

## Jeremiah 18

Read Jeremiah 18:1-3: God calls Jeremiah to go down and see something. Sometimes our learning of the scriptures stagnates because we refuse to take the action (getting up and checking it out) described in the word. It does no good to merely read the Bible; if we are not willing to rise and go do what God is telling us.

This is a famous chapter describing how man is like clay in the potters hands. God is the potter. The original Hebrew word for potter is a word meaning to squeeze and form. The potter's wheel spins like the earth; and has repeating circumstances and cycles like our life. Why does God allow similar circumstances to keep coming into our life? Because he is forming us. The more repetition suggests that we have to keep learning the same lessons over and over. We all have character flaws and characteristics like modeling clay. Some of the harder clay requires more water and pressure (pride and self-confidence); while other looser clay takes longer to make it rise up and take its intended shape (no faith or hope in God's deliverance). It is interesting that God is a potter, and Jesus is also known as the good shepherd. Both are dirty jobs that require continual focus and getting your hands dirty. Neither can happen in the absence of the master.

We are formed with a function and purpose in mind. We are like a cup (which holds the Holy Spirit inside of us. There is nothing special about a clay mug; unless it holds something precious. Turning dirt into beautiful and functional tableware requires heat for glazing. Clay is somewhat ugly; but tableware can be a beautiful work of art. We have all of the potential in God's hands.

1. There are two distinct views about what is happening here. One view is that man is made of the dust of the earth; and is a simple and common being lower than angels. We are not made to be glorified or exalted.

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 soul. (Genesis 2:7)

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visit him? -For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. (Psalm 8:4-5)

-But God gives it a body as it has pleased him, and to every seed his own body. -All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. -There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. (1 Corinthians 15:38-40)

God created the universe and all creation out of nothing (bara). Man was formed (asah) out of the existing dust and God's breath. We are dirt people. Dirt is the most common substance. The point is that our purpose far supersedes the outward appearance and substance of our frame.

2. The other aspect of focus for this scripture is how glorious God is a master creator.

For you formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.-I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. -My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; (Psalm 139:13-15)

There is a wide variation of form and function that clay can be formed into such as:: a plate, cup, vase, etc...

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. -And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. (1 Corinthians 12:4)

-For the body is not one member, but many. -If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. -And if the ear says,

“Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. -If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? -But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. (1 Corinthians 12:14-19)

In addition to the necessary varied functionality we all have as members of the body of Christ; we have different degrees of submission. Some people live more transformed lives than others. All we have to do is yield our self-will to God.

-Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. -Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. (2 Timothy 2:20-21)

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. -For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED <sup>[k]</sup>THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.” -So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. (Romans 9:16-18)

Read Jeremiah 18:4-6: The potter's wheel spins like the earth, suggesting repetitious experience and forces around us.

A generation goes and a generation comes, But the earth remains forever. -Also, the sun rises and the sun sets; and hastening to its place it rises again. Blowing toward the south, then turning towards the north, The wind continues swirling along; and on its circular courses the wind returns. All the rivers flow into the sea, Yet the sea is not full. To the place where rivers flow there they flow again. (Ecclesiastes 1:4-7)

The longer we resist; the more times we have to get thrown back

onto the potter's wheel. God loves us enough to take a marred vessel and start over. A hardening clay requires more water. Sometimes we feel like we are being pushed around by life. We were not made to sit and be unused. There is plenty of unused dirt. Living unto ourselves selfishly is like a vessel not able to meet its purpose. It has to be broken and crushed back into dust. It is better to bend than to break. Don't be prideful.

Getting out of life's ruts requires that I respond to God's promptings. The pot or a vase both requires a hollow center. God drives his fist into the center of the clay ball to hollow out a form of a cup. God is very involved in the internal pressures I feel. Then the potter puts outside pressure and inside pressure simultaneously upon the clay to raise it up. We live under internal and external pressures for a reason.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; -but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. (1 Peter 4: 12-13)

The inner man is what God cares about. The outer man has to be smoothed out and become a good platform for the gospel. We don't yield into a godly pattern without force. Our tendency, like clay is to dry out and get hardened. The word of God is often referred to as water.

Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:22)

God knows how to mold us into something better. He also knows how to break the obstinate.

Read Jeremiah 18:7-12: This portion of the chapter has individual and collective application. Not only can God reform our lives. God

can change the course of a nation like Israel. Israel has abandoned God; but it will exalt him in the future. God is telling us that if a nation heading for judgement repents it can be saved. Evil workers will not change their course if they feel that a threatened judgement is just a bluff. Before Desert Storm the U.S. kept telling Sadaam Hussein that we would attack if he did not pull back. He always waited until the attack on his army was rolling forward. Sometimes you have to make some examples to give weight to your words. Conversely a nation that is blessed with God's provision and safety should turn away from God it will nullify God's blessings and be judged. You cannot coast on old promises from God if you have no faith. Those who say that there is no hope waiting on God are proving that they only believe that they can save their selves.

Read Jeremiah 18:13-17: The Devil has duped the children of Israel to abandon a favorable land with full provision for slavery in the desert. They have traded the living God for a mirage.

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

Read Jeremiah 18:18-23: Jeremiah's public rejection is a for-shadow of Jesus. He came to save his people; but they wanted to kill him and shut him up. He prayed for his enemies. God desires that no man perish. In the end man has to accept God's offer. Man can reject salvation. The only unforgivable sin is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. To blasphemy is to defame in the form of a mischaracterization. The Holy Spirit is most associated with our conscience and deep awareness of truth. Some men lie about what God is telling us purposefully and misrepresent God for their own agenda. That is to knowingly trade present lust for eternal judgement. We cannot lie to ourselves without depression, sickness and eventually correction or judgement. We have to take action to all truth.

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. -For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a

doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; -for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. (James 1:22-24)