know the direction to our destination because we think we know more than God. I have news for you; thank God He does not give up on us that easily. The Lord **kunned** his steps. There again, He has *established* it. He has *fixed*, He has *ordered*, He has *made ready*, and He has *determined* his way, and his steps.

“A man's heart deviseth wherever the LORD kunned his way.”

In Jeremiah 10:23 tells us,

“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct [kun] his steps.”

In other words, Jeremiah is saying we do not have a clue! I do not care who you are, if you do not let Jesus into your life and take control, you will say the same thing, ***“O LORD, I know that***

the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to kun [or establish and order] his steps.”

He goes on to say in verse 24,

“O LORD, correct me...”

Or “O Lord, establish me, O Lord, make me ready, O Lord, direct me, O Lord, restore me, O Lord, prepare me, O Lord, *kun* me.”

Returning to Psalms 40:2 we read,

“He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and kunned my goings.”

He made me to stand firm, He ordered me, He fixed me, He makes me ready, He restores me, He prepares me in my goings, but something had to happen first. Obviously getting out of the pit in preparing the clay, but now I want to concentrate on the words *“and set me upon a rock”*. There is a reason why the clay gets prepared or gets softened up as we would say today, and then immediately placed on a rock. You might ask yourself what rock is this? This is our rock, Jesus the Christ. Our wonderful, great Potter has already determined, has already ordered, and has already fixed in His mind what kind of vessel He wants to make out of us. He knows the path He will take, but we must be placed on a rock and the rock is Jesus Christ.

Even though we might be guessing at times, maybe wondering, I sure do, the path that He is taking, I want you to have the confidence that the Lord knows how to direct our paths and our steps. He is the God that *kuns*. He established not only the heavens, but what happens in our lives when He takes us out of that pit. He has placed us on the wheel, on the rock, and that rock is none other than Jesus Christ. I want you to dwell on this message until I take us to the wheel through God's Word.

Continued. . .

Be Centered on Jesus Christ

A quick review on the potter's house in Jeremiah 18:1-4 is:

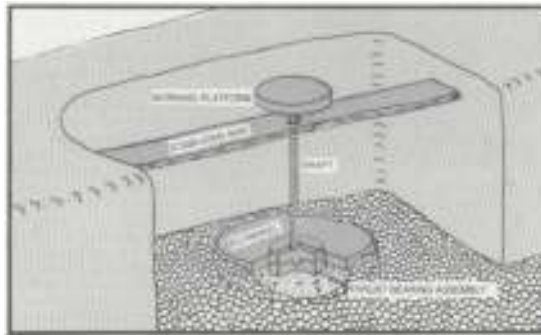
1. The Potter - God or Jesus
2. The clay - us
3. The Process - make something desirable, useful and valuable

In this story, we looked at some of the processes taken during this molding process. As I have preached, we are selected and really very fortunate to be taken out of the pit to be made into something desirable, useful, and valuable for the Lord Jesus Christ. The steps are:

1. Choosing the clay
2. Preparing the clay
3. Centering the clay

I also went to Psalms 40:2, and other verses throughout God's book, looking at the word *kun*. In the King James, it means *established*. It could also be *ordered*, *fixed* and so on. In this chapter I want to get back to centering the clay for one purpose; to be Christ centered. You hear it a lot, but we will touch on it somewhat as we continue through Jeremiah 18:1-4. We are now at the point in verse 3,

“Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.”



This is a picture of an Old Testament potter's wheel. In Jeremiah's day, it consisted of two stones. One of the stones was a lower, thick, round, flat stone that was larger and heavier than the other stone that was connected by a wooden shaft to a smaller stone that weighed less than the larger, heavier, flat stone. The smaller stone was less in weight and size, and had a flat top where the potter [verse 3] placed the clay. The smaller top stone was the working surface.

Now we [the clay] are placed on the wheel, and the Potter, being God or Jesus Christ in Jeremiah 18:1-4, turns the heavier bottom stone with his foot, which then drives the top wheel in circles and the Potter [God] would control the speed of that turning stone as it went round and round.

The Potter [God] knows exactly the right speed. Sometimes I question that and I am sure you have also questioned it sometimes thinking the Lord was going too slow or too fast, but He knows the right speed for what He wants to accomplish with the work He is doing on that particular vessel, us. Remember, we are the clay.

On the small stone, the top wheel, the Potter would place the clay He chose and prepared in all the ways I have taught in the past messages. Stay with me and put the spiritual understanding to this story. He would place the chosen, prepared clay [us] on this top wheel to continue His work. That is where we are now in the potter's house and the work He is doing on the wheel.

As Psalms 40:2 states, the Potter has taken us [the clay] out of that horrible and noisy pit, the pit of this world. He has prepared us and placed us on the rock and now He has established us in our path, or *kunned* us in our path. Now stop and think about this. He has taken us out of the pit, He has prepared us, and now He has placed us on this rock and established, fixed, ordered our paths in all the definitions that went with *kun*. It is much like the story in the Gospels in Matthew 16 starting in verse 13,

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? [In other words, Christ said, “That is what they are saying, but who do you think I am?”]

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [or Petros in Greek, a little stone or stone], and upon this rock [or petra, rock, as Christ is the rock of the church] I will build my ekklesia [church or the Christians that He calls out for His desirable, useful, and valuable purposes]”

Before beginning this message, I was thinking about how the New Testament even reflects on this story in Jeremiah. We are placed on the rock, not on a disciple. Your faith is not based on some disciple. Your faith may be because of what you heard a disciple preach or teach, or maybe something that I have said, but it is not based on me. It is based on what I communicated about Him because He is the rock. The whole purpose of this message is that we need to be on the rock to be molded, which is exactly what Jesus said; ***“upon this rock I will build my church”***. He will build you and me for His desirable, useful, and valuable purposes, ***“and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”***, or literally *be superior of any strength*. Nothing has changed. Throughout God's Word the message is always the same, be centered on Jesus Christ, which I have said for years!

In Jeremiah 18:3, after the Potter places this lump or glob of clay, I will use myself as an example, on the wheel and sets it to spin He just does not leave us there spinning. He places His hands on the clay, on us. He does not abandon us spinning on the wheel, the rock, the stone. He places His hands on us. At first you might think the first placement of the hands of God on us, this lump of clay, is to shape us. But this is where I disagree with so many. It is not God's first

intention once He has us in His hands on the stone, the wheel, to shape us because anybody who has ever done any pottery work like I have [I have studied it quite a bit], you just do not take the clay and start making whatever you are trying to make. It is not something that happens automatically. Once God places His hands on the clay, because He is the Potter, it is not to shape the clay. I am sure most of you thought it is the next step in this process. No, it is not. What the potter must do before the shaping ever takes place is to center the clay. If the clay is not centered, a host of problems will develop. So, He places His hands on us and then He centers us, assuming at that point we are not resisting the Potter's centering. If we resist in the process the potter must start over and center the clay again.

Once on the wheel, the clay does not automatically center itself. In context in Jeremiah's time, a lump of clay, on the rock does not just move to the center on its own. That is not how it happened. I know I am being very simple here, but I am trying to make a very strong point. The clay does not center itself! It is that the clay allows the pressure of the hand of God to firmly position the clay to the center point. To be Christ centered means we submit ourselves to the Potter's hands so He does the centering. There is no way around it. Even today, He wants to center us on the rock. I do not think Jeremiah had the luxury of understanding exactly what was going to be available about 600 years later and that was Jesus Christ coming down, the only begotten Son of God. But the Potter wants us to be centered on the rock, Jesus Christ. It is not good enough to just be on the rock. There are a lot of people confessing that they are on the rock, and they are Jesus Christ's disciple. As long as it is on their terms, they will profess it all day long, but it is not good enough. It is not enough to be on the rock, we must be centered on the rock. That means we submit the control to Him to center us in order to become the potential that God sees in us to be useful, valuable, and to be of service to Him.

All people are born eccentric. Most people understand the definition of eccentric as a noun, but I think the definition when used as an adjective is being communicated in this potter's message. When most people say a person is eccentric, the definition is *a person who has an unusual, peculiar, or odd personality, set of beliefs, or behavioral patterns*. When a person is eccentric, the definition basically means to be off centered. It is how most people use the word today in its noun form. But changed to an adjective and it has a different meaning than just a personality quirk. As an adjective the dictionary definition is *deviating from a recognized center. In geometry it is not having the same center; not concentric; not situated in the center. In machinery, it is having the axis or support away from the center. Astronomically it is describing something that is deviating from a circular form or an elliptical orbit.*” In other words, it is creating its own orbit.

I read those definitions today and I said to myself, boy, how many Christians are creating their own orbit? This is discipleship on their own terms. They are telling the potter, “I don't need you to center me on the rock. I can find my way and do it myself. I know what Jesus wants for me.” They are hotshot know-it-alls for Jesus. It means to be off center, away from the center, or the axis of the center; to have an elliptical pattern or orbit. If you really think about it everyone is born into this world eccentric or off centered. There are no exceptions to the rule and there is no doubt about it. We need to be rescued. That is the first step in the process. Christ came to provide salvation to rescue us, but then we must be centered because everyone is born into this world off center. We must become centered on the rock, Jesus Christ, placed in His hands and submitting to His masterful hand to become what He will produce. Many, many people are centered on so

many different things that are available in this world today, and most people are centered on themselves. They create plans in their own orbit to follow that is acceptable to them and they try to suck others into their orbit. Some of them are crafty, some are devious. We have all sinned, we have all fallen, and we have all gone astray. The problem is too many Christians today understand the salvation Jesus Christ provided, but do not want the discipleship because they want to stay in their own elliptical orbit and redefine what discipleship is and then place it on their particular orbit. They are the ones who are off course.

To make it plain and simple, Christ wants us to be centered on Him, not self-centered. How many self-centered people do you know, starting with yourself, starting with me? When is the last time anyone said to you, "We must be Christ centered; we must be placed on the rock no matter what He does with us." We must remain Christ centered as a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Let's search out, dig in and not deviate from what He wants us to become; desirable, useful, and valuable for Him. Do not ask what Jesus can do for you today. Those are self-centered fools. How many times have I said that Christianity is not all about you? Self-centered fools tend to believe everything is always about them. No, it is not. Do not think that because you go to church, are religious, belong to this or that group, believe in this or that doctrine, that you are centered on Christ. It takes more than that. Affiliation is not enough! That is why the church is dead for the most part. It has become all man-made self-centered doctrines that preach to itching ears knowing what they want to hear to keep their pews filled and the money flowing in. Churches now provide programs, projects, and feel good things to do that only keep members in the inner circle of their church so they do not drift somewhere else. Those churches will do anything all under the name of Jesus Christ. But not here, and I think those of you who have been around for a while already know that.

In these verses we see the potter cannot begin to form the vessel that he wants to produce until the clay is centered. If the clay is not centered, the following passage tells the result.

"The result in aspect of the vessel, it would become too thin [If the clay was not centered.] even in modern pottery making devices, while others too thick. [In other words, one side would be too thin and one side would be too thick if it was off centered.] The result of the thick side pressing upon the thin side with its weight and mass during the drying process, the vessel would crack under the stress."

I cannot explain it better than that. That is what happens when we are self-centered, off centered, and not Christ centered. Think about what it eventually produces. A crackpot! One who refuses to be under the control and masterful hands of Jesus Christ who has determined how He wants us to turn out. Therefore, if you do not want to be controlled by Him or submit to His wonderful, masterful hands, you will justify that you are just as usable as any other vessel the Potter is making. That is how self-delusional you are. If I decided I do not want to submit to His masterful hands to produce what He wants to produce for me, I would be a useless crackpot myself and the same is true for you. We seem to like to justify that we can still be usable by God, not maybe the way He wanted us, but we are still usable. No, it is all or nothing. Either you are under His complete control under His hands or you are not. You cannot have it both ways. It does not work that way.

With all that being said, how does the Potter center the clay on this wheel? There are different sizes, consistencies, and weights of clay, and even the purpose for the clay in the long run the way God wants us to turn out or the way the Potter wants the vessel to turn out. What does the Potter do? I am going to read another definition.

“First, he speeds up the wheel and places his hands as guides at the borders which are acceptable to him and best for the vessel in which he envisions in the clay. After making sure there is enough water on the clay to keep it soft and moldable without getting too sloppy to change form, the potter keeps his hands on the clay until it is centered.”

That is amazing! The Potter knows what He is doing. The Potter knows how much speed, how much water, how much of everything that is needed to center us on Jesus Christ. He knows it! We have it available right here in God's Word to understand it. We are not being led blindly in these last days. We have more than any generation before us so after reading those definitions, how does the Potter know when the clay is centered? How does the Potter know that!? I have already given the only answer; when the clay no longer resists the Potter's hands, but submits to the Potter's hands what the Potter is trying to produce. When we stop fighting the Potter, the clay [us] is centered.

So many people have been called, many have been taken out of the pit, many have been prepared for the shaping of the clay and they find themselves living on the wheel and the wheel is always turning, but they are also resistant to the Potter's hands. What a sad state to be in. They think the Potter is invading their space or they do not like the pressures. They want to remain on their eccentric elliptical orbit; a life they have chosen for themselves without too much interference from God. They keep turning and spinning around, and they keep coming back around to the same old place on the wheel, one side too thick, one side too thin, one side too thick, one side too thin. Why? Because they are not centered on the wheel and on the rock. Those types can never be true disciples of Jesus Christ until they learn how to submit.

I will get to obedience in this Discipleship Series. This series will probably take a year to go through. I will probably lay down more foundation and cover more ground than most written or preached discipleship material. It is not a popular subject if it is rightly divided these days. True disciples of Jesus Christ, not professing ones, are created only after we submit and are Christ centered after we stop resisting the Potter's hands, the hands of God. Like clay, if we keep resisting we can dry out on the wheel. Do not let that happen. Otherwise, it is probably better to stay in the pit. I know that seems rough, but to resist God is a dangerous place to be. To resist God is to live a life of self-centeredness that produces a self-made crackpot you think will be desirable, useful, and valuable for Jesus Christ. No! Do not be eccentric by being self-centered. Just don't do it! Understand what you must submit to and willingly do it. I am not saying it is easy and you will jump off the wheel any time soon. That is the furthest thing from the truth, but I am saying you must be Christ centered. Do not become a crackpot. Yield to the Lord Jesus Christ's masterful hands. Get centered on the rock and let God begin to form and shape you to create what only He now sees—no one else can, not even you or me—what we are to become.

Stay centered on the wheel by submitting to Him and His wonderful, masterful hands. He knows what He is doing and He has everything under control. He has *kunned* us. He established us. He

has a fixed order for us. He knows what is best for us. Remember to be Christ centered in everything involving the centering process. Submit to Him and it is your first step to being obedient to what His will is for you and that is denying yourself, taking up the cross, and following Him in His likeness.

I will continue next time with the shaping process on this journey through Jeremiah 18:1-4.

Continued. . .

Pressure and Shaping

I want to quickly recap what I have been preaching on in Jeremiah 18:1-4:

1. The Potter - God
2. The clay – us
3. The process – make something desirable, useful and valuable

We established from the beginning who the Potter was, and then we looked at some of the steps the Potter takes. The first is choosing the clay by going down to the horrible, noisy pit in Psalms 40:2 to bring us out. Remember, we are the clay. The next step is preparing the clay and I went through the process of how it is done. The last message was about centering the clay. This centering is by God. We are to be Christ centered, not self-centered. This series also included a message on the Hebrew word *kun* and how He establishes our goings in the process between steps number three and four.

The next step is shaping the clay and is for the same purpose as the other steps; to make something desirable, something useful, and something valuable. The process of shaping the clay is probably the least desirable for the clay, because the shaping process involves pressure, and who likes pressure. I know some people who say, they thrive under pressure. Yes, maybe pressure like deadlines to get something accomplished, but not the kind of pressure that involves afflictions, hardships, trials, and tribulations. This is *thlipsis* in the Greek, the squeezing type of pressure. Who likes that!? Like I said, I am not referring to simplistic-type pressures such as a project deadline. It might involve some pressure, but it is not the kind of pressure like *thlipsis*, the hardships and afflictions, trials and tribulations.

So why must we go through this shaping process? After all, God has us centered on the wheel. He has washed us with His Word to prepare us. Obviously He chose and brought us out of that horrible pit and we are now Christ centered. Why are we not a finished product without the pressure and the shaping? Some of you might be facing things that you do not know how you will handle in the future and you already know what those pressures, those problems, those troubles, those afflictions are. I am sure there are people in addition to myself who can identify with that. We do not just skip this shaping process because it is not our choice. We are not the boss. If we are now Christ centered, we really do not have any authority to have any say in this process. Go to Romans 9:20,

“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?”

Hey you spiritual know-it-all hotshots. Do you think you have arrived where you can now have a conversation with God and tell him what you think is best for you?

“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed [meaning us, the clay] say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”

Some of you may have gone through past situations in your life and you repented, let's just call it

that, and became Christ centered not going by your way anymore, not establishing your own goings, but by letting God establish your goings as Psalms 40:2 declares. You basically said, “Well Lord, didn't I repent? Didn't you center me once again and I am on the right track? Why do I have to go this day forward and still be under the pressure, still in your masterful hands as you formed me?” By the way, He knows how much pressure the clay can handle. He has the right touch in other words. You might not think that God has the right touch sometimes. At times I think that saying, “That's too much pressure! Back off Lord, enough is enough! Do you really know what you are doing!?” You are getting some insight on how I communicate to God sometimes. But then I also tell myself, “Who are you, you spiritual hotshot? He is forming you and making you thus.” Verse 21 goes on to say,

“Hath not the potter power over the clay....”

Power in the Greek means *power and authority*. God has the power and the authority. We do not have the power and the authority over what is to be shaped and formed.

“Hath not the potter power over the clay....”

He has the right to make whatever He wants to make and form whatever He wants to form out of this lump of clay. He knows the desirable, useful, and valuable purpose in what He is producing. God does not design every vessel the same. He has different purposes for different vessels. In general, there is pottery that stores food, pottery that stores water, pottery that stores wine, pottery that just stores water so it can be poured, which is another subject. Each one of us is uniquely shaped and formed according to His purposes. We might not like those purposes, but He is forming us for a specialized use. That means we are special to Him and He has an important reason why He is doing what He is doing in our lives. We have no right, no power, and no authority over it. We can plead to Him, we can request, we can ask for strength if that pressure seems a little too much, but He knows what He is doing.

Many Christians want to be independent. They want to be their own ministry by themselves. Fine, be that. In this case, God's Word established in Ephesians 4, starting with verse 11, a principle how not just His Word, but the people He chooses to develop you through His Word, not through them, not through me, but me through His Word. There is a difference. I am not trying to make replicas of myself because you do not want to be me. Through His Word, there is a repairing and mending that takes place through His gift ministries which I will get to. Paul lays down that principle clearly in Ephesians 4:11. Let's read it.

“And he gave some, apostles;”

I do not think apostles like the original apostles exist any longer, but there are still apostles today. You can put any title you want on any one of these gift ministries, but the literal meaning of an apostle was *one that was sent forth with orders*, in this case sent forth with the Gospel for the perfecting of the saints.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets;”

Also, the word *gave* means *to give something to someone to take advantage of as a gift*. Why do you think I am so open with your communication? When I think you are spiritually out of step, I do not hesitate, through God's Word, to show you that you are off step or that maybe you misunderstood God's Word probably because of some past teaching that was not rightly divided. Whatever these ministry positions are listed in Ephesians, they are given so we can take advantage of them because they are gifts given to us so we can get the full benefit from them.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”

The word *prophet* here means *one whom God speaks through* now through His Word in the New Testament. An *evangelist* is a bringer of the Good News of the good tidings of the Gospel. For what?

“For the perfecting of the saints...”

In the Greek, *perfecting* could also easily mean *preparing or perfecting*, and this word comes from a root word which means *to mend, repair, or restore to a working order*. I really like the last definition about getting someone or something into shape. If you are following and listening to somebody rightly dividing the Word of God, it will do all these things for the reason that follows,

“for the work of the ministry...”

Work is *ergon* in the Greek and will perfect, prepare, mend, or restore you into working for the employment of the Word of God in the capacity that God has called you. Most of you are in support of one of these gift ministries. In a general and personal sense, it could be to a family member, it could be to a friend, or it could be an acquaintance,

“for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man [really unto a more completed man], unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

That we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness [or false-ism literally], whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, Christ:”

You must realize those who teach and minister the Word to you are used by God to mold you as a potter would mold the clay like into the likeness of Christ, not my likeness. God forbid. You would not want to be me anyway, but we all want to be in His likeness. This is not only through the Word, but through the ones who minister the Word to you are applying the pressure, so to speak, through the rightly divided Word of God to shape and form you for the employment of the Word of God in the capacity you were called to participate. This is nothing new. I have preached this for years now.

The fourth point is that shaping requires pressure. If you do not like that, neither do I! So we are

in the same boat together. However, I believe there is always an upward type of pressure if you read the story in Jeremiah 18 and understand how a potter would shape the clay in his day. I am not talking about modern techniques, even though some of it is still applies today. There was a certain type of pressure like clamping down on it from top to bottom, not the kind of pressure that flattens, but an upward pressure and an outward pressure. That means this pressure was not a downward pressure that we get from Satan and his demons and evil cohorts. So why does God allow Satan to apply that downward pressure? That is how our faith gets tested; in the trials, in the heat of the fire to see if it comes out more precious than gold. It needs to be tested. The way God shapes and forms us, the way God applies pressure is an upward and outward pressure for a purpose. In Jeremiah 18, what were Jeremiah's instructions? He was told to,

***“go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.
Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.”***

Jeremiah heard God's words, but we only were told what he saw. There is a deeper meaning to these four verses than what is usually preached, which is why I have taken more time here. This is not a message to understand quickly. There is so much to be learned when observing how the Potter relates to the clay and what he does with it in these verses.

The pressure from the potter is an upward pressure. God wants to lift us up higher. Satan wants to bring us down. Think about it. He wants to lift us up higher because He knows His purpose for us is something useful and valuable. Satan wants to make us useless for God's purposes so he has that downward pressure. Philippians 3:14 tells us,

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

It can easily be said the upward calling. We press toward the mark even though the race is not easy, but even Paul knew the prize was an upward call. Here in the King James it says *high calling*. Even though I am using it as an example in Jeremiah 18:1-4, this concept is seen throughout all scripture, the upward and outward expansion to create more of a capacity for us to receive the Holy Spirit so it can create what it wants to create and form for God's purposes to the work of the ministry. God does not push us down. He wants to lift us up and He has us in His hands. He is trying with that upward calling to draw us to Him. At the same time, He is trying to also enlarge our capacity. That means a vessel that can contain everything the Holy Spirit is designed to do with us, so without the right type of pressure none of that can be accomplished or be of any use to God if it was not applied correctly. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus Christ, the eternal rewards, and the reasons why this pressure is applied is to prepare us now even for the next forever adventure, if you want to call it that, so we must understand why we are under pressure now.

I am saying we have pressures, *thlipsis*, because pressures try to bring us down, but there are also pressures that take those circumstances and lift us up and outward. Without an outward and upward pressure, we will not have any spiritual development. Without pressure, there is no spiritual development. Even though I do not like the pressure, I really dislike the pressure that sometimes comes with the shaping and the forming. I know God is establishing my path, He establishes my goings, He had *kunned* me, He has me in His hands, He has His masterful hands

controlling the type of pressure that not only draws me to Him in an upward fashion, but also expanding me out so my capacity to receive Him becomes greater. That is the Fruit of the Spirit.

There is something unique in these verses in Jeremiah when this vessel or lump of clay is being formed with the constant upward pressure as it begins to take shape. You might even tell yourself I know what God is trying to form now. We begin picturing in our mind what type of shape we are meant to take. Sometimes we try to jump ahead and put our hands in there as well telling God that we can begin to form on our own without Him. But then, the next thing you know, the vessel begins to look ugly and out of shape again. We think we have a good idea of what God's intended use of that vessel will be, but that is just the exterior appearance. The interior part is next, but I want you to understand what Jeremiah saw and experienced at that potter's house. As the exterior of this vessel under masterful hands is taking shape, starting to look good on the outside it does not mean that it is much of a pottery piece yet. It just means that we are in the forming process.

What happens next is tough because the potter sticks to the old school type of pottery making by taking his fingers and forcing them down into the center of the vessel. In the spiritual sense, the Holy Spirit begins working on the inner man. The potter forces his fingers inside the inner vessel. In the pottery world that part is called the heart. God works on the exterior and when He is almost done with the exterior, He digs in deep and starts working on the interior. There is a total man change in other words, not just one part here, one part there. Too many Christians only look like Christians on the exterior, but as for the interior, they told God to keep His hands off and not touch their hearts. They are not true disciples of Jesus Christ.

His hands and fingers work everywhere and molds inside the vessel. If the Potter does not do that, then the vessel cannot contain anything because there is no inside to the vessel. The vessel will only look good on the outside, but it will have no usefulness except to just stick it on a shelf and look pretty with no useful purpose except for people to gawk at it. Plenty of Christians like to have people gawk at them seeing how they did this or that, or did not do this or that. But they are useless pieces of clay that only allowed God to do half the work.

In the pottery world, the bigger the inside the more the inside will develop, meaning it can contain more so it can pour out more. Do you understand this? Throughout scripture in the psalms and other places, scripture speaks of a God who expands and enlarges our heart. The Potter gets in there and depending on what He wants for you, He also expands your capacity for His purposes and what He wants from us and the Potter has the authority to do that. You do not! Psalms 119 is one example in scripture that talks about the heart and its capacity. This is one of those psalms that seems like it never ends and some may wonder why it was written. Verse 32 tells us,

“I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

In our case we could say instead of *commandments*, “I will run because you are in charge, O Lord. You have the authority and the power. You are the only one who has the ability to implant all the attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit in me to enlarge my capacity.”

I Samuel 16, a very familiar story about when Samuel anoints David to be king, with another example in verse 7,

“But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him [Saul]: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”

That is why He must mold or form the inner man, the heart, not just the exterior change. He enlarges our capacity to make room for what He wants to implant in us through His Holy Spirit. The outward appearance can be misleading, so at this stage of the vessel making, the Potter has one hand inside the vessel and one hand outside the vessel. That means He is working on the total person. Remember we are the clay in this story. He is working on the total man, both the outward and the inward!

In the ancient pottery world, there is another section of the vessel called coincidentally, the mouth. Some potters still use these terms, the mouth and the heart, today. After the potter had shaped and molded both the inward and outward parts of the vessel, now he goes to work on the topmost part of it which as I said is called the mouth. The mouth is vital and part of whatever is inside in the capacity that God created the heart of the vessel. Whatever will be poured out of that part of the vessel touches the mouth. I could spend the next three months or probably more preaching on just this one section of the vessel, but the mouth is vital. About that, Luke 6:45 tells us,

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart [the inner part] bringeth forth that which is good [because God is implanted in you and He is working on it]; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart [whatever is in there] his mouth speaketh.”

In the pottery world whatever the capacity is that the potter created called the heart, when the inner capacity of the vessel is poured out, it will go through the vital part, the mouth. Here, ***“that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”***, so ***“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”***

Whatever overflows out of the heart his mouth speaketh. God is not talking about whether you cuss or not. That is moron Christianity with its rules and regulations, and probably the least of Christ's concern. Stay in the spiritual things of God. The mouth influences and it affects everything that comes out of the heart. If it is evil, it is contaminated. If not, through Christ and His Word it is pure. There is a difference. It can change the whole nature and the way we relate to what the substance is and how it is received and perceived in the vessel. We read in Proverbs 18:21,

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue [the mouth again]: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.”

The whole chapter of James 3 concerns the tongue, and verse 1 tells us,

“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation [or judgment].

For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect [or completed] man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

Behold, also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

Even so the tongue [the mouth] is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

And the tongue [or the mouth] is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”

The word, *course*, is also used in the Greek and we could put *the wheel of how something rises and forms*. To tie this into this message on the potter's wheel, we could translate this verse to say of this little member, ***“that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of what nature or whatever is on the wheel that rises and forms,”*** In other words, the mouth can do a lot of damage. Verse 7 continues,

“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: [we tame animals]

But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. [It sure is, which is why the Holy Spirit, the attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit go to work on us.]

Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

This same message is said differently in the Gospels in Luke 6:45,

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

We know a fountain cannot yield both salt water and fresh at the same time. It will either be evil, as in Luke or good. Either an attribute of the Fruit of the Spirit is flowing through us because it has been implanted by the Holy Spirit as God reaches in and increases our capacity to receive what He wants us to receive because He is developing our heart for what His purposes are.

Whatever is in there will flow through our tongue and mouth and will be poured out. When these verses are all tied together, and these are just some of them, and they are rightly divided, these

verses just leap off the pages saying we cannot do this on our own. The Potter must have His hands on us and He must design us, forming both in the inner and outer part of the vessel. That is why we need to be Christ centered and why He chose and prepared us. He knows what He wants to do with us.

I want to finish by giving these examples of how ancient pottery worked. Even some modern pottery uses some of the old principles. The thing you need to always remember is that God always has us in His hands. As the Potter works with the clay that becomes a vessel, His hands never leave the vessel. The Potter always has His hands on the vessel. Even when the Potter reaches for some water, He has at least one hand on the vessel. When the Potter reaches for a forming tool, one hand is still on the vessel. God keeps His hands on us! His promise is that He will never leave us nor forsake us. With the type of pressure to enlarge our capacity for that high calling, He gently uses that upward pressure, that right touch as I said earlier because He knows what He is doing. We only think we know best, but He knows what He is doing and while He is doing it He never leaves us nor forsakes us. He never takes His hands off us.

Even at the toughest times in my life when I know He is putting me through some tough training, when I come to my senses I realize that even through the most difficult times and the toughest training, He has always had His hands on my life, and that is the same promise for you. It is not exclusive for me. That promise is in God's Word for all who trust and faith in Jesus Christ. These promises are there. He will not let us go. He wants to form us for something desirable, useful, and valuable. He wants to increase our capacity into the image of His own Son and He will not let up. We just need to keep trusting and faithing in Him. I do not care what you are facing; I do not care what I am facing in the future, this I know even though I might not be able to see it, I trust and faith that His hands are on me. He will never leave me nor forsake me. He works the inner and outward appearance and He knows what He is doing from head to toe, from the heart to the outward appearance, to the tip of my tongue and I will sing His praises and glorify His name. The kind of God we serve is one that never lets go, one that never takes His hands off the vessel. I might not like the shaping, but it is there for a purpose. I might not even like the pressure. Satan is always trying to bring me down and make me a pancake; God has always had the upward and outward pressure to create my capacity to receive the Holy Spirit and all the attributes that go with it to make me into the vessel He wants to make me, and the same goes for you. Never forget it.

Am I done with this? No, we still have another step in the process to look at.

To be Continued. . .

The Fire

Jeremiah 18:1 begins,

*“The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,
Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.
Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.
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.
Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
O house of Israel [personalize this, put your name here. I am putting my name here, “O Joe”],
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.”*

Personalize this and insert your name as I have.

To quickly review:

1. The Potter – God or the Lord Jesus
2. The clay – us
3. The process – make something desirable, useful, and valuable

In this series, I have been showing all the steps and processes the potter takes from the beginning to the finished product. Not that this finished product will be done because I am a work in progress and so are you. We might become marred on occasion, but if need be God knows where He left off in how to mend this broken pot. However, the first step was, choosing the clay. In choosing the clay, He went down to the horrible, noisy pit. We looked at Psalms 40 and other places to see what God’s Word said about this step. Second was preparing the clay which includes cleansing the clay with water. Next was centering the clay, where we looked at the word **kun** and Psalms 40:2 to see how He establishes our goings. In centering the clay, the process is to keep us centered on Christ so we are Christ centered instead of self-centered. The fourth step was shaping the clay. Here, God, the potter, applies upward and outward pressure.

In this chapter I will talk about the next step, the fire. You may have thought you were done at the point of shaping and pressure, but now we also must be thrown into the fire. This is not a message where you will shout hurrah. If you really think about it, the part of choosing the clay, preparing the clay, or even centering the clay is not so bad if you are willing to be an obedient servant of Jesus Christ; if you turn your life over to Him and let Him center you. But then comes the shaping and pressure and now the fire. Now it is getting into areas that are not very comfortable.

Once we are formed and shaped through the right amount of pressure and the masterful hands of the Potter, you have a shaped vessel, but it is not done. If it becomes marred, it might be reshaped or thrown back into the fire again. Like I said, this is a work in progress. Throughout all scripture, the way these vessels become hardened is through trials of the fire. If a pot does not get

thrown into the fire, it will not stand up to normal usage. I know the different ways of drying clay, but back in the time period when this was written for our instruction today, we must apply what Jeremiah was caused to hear and see. We know faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God, through God's words, and through the example of the potter and the clay in the potter's house. The vessel will not stand up to normal usage or anything strenuous without the fire. Fire takes the clay, that raw clay vessel, even though it is shaped, and makes it stable for whatever useful purpose and desire the Potter's masterful hands intended it to be.

In the days of Jeremiah, clay was hardened three different ways. First, the vessel was dried by just putting it out in the sun to air dry. That was the simplest and easiest way, but it did not create a durable product. In fact, of all the three ways I will mention it was the least durable way of stabilizing the vessel. Even though it was the simplest and easiest way it was not the most stable and durable way. When put into even normal usage you could not depend on it to last, forget about any strenuous use.

The second method of drying was to bake the vessel in an oven. It was not as durable as the kiln fire process, but it was more durable than the air and sun dried process. In fact, the air dry process only removed about 30% of the water in the clay. Putting that into spiritual terms, the shortcut of air and sun drying only produced about 30% of the potential God wants us to become for His useful, desirable, and valuable purposes. This is shortcut Christianity taking the easy route. Who does not like to go to the beach, sit by a pool or in your backyard and absorb some sun rays? If that is all we had to do to be a Christian, I think we would have everybody signing up and not many leaving thinking, "Whoopee, now that is my kind of Christianity, enjoying the sun, lounging out at the beach, the poolside, the backyard or the park. Isn't it just great being a Christian? I am enjoying this." But you are only about 30% useful and will not last very long! In the oven drying method, we are more durable than the sun drying method, but it is still not something that potentially could last under stressful periods of use whether it was for storage or for other purposes.

The third method was to put the vessel in a kiln; a type of oven that heats up to over 2,000 degrees to bake the pottery. Now that is fiery hot, but the process produces the most durable and useful product. Comparing these methods to today's Christian world, we really have all three types. Very few Christians have been in the kiln fire, many are in the air dry category and the rest are oven baked. Most of Christianity preaches that it is okay to be air dried or oven baked to produce a true disciple of Jesus Christ. However, I cannot find anywhere in scripture where a true disciple of Jesus Christ does not have to be kiln baked in the fire. That word is spelled k-i-l-n. The first three letters are the first three letters of the English language kill. Believe me, sometimes you think you will be when you are in that type of fire when that type of heat is turned on.

Whatever you have been shaped or formed to be for Christ's purposes, vessels only reach that fire phase if you have submitted and yielded to the shaping and surrendering to the hand of the Potter. Otherwise, you would not get that far. If you do, the trial, or let's call it the heat, is part of the process. You cannot just go through only one step to be Christ centered, or go through the shaping by the fire. To be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, you must go through all of it. And when you get to the fire stage, do not settle for 30% or believe there is an easier way to be a Christian

and still have all the pleasures out of life that you want. You might get them, but do not expect them. True disciples of Jesus Christ go through the fire.

I have read I Peter 4:12 many times. It tells us,

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:”

In other words, do not think it is strange to be thrown into the fire or anything that came before it; the shaping, the pressure, the turning and surrendering your life over when you are not fighting the Master to center you. The fiery trial is to see if you will stand up to not just normal use, but the strenuous use of whatever vessel Christ formed you to be useful for His purposes. Do not be surprised or shocked. Do not get angry or mad at God, but rejoice! That is what verse 13 tells us,

“But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

I have to admit that is hard to do sometimes. Believe me recently there are few things to rejoice about if I look at my circumstances in the flesh. Through God and His Word and the instructions given, they not only prepare me for what I already knew was coming in some circumstances, but when it does get here, I rejoice. He is seeing if we can make it through the heat of the fire because He has something in mind for us to be put to a useful purpose for His glory. This verse is telling us that we go through trials so He can produce a desirable, useful, and valuable vessel, but also to bring Him glory. Rejoice because of the fire, the heat of the trial, or the heat of the furnace. It brings Him glory!

For another example, go to II Corinthians 4:7,

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels [or in jars of clay], that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

We are troubled [or pressed or hard pressed] on every side, yet not distressed [or not crushed]; we are perplexed, but not in despair [literally not all together without help];”

We are being shaped and pressured, but if the pressure comes from God, we are under His masterful hands and He knows what He is doing. He knows the exact amount of pressure not only to expand our heart's capacity but our usefulness which, by the way, we should rejoice and be glad of because it brings Him glory. God knows what He is doing, but there are times when we all take stupid pills and become marred. We think He does not know what He is doing and we take things into our own hands and what happens? In the pottery world, the pot cracks, brakes, maybe even shatters, but we do not despair because the Potter is there. Verse 9 goes on to say,

“Persecuted, but not forsaken [or abandoned]; cast down [or struck down], but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”

I have to remind myself at times to rejoice and understand that the Potter has us in His hands. I could go to so many other promises in God's Word concerning this particular subject, but I think you understand that once you are in the Potter's hands He will not desert us. That is as long as we do not become self-centered thinking that we have a better way of finishing the product, or you are not led to believe by some preacher who preaches a different way that really produces a 30% Christian like I mentioned earlier. This is the promise we have. The treasure in jars of clay, which is us, to show that this is all surpassing powers from God. It is not from us. If anything as we are pressed on every side, He is right there along with us because it brings Him glory also to see He produced a pot that will be useful and valuable for His purposes. He will see that we are desirable because He can see that the pot will be able to withstand anything and everything beyond just normal strenuous usage.

God took this mold, this clay, me and you, because I said to personalize this, and molded and fired us in the fiery furnace. He took this original glob of clay and as it goes through the processes as a work in progress in motion. It is too bad we cannot film our life to see where we have been, where we are now and God knows where we will be in the future. We probably would not recognize ourselves because we are in the process of being changed into something for the better and desirability of Christ for what His intentions are for us. We are changed because the Old Testament concept that is seen so often when you look at the tabernacle and the temple and everything involved in it, nothing changed in the New Testament. We are here and He is forming this vessel for two purposes: to serve and to lift Him up in worship. That was the concept He taught with the tabernacle and all the furnishings and everything that went with it in the Old Testament. When the tabernacle was no longer in a tent, Solomon made a temple. It was for people to find their place in the ministry and their personal lives to serve and to lift up Lord Jesus Christ or God in the Old Testament in worship.

Horizontally in the New and Old Testaments, we see to serve means that we horizontally serve one another when we bring the Word rightly divided to another individual who has never even heard of it. If they have heard of the Word of God, they might have been taught incorrectly, but now they need to be under someone's tutelage that is rightly dividing the Word of God, whether it is this ministry or someone else, to get that horizontal relationship going. There is also the vertical when we find ourselves worshiping and lifting our voices and our service to God. The vessel is not to just sit there to look pretty. It has a purpose.

Since I am in the New Testament go to Matthew 4:10. After Jesus was tempted by the devil, He finishes by saying,

“Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

Even then Christ told him to worship the Lord thy God. It makes me wonder what Christ was hoping for Satan after being tempted. Yes, He is quoting Deuteronomy 6 because Satan knew it was written. Do I think Satan would want to repent and worship God and serve Him only and stop being self-centered thinking he could be a god also? No, I really do not, but the Lord Jesus is reminding Satan of what God said back in the Old Testament. ***“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve”***. So the purpose of this vessel is not only horizontally

but vertically. As I said, we must serve one another and not in some of the ways you find other ministries proclaiming what that service is, and we are also here to worship God. You see that concept through all scripture from Old to New Testaments.

With that, all of this is an introduction to Jeremiah 18:4,

“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 [literally he returned and made it].”

Sometimes things do go wrong. Even after the vessel is made and put into a useful and valuable purpose, the vessel can become broken. Nobody wishes or hopes for that. I pray always that our faith fail not, but it can be dropped just as normal pottery can be dropped. To put some spiritual significance on that, you can drop away from following the Lord and start following afar off as Peter did just before he denied his Lord. You can become cracked or chipped because the gift ministries that are supposed to prepare the hearers of faith who do want to follow Jesus in the Christian faith do not give enough preparation. They are only air dried or oven baked and they will not be able to handle the stress or have the ability to hold together because they were not tried by the fire or in the fire. I have seen too many of those in my lifetime; more than I would like to even think about. I mean, some can even convince themselves that they are in the right type of fire.

There are some Christians who think they are being tried by the fire and are in the right type of fire, but they are not. By that, I mean they are not taught the rightly divided Word of God and their fire is explained some other way besides what I am preaching in this message. Forget a fiery furnace; they are not even going to create a little fire with a matchstick. We are not even talking about that type of heat because they are not prepared. Then there are some cases where we are prepared just like Peter was, but he still separated himself. He boasted and he had a big mouth saying, “Lord, I will never leave you; I will never forsake you; I will never deny you no matter what happens!” But what happened to Peter as soon as Jesus was a prisoner and went to trial? In the story, this is someone clearly hanging out in the wrong type of fire. In Luke 22:54 is Peter's denial of Jesus, and is found in all the gospel records.

“Then took they him [Jesus], and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.”

He was not even going to be side by side with his Lord, even though he proclaimed that he would be there to the end. And this was someone instructed and trained by Jesus Christ! Even though, Peter became broken, not because of the Lord's doing, because of his own doing. The first thing he did was follow afar off. Instead, at that moment is when he should have been pressing in closer than ever, but he followed afar off in the story in verse 54,

***“And Peter followed afar off.
And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sat down together, Peter sat down among them.
But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said,
This man was also with him.***

*And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.
And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.
And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean.
And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest.”*

In other words, “You don't know what you are talking about! You got me mixed up with some other guy.”

*“And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.
And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.
And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”*

In verses 55 and 56, he sat by a fire, but he chose a worldly fire. He chose a fire that did not put him in the heat of the furnace and then went on to deny his Lord and the finished result at this time was that he ran out and wept bitterly. He was broken in the heat of the trial concerning his faithfulness at Jesus' trial of all places. He declared that he would be faithful and there until the end, but he was not. What he actually did was substitute the trial's fire where Jesus was for the world's fire to stay far enough away from Jesus and still stay warm. He put himself in a cozier position. Maybe he could not hear what was going on, but he could see Jesus from his position and stay warm at the same time. Too many Christians have I come across in my life who follow from afar off like Peter. They are convincing themselves that they are in the heat of the fire, the heat of the trial with Jesus believing to be in the fire means Jesus is there also if you are a true disciple of Jesus Christ. However, they are in a worldly fire which is far from where Jesus is. These Christians have substituted the trial fire for the world's fire and convinced themselves it was okay. I have heard people say, “Well, I have had so many trials and tribulations that I am going to get into heaven.” Well, the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. What is new! That is no guarantee of entrance to heaven. With Peter he went away running and weeping because he cracked, but thank God that is not the end of this story because he was also restored by a second firing. I want you to really think about it, he was restored by a second firing. To see this, go to John 21, which I have preached on before where Jesus appears in Galilee. Verse 3 begins,

“Simon Peter saith unto them [the other disciples] I go a fishing.”

Literally, Peter is saying that he was going back to his original occupation and taking some of the disciples with him. What it means here in the original language is, “I am going to go back to what I did before I met Jesus. This following Jesus, this wonderful dream that we have no longer exists.” So if you really think about it, he started following even further away, but then the verse goes on to say,

“They say unto him, We also go with thee. [Peter had some willing disciples to go with him] They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not

that it was Jesus.

Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. [He did not even wait until the boat got back to the shore.]

And the other disciples came in a little ship, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.”

Christ now goes into a restoring mode saying, “No, you are not going back to your original occupation any longer. You are not going back to being a fisherman of fishes, you will be a fisherman of men,” to the disciples that were with him. He had to convince Peter. Three times He asked him, “Peter, do you love me? Then feed my sheep.” I am not going into that now, but He finally gets Peter on board and he was restored. Remember after Jesus was resurrected, He gave His instructions, “Go tell my disciples, and Peter.” Christ knew the vessel that was being formed had cracked under the heat of the fire because he was pressing close to the wrong type of fire. He was pressing and hanging around a worldly fire, not the fire we all need to be shaped in that Christ provides and allows in our life to produce something stable that can handle the stress of whatever comes our way. Peter was restored, but he was restored by the second fire and Christ used this whole example to bring a restored Peter back into the fold.

How were cracked vessels restored in those days? This is something that most people probably never even heard of. Going back to Jeremiah 18, if a pot became cracked for whatever reason, even if it was put into a kiln fire oven, the potter used the blood of an insect. It was something like a tick called a fasuka. These tick-like bugs would cling to the back of oxen, bulls, and goats. The potter would pull the ticks from these animals and squeeze the bugs to drop the blood onto a dried type of powder to make a paste. They would then apply this paste to the crack in the vessel and then re-fire the vessel and repeat this motion until all the cracks were filled and repaired and the vessel was made strong again as in Jeremiah 18. The vessel might become marred, but the Potter is not through with us; He throws us back into the fire. Verse 4 reads,

“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.”

Let me read a note about what I just explained.

“The potter prepared a certain kind of cement out of blood from a small insect which lived on the body of a bull and goat and oxen. The potter would take the blood of this insect and mix with powder the broken pottery and cement the crack in the vessel [so it became like cement]. The powder of the blood fixed the broken pottery and mended the cracks.”

What blood mended us? What blood restored us? What blood repaired us? The blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.

“He would put more wet clay on it, re-heat it, re-fire it, and if it held the patch it was called a vessel of mercy.”

A vessel of mercy. That what Christ has done for us. If we become marred and we run back to Him, He will patch us up. The spilling of His blood promises that and we become a vessel of mercy. By the way, a vessel of mercy was used to carry fresh water that was freely shared with strangers. Once it was mended by the blood of an insect, or in our case by our Lord Savior Jesus Christ, it was used to carry water. In the spiritual sense, substitute water for the Word of God, living epistles supporting the ones that proclaim it rightly divided that was to be freely shared with strangers. What a wonderful message.

When we are cracked, I only have one message for us; apply the blood of Jesus Christ. When cracked in need of repair and restoration, apply the blood of Jesus Christ. Verse 6 in I John sums up just about everything I have said about the blood.

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The blood restores, the blood repairs, the blood mends, the blood saves. Apply the blood of Jesus Christ. If you do not, you will find yourself in a situation that you might be thinking is Christian, you might be thinking you are around the right type of fire and going through the right type of fire, but I guarantee you will be in a situation just like Peter was. He was in a cozy fire that was doing him no good and the longer he stayed there, the further he created a distance from him and the Lord Jesus Christ. But thank God we have a Savior who died for us and wants to apply the blood to mend us. No matter what has happened to us in our past, He is there to mend us, repair us, and restore us. He has given us that second firing opportunity and the same message holds true to be a desirable, useful, and valuable vessel or servant of Jesus Christ for whatever purpose in the capacity He has you. Whether you like it or not, you must be in the right kiln fire, the spiritual kiln fire. Even though it might be very hot, it is a type of fire that produces a durable and lasting vessel that can handle the strenuous trials and afflictions ahead. A vessel that Christ wants you and me to be. That is what is desirable to Him; we are to be useful to Him, and valuable to Him. Who are we to say how the Potter will continue finishing this work in progress? Who are we to say, ***“O house of Israel,”***—O whatever your name is— ***“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 whatever your name is. You can fill that in.

He has chosen you, He has prepared you, He has centered you, and He has shaped you with the pressure that He has applied. He has put you through the fire so you can be tried and tested because He wants vessels that can handle the strenuous trials and afflictions ahead. It brings Him glory, so rejoice over it. Wimps for Jesus need not apply. I do not care what your circumstances are or that you think you are going through so much you must be going to heaven. I am sure

there are a lot of people, including Peter sitting by that fire while Jesus was not too far in the distance being tried to murder Him, to eliminate His life. Peter and the rest of the disciples should have been standing there with Him, but they were not. Fortunately, we have a forgiving Lord, we have a Lord who will take a cracked and marred pot, reshape it, mend and repair it, and put it right back in the fire. Just because He repaired and restored you, does not mean you are not going to go back into the fire. Who are we to talk back to the Potter?

Using the same principle as in Jeremiah 18, go to Romans 9:21,

“Hath not the potter power [power and authority] over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?”

Christ is the boss and He will do with you what He wants to do with you, as ***“the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand.”*** You are in God's hands. Remember that and remember the pit that you were dug from all the way to the fire you are being tested and tried in to see if your faith will be more precious than gold tried in the fire. Do not follow afar off and even if you slip, run to Jesus and He will fire you up again because His blood, just like that insect, but a whole lot better, can mend and repair your life and put you back in fellowship with Him pressing in close and not afar off. I hope you understand that.

For now, I have concluded these messages on the potter's house in the Discipleship Series, but I will be coming back to it on occasion. I am not done, but I think I have given enough information for you to digest for a while to remember and to hear with your own ears because faith comes by hearing.

Just as Jeremiah did what was instructed in the first verse in Jeremiah 18 to get the important spiritual message about how the Potter in this case is God, we are the clay, and the process is everything else in these messages. We are a work in progress and we are not done until we graduate, He takes us home, or comes back for us.

Rejoice; it will get hot.

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Please email us at email@teachingfaith.com if this has encouraged and strengthened your faith.

In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it reads, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” The Greek word for cheerful is Hilaros which means when someone is prompt to do something, they are ready in mind, with a joyful heart. In the Septuagint, it also means to cause to shine. Today I am looking for Hilaros Givers who are ready and full of joy for the opportunity to cause others to shine by hearing, learning, and growing in God's Word.

Join with us today and participate as a Hilaros Giver. If you wish to participate use the following link: <http://www.teachingfaith.com/giving>

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