

## Jeremiah 18

**Read Jeremiah 18:1-11:** God tells Jeremiah that he is going out on assignment to gain more scriptural understanding. Jeremiah went out as he was told, and his awareness of the big picture increased. We can expect limited spiritual growth if we do not take on any ventures of faith. That is one reason that life can become boring. The daily routines are not supposed to overpower spiritual opportunities.

The book of Jeremiah (and much of the Old Testament) was about human moral failure. This chapter teaches us about the New Testament concept of redemption. Sometimes it is more compelling to see things from God's perspective, than to be shown report cards and the rules of conduct. We might be more motivated by seeing God's heart regarding our potential.

*Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Romans 2:4)*

God teaches Jeremiah that we can reverse a judgement or a blessing in a moment. The parable of the prodigal son is a perfect example. Judah was heading for destruction. If they did repent in earnest, God could call off the disasters.

This chapter is about the redemption process. Redemption is not just getting a second shot at it. It is a lot more than a reset button. God created all things in a moment; but he adjusts us during our entire lifetime. The potter spends a lot of time re-creating a piece of art. God does it all; but it does involve a process; which its own journey.

There are reasons that we keep failing. We are like a lump of clay that has hard rocks embedded inside. Clay is not like water. It involves a lot of handling to mix and sort out the little, tiny aggregates that create flaws. These faults and hard-core spots are deep down within us that they need to be worked out. We may not even be aware of all of our hard spots. We are reborn like lumps of unworked clay. There is more involved than God's conversion of the raw material into life. We have hard spots that are not visible from the outside. God is enhancing our flexibility and becoming more moldable. We do not like being pressed on or squeezed into a new shape. We prefer the old shape; and we dig in our heels.

God is sharing his redemption process by showing him a potter working with clay. It is a fitting illustration. God formed man out of soil in the beginning.

*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)*

There are three types of soil: Sand, silt and clay. All soil is a combination of these three types of soil. I can visualize a clay doll receiving life. Sand does not stick together; and neither does silt. The word for *man* and *Adam* are interchangeable. They refer to the reddish tint that only clay has. Sand is grey and silt is brown. Only clay holds together into a shape.

We are like balls of clay. The water of the word softens us. God uses a pottery wheel to compare our broken lives undergoing ongoing cycles of redemption. Step one for a potter is to press (wedge) the clay ball and compress it down to a flattened ribbon. This mixing and breaking down of clods compare to outside pressures in our life that put the squeeze on us. I do not like change. I tend to hang on to my expectations. God wants us to be flexible. We all have hard spots in our lives that have to be broken down and dispersed, just like all clay. The clay is pressed and spread out, restacked, smacked down again, and pressed out into a flat ribbon again and again, until there is a uniform and workable consistency throughout. David and Abraham and Joseph and Job and our other biblical heroes got squeezed and smooshed over and over. These characters confirm that daily pressure and tribulation are not necessarily for bad behavior. They are necessary for the most-faithful saint too.

*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)*

God is the potter. A potter literally keeps squashing the ball into a ram's head shape up to 200 times, and likewise pressing it down into a flat pancake over and over, until the clay consistency is uniform. The potter's wheel can be compared to this world that spins repeatedly around for another and another impact with this world.

The word for potter /H3335 means one who squeezes something into shape. That is what God is doing. It's not just the devil trying to stop me and frustrate me. The potter is defined as one who forms something into a set purpose. He is also an artist. The potter will push down and rotate the clay, and work with it until he has the envisioned desired shape. Finally, the formed vessel goes into the fiery furnace to hold its shape and become more beautiful. There is nothing easy about the redemption process. We might say: “*Stop pressing me! Stop the outside pressures that are putting me to the test*”. This is how we get from A to B. That glorious future requires some changes within me. We are literally his piece of functional art.

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)*

The word used in this verse for workmanship is *poiema* / G4161. It is also the word for poem. We are his intentional creation. God's creations are all on exhibit to glorify (illustrate) the artist. Art requires a lot of attention and time and detail work and patience from the artist.

**Read Jeremiah 18:12-17:** The Jews did not really believe in redemption. They are not big on making changes. They believed more in being a chosen and superior race.

*...and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. (Matthew 3:9)*

The Jews completely misunderstood the sacrifice system. It was about moral failure and necessary substitutions. They thought that they were getting brownie points from their offsetting good works.

God asks this unspiritual people a simple question. Who would trade away this beautiful country, with its abundant natural resources? It would have been like asking Eve why she let Satan trade her out of the Garden of Eden. *“What are you thinking?!” “Don’t you see that you got played?”*

Sometimes we see the light; but we are too invested in seeing our plan through.

*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. (Proverbs 26:12)*

We tend to hold onto things. That is a hard spot in my heart. We try to live in a hybrid combination of God’s word and my past choices. That kind of thinking never works out. Our lives get turned upside down when we resist the subtle promptings of the Holy Spirit.

*Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, (Hosea 10:12)*

*For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: “Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, (Jeremiah 43:4)*

**Read Jeremiah 18:18-23:** The messages that Jeremiah shared were not only for his people. It would not seem completely righteous if God let his servants pay for the sins of their own people. They were also for him. When you tell the truth, you might face opposition from a seemingly credible force. Jeremiah was against all of the religious and Government folks, and all of the leaders in the community.

All of this rejection and intimidation was also part of the redemption process for Jeremiah. Now the potters wheel would pull him in for a *squeeze* and pressure him flat onto his face before the LORD again.

The people of Judah decided to shut down the only voice of the one who is getting under their skin. Instead, they choose to listen only to the ones who confirmed their choices. There is nothing honest or noble about marginalizing our opponents' voices. This is true, even if you are in the right. I can recall watching Fox News so many times where a liberal politician would be called out to answer for his policies. Obviously, the viewers are opposed to his policies. What often took place was a setup and a tar and feathering, posing as a normal conversation.

Sometimes we are even put at odds with other believers who do not see things the way that we do. Paul and Barnabas got into an argument over how to make use of John Mark.

*Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; (Acts 15:37-40)*

There is a Christian owner's rep at my jobsite who I occasionally try to avoid because of what he seems to do. He is not always wrong; but many of his *witch hunts* end up being about time wasting and are hard to take. When I see him coming, I will sometimes go another way. He and I were talking about how we are both people of faith who seem to keep getting pitted against each other. This is a potter's wheel opportunity for each of us. How do I respond when I am offended or rushed or pressured into senseless things? It is a tough thing to have a unresponsive sub that makes you break your promises. Over and over.

Today, our political environment is all about personal attacks, instead of substance. The objective is to mischaracterize the opposing view. God is not only an artist and potter; he is also carpenter. He uses tools that go against our grain to re-shape us. If we are right and loving we do not need to worry about opinions.