

The Potter, The Wheel and the Clay

Jeremiah 18:1-6

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." 3 So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. 4 But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. 5 Then the word of the LORD came to me: 6 "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. (NIV)

I went and I saw him working at the wheel. Jeremiah saw something very special. What Jeremiah had seen has been told and retold for many centuries. The lesson is relatively straight forward and simple. So is the application. Let us take a look.

The potter is equated with God. He is the one in charge of all things. He has the authority to do as He wills for it is his house. God is not only seen as the one with authority and power, but also as the great artist. I heard somewhere that an artist was asked, "How do you make marble so lifelike?" "Easy," the artist replied, "You just chip off the pieces that do not belong." If only it were that easy. It is amazing to me how an artist can see the object inside the stone, or how an artist can see a picture inside multiple tubes of paint. Then, they take that vision and translate it through natural and practiced talent into reality for everyone's amazement. As wondrous this is on the human scale, imagine how awesome it is that God sees within you, His greatest masterpiece. God is an awesome potter.

Consider the wheel. Never forget that the wheel is in the control of the potter. God is in charge of all our life. We know that He will bring about His purpose in all things. He will spin our lives to the point that will best enable us to take on the shape that He sees for us.

We are the clay. Yes, there are times that we fall apart on the potter's wheel. We resist His handiwork in our life. Sometimes we are just not soft enough for His fingers to work His talent upon us. Sometimes we might not be firm enough. But God knows whether we need pounded down, turned or baked.

Consider this story by an author unknown.

There was a couple who used to go England to shop in a beautiful antique store. This trip was to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. They both liked antiques and pottery, and especially teacups. Spotting an exceptional cup, they asked, "May we see that? We've never seen a cup quite so beautiful."

As the lady handed it to them, the tea cup spoke. "You don't understand," it said, "I have not always been a tea cup. There was a time when I was just a lump of red clay. My master took me and rolled me pounded and patted me over and over and I yelled out, 'Don't do that. I don't like it! Let me alone,' but he only smiled, and gently said, 'Not yet!'

"Then, WHAM! I was placed on a spinning wheel and suddenly I was spun around and around and around. 'Stop it! I'm getting so dizzy! I'm going to be sick!', I screamed. But the master only nodded and said, quietly, 'Not yet.'

"He spun me and poked and prodded and bent me out of shape to suit himself and then...then he put me in the oven. I never felt such heat. I yelled and knocked and pounded at the door. 'Help! Get me out of here!' I could see him through the opening and I could read his lips as he shook his head from side to side, 'Not yet.'

"When I thought I couldn't bear it another minute, the door opened. He carefully took me out and put me on the shelf, and I began to cool. 'Oh, that felt so good! Ah, this is much better,' I thought. But, after I cooled he picked me up and he brushed and painted me all over. The fumes were horrible. I thought I would gag. 'Oh, please; stop it, stop it!!' I cried. He only shook his head and said. 'Not yet!'

"Then suddenly he put me back in to the oven. Only it was not like the first one. This was twice as hot and I just knew I would suffocate. I begged. I pleaded. I screamed. I cried. I was convinced I would never make it. I was ready to give up.

"Just then the door opened and he took me out and again placed me on the shelf, where I cooled and waited and waited, wondering, What's he going to do to me next? An hour later he handed me a mirror and said 'Look at yourself.' And I did. "I said, 'That's not me; that couldn't be me. It's beautiful. I'm beautiful!'

"Quietly he spoke: 'I want you to remember, then,' he said, 'I know it hurt to be rolled and pounded and patted, but had I just left you alone, you'd have dried up. I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel, but if I had stopped, you would have crumbled. I know it hurt and it was hot and disagreeable in the oven, but if I hadn't put you there, you would have cracked. I know the fumes were bad when I brushed and painted you all over, but if I hadn't done that, you never would have hardened. You would not have had any color in your life. If I hadn't put you back in that second oven, you wouldn't have survived for long because the hardness would not have held. Now you are a finished product. Now you are what I had in mind when I first began with you.'"

God knows what He's doing in each of us. He is the potter, and we are His clay. He will mold us and make us, and expose us to just enough pressures of just the right kinds that we may be made into a flawless piece of work to fulfill His good, pleasing and perfect will. So when life seems hard, and you are being pounded and patted and pushed almost beyond endurance; when your world seems to be spinning out of control; when you feel like you are in a fiery furnace of trials; when life seems to "stink", try this: get out a teacup, brew some tea, and have a little talk with the Potter.