**MARRED IN THE MASTER’S HAND**

**JEREMIAH 18:1-6**

**I. THE MASTER**

 When you look at a Potter, we must establish God’s sovereignty.

 That He has an absolute right to deal with us in any way He wishes.

 The Potter has the ultimate plan, objective and design.

 He can do whatever He wants to do with the clay.

 That clay is at the will of the Potter. (*a drinking cup*, *slop bucket*, or *fine china*).

 The only difference between a *mass* of mud and a *man* of God is the Master!

 If you look in Genesis 1:3, God says, “*Let there be light:*”

 In verse 6 He says, “*Let there be a firmament*…”

 In verse 14 He says, “*Let there be lights in the firmament*…”

 But in verse 26, the narrative shifts.

 And He goes from saying ‘*Let there be*’ to ‘*Let us make*’.

 When He gets to man, He doesn’t say ‘*Let there BE man*’. He says ‘*Let us MAKE man*’.

 He spoke light; He spoke fish; He spoke the sun; He spoke the moon.

 But when it came to man, He just didn’t speak He said, ‘*Let* *us make…Let us shape Him into our image.*’

 Genesis 2:7, “*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.*”

 That’s when the process began—God did not just speak you; God made you.

 Our beings are Divine productions: *embodied thoughts* of the Divine heart and mind, the very *work* of the Divine hands.

 God formed you from the dust of the earth, fashioned you and crafted you—then He stepped back and said ‘*That’s good*’.

 God loves you tonight!

 He was willing to get His hands dirty so that you could come into being and become a living soul.

 But then we have this sin issue.

 Because with this sin issue now, rather than *looking* like the Creator…rather than His image *shining* through…we have taken on the characteristics of the enemy of our soul.

 And so the Devil’s design is to disfigure you and to make you not look like your Creator.
 And therefore we have this dilemma.

 The dilemma of trying to look like our Creator—but the Devil is trying to get us to *look* like the world and look like the enemy.

 Every one of us has a master, and that master determines our *behavior* and our *actions*.

 If you’re master is money, then everything you do is centered on money.

 If you’re master is power, your life is centered on trying to obtain that power.

 So, who is in charge of your life?

 Now of all the people and things you can place at the center of your life, only One truly belongs there, you were created in such a way where the throne in your heart is *reserved* for God and God alone.

 Augustine said, “*Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.*”

 Everything else looks pretty silly sitting on a throne too big for them.

 Can I remind you? He is the Master!

 Psalm 40:2, “*He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*”

 Romans 9:20-21, “*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?* 21 *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*”

 Ephesians 2:10, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*”

 You see, the clay has to *crumble* before the Christ!

**II. THE MESSAGE**

 Jeremiah 18:1-2, “*The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,* 2 *Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.*”

 God took Jeremiah from the high ground where the temple area was; down to the lower south part of Jerusalem where the potter’s area was.

**A. IT’S A HUMBLING PLACE**

 Sometimes without migration there can be no revelation.

 God was telling Jeremiah, “*You can’t get future blessings in your present place.*”
 You want God to *speak* to your where you are.

 You want God to *use* you where you are.

 God is saying, “*When you get up and go down—that is when I will speak to you.*”
 Arise—Get up. And as soon as you get up…go down.
 Get up from you stagnation, from the place that you are.

 And as soon as you get up…get right back down on your knees and admit ‘*Lord, I need you to help me…with me*’.

 You’ve got to get right back up and get up from your sin/struggles and people that are dragging you down.

 And as soon as you get up then go down and repent.

**B. A HEARING PLACE**

 Notice what He says, “*Arise and go down to the Potter’s house…and there I will announce my words to you*”.

 “*There*” is the place of *hearing*, *obedience* and *learning*.

 In I Kings 17:4, 9, twice God told Elijah to go THERE.

 THERE is a place of GOD’S CARE!

 If you miss it; you’ll miss His care!

 If you miss it like Jeremiah; you’ll miss God’s truth!

 Oh God, help us to get to the place where He wants us to be!

 Isn’t it interesting that there are some things that God speaks to you that you *can’t get* at your house or where you are?

 Sometimes you have to get away from the distractions.

 That is what it meant when Jesus went alone to a solitary place to be with God.

 There ought to be a place where nobody can get to you; where nobody can find you, because you are alone with your Heavenly Father.

 Is there anybody in here who knows that it was not until God brought you up out of some things and then brought you down to a place where He could speak to you that you really learned how to hear from God?

 Because it is when God brought you out—you learned how to cry *out* to God, call *on* God, lay *before* God.

 And now you can testify that if it had not been for the Lord that was on my side….

 Are you listening to His message?

 Are you obeying His orders?

**III. THE MESS**

 In other words, the clay as it is taken from the ground is worthless.

 David said it was miry clay.—the dregs.

 This is a perfect example of us as sinners.

 We are a mess without God!

 “The clay is not attractive in itself, but when the hands of the potter touch it, and the thought of the potter is brought to bear upon it, and the plan of the potter is *worked out* in it and *through* it, then there is a real transformation.”—J. Wilbur Chapman

 It must be transformed into a useable state and this is a process that takes *time* and the *energy* of the Potter.

**IV. THE MAKING**

**A. HAMMER**

 After the clay has been taken out of the ground the potter will cleanse it. (remove impurities and dirt)

 After the clay has been *cleansed* and *processed*, it is laid on a table and beaten with a wooden mallet.

 The potter does this to *remove* any air bubbles that might be trapped in the clay.

 If he doesn’t; the air bubble will form a *pocket* that will produce a weak spot and cause the vessel to be fragile and unusable.

 This is a picture of the *trials*, *calamities*, *hurt*, *sorrow* and *pains* we encounter in life that tend to work together to shape us in the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

 II Corinthians 4:17, “*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*”

 We may not like the pounding of the mallet, but its sole purpose is to make us more *usable* and *pliable* in the Potter’s hand.

 If it feels like life has come down upon you lately; God is trying to work things for your good!

 You see, the Heavenly Potter is in the business of making us look like Jesus.

That pounding is just for a moment but God is trying to make something out of you!

**B. THE HUB**

 The potter takes that clay and he puts it on a wheel.

 There is a large bottom wheel made of stone. It has a socket in it where a 3 foot shaft come up that holds a smaller wheel which is laid flat upon the top of it.

 The Potter, *using* his feet, spins the large, lower wheel. As he does, the upper wheel is turned.

 This is where the clay is placed.

 The potter’s hands being stronger than the clay, puts pressure upon it and *forms* and *fashions* it to the vessel he wants to make.

 It is on the wheel that the potter breaks the clay’s will and creates a vessel.

 The clay on the potter’s wheel can’t get up when it wants to.

 The clay on the potter’s wheel can’t talk back.

 You remember the delightful little story we heard in the nursery about the gingerbread boy that talked back. But the clay can’t talk back.

 “*Here I am Lord, mold me, make me, send me!*”

 The clay on the potter’s wheel is not able to do anything.

 It can only yield to the potter’s hand.

**A. THE WHEEL OF CHALLENGES—the pressures of life.**

 Sometimes life is hard. Sometimes life isn’t fair. Sometimes life doesn’t go the way that you would like it to go.

 But don’t give up under the pressure!

 When you feel like life is squeezing you; remember the Potter controls the pressure!

 He is not going to let you break!

**B. THE WHEEL OF CIRCUMSTANCES—the problems of life.**

 This wheel is symbolic of the circumstances and situations that life brings our way.

 Life often seems like a large circle, one trial after another.

 It seems that we just get past one trial when here it comes around again.

 These things are hard to take and leave us confused and burdened, but we must remember that ***the Potter controls the speed of the wheels and they only rotate according to His will. Never forget that God is still in control, regardless of what you are facing in life, and that all things are eventually going to work out to your good***.

 Stay on the wheel.

 Often times we get tired and are *tempted* to jump off before we are formed into that vessel that God wants us to be.

 “*God, I’m not sure what you are trying to do.*”

“*Where are You taking me?*”

“*What are You doing with me?*”

 “*I want to do my own thing for a while.*”

 I recall a story of a little boy who was playing in the mud down by a brook. He was attempting to make a man. He worked on him and had gotten pretty well along when his mother called him. They were *going downtown* and he must come along. He wanted to stay, but she insisted that he come. By this time he had finished his mud man except for 1 arm. But he had to leave. While he was in town with his mother and father, he saw a one-armed man. He eyed him for awhile. Finally he went up to him and said, “*Why did you leave before I finished you?*”

 The wheels of God’s *promises*, *purposes*, and *providences*, are all working together for your good ([Rom. 8:28](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+8%3A28)).

 The story is told of a king in Africa who had a close friend with whom he grew up. The friend had a habit of looking at every situation that ever occurred in his life (positive or negative) and remarking, “*This is good!*”

 One day the king and his friend were out on a hunting expedition. The friend would *load* and *prepare* the guns for the king. The friend had apparently done something wrong in preparing one of the guns, for after taking the gun from his friend, the king fired it and his thumb was blown off. Examining the situation, the friend remarked as usual, “*This is good!*”

 To which the king replied, “*No, this is not good!*” and proceeded to send his friend to jail.

 About a year later, the king was hunting in an area that he should have known to stay clear of. Cannibals captured him and took him to their village. They tied his hands, stacked some wood, set up a stake and bound him to the stake.

 As they came near to set fire to the wood, they noticed that the king was missing a thumb. Being superstitious, they never ate anyone who was less than whole. So untying the king, they sent him on his way.

 As he returned home, he was reminded of the event that had taken his thumb and felt remorse for his treatment of his friend. He went immediately to the jail to speak with his friend.

 “*You were right,*” he said, “*it was good that my thumb was blown off.*” And he proceeded to tell the friend all that had just happened.

 “*And so, I am very sorry for sending you to jail for so long. It was bad for me to do this.*”

 “*No,*” his friend replied, “*This is good—This is VERY Good!*”

 “*What do you mean, ‘This is VERY Good*’?

 “*How could it be good—VERY GOOD that I sent my friend to jail for a year?*”

 “*If I had not been in jail, I would have been with you.*”

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 I want to be centered in His will (wheel)!

 I know Ezekiel’s wheel in the middle of the wheel!

(HAMMERING, THE HUB)

**C. THE HANDLING**

 As that clay goes around the wheel that potter begins to knead it.

 One *hand* is on the inside and the other *hand* is in the outside.

 One hand holds the inside and gives it the *desired form*; while the hand which is outside *smoothes* and *refines* the curves in it.
 **While the clay spins around on the wheels, it is never out of contact with the potter’s hands. He is in constant control.**

 *Molding*, *shaping* and *bringing* the clay along through his guidance.

 If he were to ever remove his hand, the clay would spin right off the wheel and would be lost.
 The child of God need never fear that the Lord will *walk out* on us and *leave us* to spin out of control.

 No matter how *fast* the wheels spin, or what comes our way, we can rest assured that the Lord of glory will never remove His hand from us.

 He is always in touch with His clay!

 He remains there with the clay until it becomes what He desires it to be.

**D. HEARTH**

 After the Potter gets you properly made, you have got to go into the oven.

 The oven is necessary.

 It doesn’t matter how good it looks on the outside; if it doesn’t go through the burning—it is not complete.

 **1) Burn the Contamination from the vessel**

 The temperature must be so hot it burns the impurity out of the clay and creates a new bonded substance.

 Too much heat too fast and it cracks and falls apart.

 Sometimes the clay thinks it can’t take any more heat.

 But the Potter knows the degree of heat to set and also how long it must be in the oven.

 I Corinthians 10:13, “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*”

 **2) Congeal the Vessel**

 The fire hardens the vessel.

 Our faith too must be tried as by fire.

 He brings you through the fire so that when the enemy comes his temptations will not be able to impact you or make a dent in you.

 You’ll be able to look at the enemy and say, “*Sorry, you are going to have to come at me with more than that.*”

 After you are hardened you won’t go off into the corner and *cry* when somebody begins to talk about you.

 You use to think it was the end of the world when a friend *walked away* from you.

 But now you have been through the fire and it is a new day and a new season.

 Things that used to get on your nerves; you are able to hold up now.

 The furnace of pain becomes the furnace of perfection!

 God brings you through the fire to toughen you up a little.

 Now you are strong enough to sing, “*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ and His righteousness.*”

 John Wesley came to America because he visualized himself a missionary to the Indians of Georgia. He returned to England a miserable failure, *disheartened*, *discouraged*, *ready to give up*. Then out of that fiery trial, even out of that failure, John Wesley received a vision that sparked revival throughout the entire church world.

 Zechariah 13:9, “*And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.*”

 A product must be tested before it can be *placed* on the market!

 God wants to present you to a lost and dying world!

**V. THE MARRING**

 But you see, before the Potter could put the clay into the oven something happened to the clay.

 Marred means: *decayed*, *ruined*, *corrupt*, *spoiled*, *disfigured*, *wasted*.

 Even in the Potter’s hand, things can still go terribly wrong.

 Even in the midst of a holiness church.

 The fault is not with the Potter, but with the clay because it would not yield.

 There are times when even with the best of care, the vessel still gets out of shape.

 Isn’t this the way our lives seem at times?

 We are going along just fine and we are growing in the grace of the Lord, then along comes a temptation or a trial and for one reason or the other, we are *thrown off balance* and we become marred in the Potter’s hand.

1. Resisting the will of God will mar you. God will never force His will upon you.

2. The unwillingness to break with secret sin will mar you. He desires to *pull* that little stone out of you!

 The unwillingness to say “No” to temptation.

 To make restitution.

 To abandon a sinful practice.

3. We become marred when we *want* *only* the blessings, not the responsibilities of serving God.
4. We become marred when we starve ourselves by not reading and studying the Word.

4. We are marred because of *lack of communication* with God; we do not pray.
5. We are marred because we will *not take advantage* of training to become better servants.
6. We are marred, becoming unusable for the potters original plan because we will not hear Him.
7. When one becomes hardened they can no longer be *shaped* and *molded* into His image.

 There are many people in this world that started out running well for the Lord, but along the way they got weak and out of balance in their lives.

 When the Potter spots that problem with the clay He will take the clay off the wheel and try to remove the problem.

 There were some impure things in me and in you—But God sees it because He’s the Potter—and He loves you too much to leave you where you are and leave you like that.
 There are some things you can’t worship it *off*, you can’t shout it *off*.

 **Some stuff—God’s got to take it out of you.**

 When God deals with you about it; get rid of it!

 But you see, the clay in this story had become so full of impurities that the Potter had to do away with what He originally wanted.

 Some of you have become marred by sin.

 Some of you have become marred by self.

 Some of you have become marred by someone else.

 Some of you have become marred by struggles.

 Therefore the Potter had to take that clay and crush it in His hand.

 He had to knead it again.

 It was no longer fit to become the vessel He originally wanted it to be.

**III. THE MIRACLE**

 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.*”

 But the potter *did not throw* the ruined piece into the corner of the shop, or into the trash.

 He continued working with it and reshaped it into another vessel which he deemed good to make.

 You don’t have to be refuse; He can reclaim you!

 In other words, he began again, from scratch with the same clay and gave it a shape that was good and would hold its form.
 God would say to you, “*O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.*”—Jeremiah 18:6.

 When we are found flawed, Here is the good news, God can remake us!

 We when fall apart at the *seams* God can put us back together again!

 God wasn’t through with the clay.

 God was telling Jeremiah to tell the people, yes you have *messed up*, yes you have *disobeyed*, but I can still rework you, I can still form you into a vessel that is useful.

 I’m not through with you yet!

**A. GOD CAN REWORK THE SINNER/STRUGGLER**
 **The best of men have given up the task, shook their heads over publicans and sinners, and said, “*The ruin is beyond restoration.*”**

But Jesus came and looked upon these wrecks of humanity, and said, “*These, too, can be restored,*” and He has justified His word.

 Maybe you may feel like you are no longer useful to God.

 You’re a cracked pot, with to many *flaws*, to many *mistakes*, to many *stains*.

 Well, here’s the good news!

 I Corinthians 5:17, “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*”

 God can rework that old clay and turn it into something wonderful.

 God tells Jeremiah that if a nation that was doomed to destruction repents; then guess what…God gives them another chance.

 And if you have failed, if you have *made a mess* of your life, then let me tell you that God is still at the Potter’s wheel today *ready* to rework your life into something wonderful.

 I think of **Abraham**, that great man of faith, who one day disobeyed God and left the Promise Land for Egypt.

 While in Egypt, he fell into sin and lied about his wife.
 In fact, because of his disobedience, he almost lost his wife.
 What did God do with Abraham?

 Did God reject him and throw him on the trash heap?
 NO! He made him again! He gave Abraham another chance!
 And as a result, Abraham became a great servant and was known as the friend of God!

 I think of **Peter**, that great man of courage!
 Peter said to Jesus, “*Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*”—Matthew 26:33.

 Yet, Peter denied the Lord 3 times!
 What did God do with Peter?

 He made him again!
 Jesus *forgave* Peter and *restored* him to discipleship, and Peter became one of the greatest soul-winners of all time to the glory of God!

 I think of **David**, a man after God’s own heart; *committed adultery*, *lied*, and *killed*!
 What did God do with David?

 He made him again!

 He found Zacchaeus a wreck, and restored him; He found Onesimus a wreck, and restored him; He found Augustine a wreck, and restored him.

 Out of these battered ruins and shattered wrecks of humanity He has made temples of the living God.

 Dr. George Gill used to say in class, “*God remembers that we are dust, but man sometimes forgets it, and he gets stuck on himself. And when dust gets stuck on itself, It’s mud.*”

 John Newton is a good example of that. He was a man whose life was going downhill quick. He worked as a slave trader and lived a drunkard’s life, and it got so bad that one time he got drunk and fell off the ship and his shipmates had to harpoon him to bring him back on board.

 We would say what a waste, but not God.

 God would give John Newton another chance, and one day when fearing for his life while at going through a storm at sea, John Newton gave his heart to Christ, and later this slave trader turned preacher would write the words of his life in a hymn, “*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost but now I am found, was blind but now I see.*”

 Perhaps today, you are living under a dark cloud of *defeat* and *despair*!
 Perhaps you have disobeyed the Lord and have sinned against Him!

 Satan is accusing you and saying, “*God is finished with you.*”
 Listen my friend, God will forgive your sins and make you again!
 God isn’t through with you! No need to despair!

 I John 1:9, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”

**B. SOMETIMES GOD REWORKS THE SERVANT**

 Sometimes God *breaks* people *up* and reshapes them and uses them in different capacities.

 He reshapes hem for higher *ends* and wider *purposes*.

 He breaks up **Joseph** the dreamer and the slave, and forms Joseph the wise statesman, administrator, and prince of Egypt.

 Christian history is full of such instances.

 Here **George Fox** who was only a timid lad as a child, who shunned rowdy companions, retiring to woods for meditation on God’s Word. The timid lad becomes a fearless preacher, and the founder of the Society of Friends—the Quakers.

 Here is another, a poor cobbler, piecing together little scraps of different colored leathers to make a map of the world, and by the black pieces to point out to his friends the extent, of heathenism. The poor mapmaker becomes **William Carey**, the founder of Missions to India and the translator of the Bible into Indian languages.

 Another is at first a poor piecer, tying broken cotton threads on the spinning machines, in a spinning factory for 12 hours a day on the banks of the Clyde. But at last he is the voice of one crying in a wilderness: “*Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*” And so great in this ministry that black men carry his bones, when he dies, a year’s journey from the depths of Africa to England; and white men there reverently bury them in the sepulchers of their kings, because he had done good to God and to man. **David Livingstone** became a legend both to Christians and scientists.

 Those awful times in the experience of His people when He comes with a *succession of trials*, when He sends *whole tides of sorrow* into the soul, are the times when God does His best work!

 When He reshapes for higher ends the clay that was shaped for lower ends before.

 In 1502, in Florence Italy there was a large block of marble given to a church in Santa Maria, the church immediately hired who they thought was a professional to sculpt this enormously huge piece of rock. The man was not a professional and soon after commencing this great task the man drilled a whole right at the bottom destroying this magnificent piece of marble, so that the church decided just to *drape* a huge sheet over it not knowing what else to do, since it had been damaged beyond recognition and repair. A certain man, Michelangelo caught word of this large stone and how it had been destroyed, so out of curiosity he went to check it out

and thought “*Hey, I think I can do something here.*” After a time he began work and sculpted; and what was once thought to be a lost cause became one of the greatest statutes of David ever built.

 There are people today who feel like that gigantic slab of marble, things have been done *to them* and something is broken *inside*.

 But in the *capable* hands of the Lord, they can be *molded* into all that Jesus has called them to be.

**CON:**

 Can you honestly say today; “***I am totally yielded to the will of God for my life.***”?

 Or, would you have to say, “***There are areas where I am still in control. There are parts of me that I haven’t given to the Potter. There are circumstances that I face that I still try to control and work out.***”?

  Many years ago in the “***horse and buggy***” days, a man and his wife were driving along a very narrow and dangerous stretch of road. The woman became extremely nervous, and in her fright she grabbed 1 of the reins. As calmly as possible the husband responded by offering her the other strap, “***Oh, no***,” she cried, “***I don’t want them both! I could never manage that animal alone!***”

 “***Well, then,***” he said gently, “***you must make your choice. It’s either you or me. We can’t both drive the same horse!***” The frightened wife quickly surrendered full control of the carriage to her husband. Everything was once again in good hands, and they journeyed safely onward.

  Many of us are like the fellow who rode in his car as it was being towed to be repaired. When they arrived at the repair shop, the tow truck driver told him, “***I didn’t think I was going to make it up that big hill.***” The man replied, “***I didn’t either. That’s why I kept the brakes on so we wouldn’t roll backwards.***” To live without total dedication to Christ is the same as trying to go forward and to hold back at the same time.

 One day the work will be finished.

 At that day will you be dumped or displayed?

 One day the Potter will put the vessel on display.

 The rough times of *hammer*, *hub*, *hands*, and *hearth* had passed, but the beauty it brought has remained.

 Psalm 17:15, “*As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*”

 I John 3:2, “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*”

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