

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES

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Clay In The Potters Hand

Our topic today is titled "Clay In The Potters Hand." The basis of our study comes from Jeremiah 18:1-3 "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying: Arise and go down to the potter's house and there I will cause you to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house and there he was, making something at the wheel. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to him." Jeremiah 18:1-4 These verses will suffice as a starting place for our discussion today. The best of men sometimes become discouraged.

Such was the case with Jeremiah, who has been called "the weeping prophet of Israel."

He called Israel to repentance, but she was obstinate and continued in sin.

Even though he continued, his pleadings, seemed to be in vain.

God sends Jeremiah down to the potters house or work-shop, for a lesson.

Here he sees the potter working with clay that has been placed upon the wheel.

(Two wheels: the lower worked with the feet to give motion to the upper one.)

The clay was placed on the upper disc and as it turned, he molded the clay with his fingers. So Israel was in the hand of God. When a vessel had a flaw or was spoiled, the potter did not throw it away, but crushed it together, put it back upon the wheel and began his work anew.

Just so, Israel had been chosen of God to be a useful vessel, but because of her sin, she had rejected God. But God, as the potter, had the power to crush her and make her over again. When Israel refused to repent, God sent them away into captivity.

Just as God had a plan for Israel, he has a plan for our lives as well.

What is the plan of God? How would the potter mold us?

I. It is God's plan that we recognize Him as the Sovereign and Almighty God.

So many go through life ignoring God. Our first responsibility is to recognize that God exists and that He is above all, and we are subject to Him in all things.

Gen. 1:1 "In the beginning God..."

Psa. 14:1 "The fool hath said in his heart that there is no God."

Job 10:8 "Thine hands have made me and fashioned me" There are many today who totally ignore not only God's existence, but His word and commandments as well.

II. It is God's plan for us to accept the sacrifice of Christ for our sins through obedience to the Gospel.

Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12

The bible plainly teaches salvation through Christ. We cannot save ourselves.

We do not possess the price of our salvation.

1Cor. 15:1-5 "Moreover brethren I declare unto Gospel..."

Romans 1:16 1:16 "I am not ashamed..."

Mark 16:15-16

Acts 2:37-38

1Tim. 2:4 "who desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth."

III. It is God's plan for us to live separated lives.

God doesn't expect from us the same kind of life after conversion, that we lived before we came to know him. The world feels the same way.

1Cor. 6:17 "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." (idolatry)

This separation also includes immoral conduct, questionable places, and bad company.

We should also rid ourselves of bad feelings, and corrupt hearts.

1Cor. 6:20 "And such were some of you..."

IV. It is God's plan for us to be loyal to the Church.

The church is not here by accident, but as a result of God's eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ. Jesus built the church Mt. 16:18

It exists, in part, to tell all men of the salvation made possible by Christ.

Sears is headquartered in Chicago, but has branch stores all over the U. S. in order to sell its products.

Jesus Christ is headquartered in heaven. His church exists throughout the world to carry out His plans and purposes. Every Christian should be a member of a local church. No such thing as "universal church membership."

It is as a member of the local congregation that we have fellowship with other Christians in the Lord's work. Titus 3:1-2 "Ready unto every good work"

Eph. 4:16 "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body, for the edifying of itself in love."

The only way one can be loyal to Christ through the church is to be loyal to his/her responsibilities in the local church. That includes its services, work, outreach, benevolent works etc.

V. It is God's plan for us to live like Jesus.

We will never live in a house like the one Jesus lived in.

We will never travel like he did, nor perform miracles as he did.

But we can live in such a way that others will see Jesus in us.

It is said of the apostles that "they had been with Jesus."

They did not say this because of their looks, because of their clothes, or the language they spoke. They said it because they lived consecrated Christian lives. They said it because they were different from the people of that day.

When we became Christians, we were expected to give ourselves completely to Christ.

Is there still something in your life that you have failed to surrender to Christ?

Are you holding out on God? What about your time? Talents? Disposition? Temper?

Is there something you haven't given up? Something you want to hang on to?

2Cor. 3:18 "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being

transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of our Lord." Every Christian is a reflection of Christ. The change taking place is a constant process. This is the potter's plan, we are molded by God, through His word, into the image of Christ. We are truly clay in the potter's hands.

VI. It is God's Plan for us to serve Him.

God has given His Son for us. He saved us, from a horrible death, impending doom.

He has blessed us all along the way. This relationship should not be one-sided.

He has served us hence, we ought to serve Him.

One of the tragic traits of modern life is the terrible lack of responsibility on the part of many people. Businessmen of today tell us that one of the problems they face is getting their employees to see the needs around them and to assume individual responsibility.

Often it is even worse in the Lord's work. The average church member is content to let someone else do the work. He believes we should have good singing, but does nothing constructive to help. He believes we should have good teaching but fails to apply himself in that endeavor. He believes we should have Wed. night services or a gospel meeting, but fails to show up.

Jesus said "I must do the works of Him that sent me, the night cometh when no man can work."

I had walked life's way with an easy tread, Had followed where comforts and pleasures led, Until one day in a quiet place, I met the Master face to face.

With station and rank and wealth for a goal, much thought for my body, but none for the soul, I entered to win in life's mad race, When I met the Master face to face.

I built my castles and reared them high, 'till their towers pierced the blue of the sky

I had sworn to rule with an iron mace, when I met the Master face to face.

I met Him and knew Him and blushed to see, that His eyes, filled with sorrow, were fixed on me, And I faltered and fell at His feet that day, While my castles melted and vanished away.

Melted and vanished and in their place Naught else could I see but the Master's face

And I cried aloud, "Oh make me meet, To follow the steps of thy wounded feet."

My thought is now for the souls of men, I have lost my life to find it again,

E're since one day in a quiet place, I met the Master face to face.

So, here is the way God would mold you: He wants you to recognize him as sovereign God, to receive the salvation offered by His Son, Jesus Christ, to live a separated life, to be loyal to the church, to live like Jesus, and serve God faithfully. But what about your life? Have you yielded to the potter? Or have you rebelled? Are you willing to become what He wants you to be, or do you want to have your own way? Would you be willing to change for Him? These are all very important questions. They deal with your eternal destiny. But what happens if we fail and mar the plan that God has for our lives?

Look at the potter again. The first vessel had a flaw in it, so he made it over again.

We often mar God's plans by the flaws in our lives.

Consider the drunkard reeling down the street, the thief behind prison bars, the murderer on the way to execution. The immoral man who makes havoc of his life and others about him. It's easy to see how people like this have ruined God's plan for their lives. But they are not the only ones. Look at some Christians, members of the church, they have made a mess of things as well. So let us study for a while how we actually mar the plan of God.

I. We mar God's plan through sin.

Adam and Eve placed in the most beautiful garden this world has ever seen.

No sin there. No sin in their lives. One day they opened their hearts to sin and since that day all of God's world has been stained and marred. Even the physical world is marred. After sin came thorns and thistles. Man would have a hard time digging his living out of the ground, and would do so by the

sweat of his brow. Human society has been marred by sin. Compare Adam in the garden of Eden to a drunken bum on skid row.

Compare the purity of Eve with the life of a prostitute and you will see how sin has marred human society. Our bodies are marred. Disease sets its hold upon every organ of the body. And sin brought disease and death into the world. Rembrandt was one of world's most gifted painters. One of his portraits would be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars today. If you want to see how sin ruins a man, you need to look at his self-portraits. In the first he is a handsome young man and you can see his strength of character. He is a man of genius and promise.

In the following 20 years he went through the whole catalog of human sin...then came another self-portrait. This one shows shrunken cheeks, a weak chin and dull eyes.

Little resemblance between the two. You can go to certain parts of the city where you live and find homes that once were the pride of some wealthy owner. They were beautifully kept, filled with fine furniture, ablaze with lights as the elite of the city met there. Years have passed and former owners have died. Houses now empty. Spider webs over the door, weeds in the once beautiful yards, as the house rots away. A true picture of man's soul. Once destined for glory and beauty only to be ruined by sin. How may have traveled that road? Sin ruined the picture. "Demas hath forsaken me..." wrote Paul. A ruined life. 2Peter 2:20-21 "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them."

II. We mar God's plan through disobedience.

In the Old Testament we meet Saul. He was a big handsome fellow.

He had great promise. God had wonderful plans for him, hence, he became king.

But he disobeyed God, and played the fool. He came to a pathetic end.

To resist God is always to rob ourselves.

No man ever turns his back on God's will but that he cheats himself of the usefulness and joy which God had planned of him. Legion is their name who have taken that path.

What about David, Moses, Job and countless others.

III. We mar God's plan by our failure to do our best for Christ.

We are told that He isn't "willing for any to perish, but wants all to come to repentance."

That doesn't mean that salvation is merely a fire-escape to save us from hell.

God wants us to be useful, to be good and faithful servants. We need to do our best for Him.

2Tim. 2:21 "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work."

Man collector of fine china, was shown through a pottery where it was on display.

He picked up a lovely cup and said "This must be very expensive" The guide replied "No, you can buy for 50 cents. Surely worth more than that, he said.

"It was intended to be, but there is a flaw." "I don't see a flaw."

"But our master does" he said "and he will not send it out if it is not perfect."

The world may look at us and compliment us, but our Master, sees the flaws others might not see. He knows we have failed by not giving him our best.

Story: Preacher who talked with a man in great distress. Because of sinful habits he was sinking to the bottom.

"If you could see Christ face to face and talk with Him now, what would you ask him to do for you?"

The man quickly replied, "Sir, I would ask Him to make me over again."

That is exactly what Christ wants to do for all who have failed.

He wants to put the clay of your life on the wheel and make you over. Many of us realize our failures and imperfections. We know how miserably we have failed in so many areas, but often just don't know what to do in order to change our life for the better. What we cannot do by ourselves, the Lord can.

But how does he do that? First of all He cannot do that without your cooperation. You must work with Him, you must help. But how, you ask?

First you must believe Heb. 11:6 Unless you believe that I am Him you shall die in your sins and where I go ye cannot come." Then you must repent. Turn away from your sins. Luke 13:3 Acts 17:31. Then one must confess Christ Mt. 10:32 and Acts 8:37. Finally in order to be made new one must be baptized in water for the remission of sins Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16, Acts 22:16, 1Peter 3:21 and Romans 6:3-4. Have you taken these steps? If not you need to do so today. We cannot make ourselves new. The Lord must do that, but He only does when we comply with his will