

Lessons From the Potters House

by Chuck Smith

God is the potter, and we are the clay, and He is shaping us into vessels of glory through the circumstances of our lives.

Duration: 26:50

Scripture: Isaiah 64:8, Romans 9:20

Topics: "Sovereign Power", "Spiritual Formation"

Description

This sermon focuses on the analogy of God as the potter and us as the clay, emphasizing the importance of yielding to God's shaping and molding in our lives. It highlights how God's sovereign power works through the circumstances, pain, and sorrows in our lives to form us into vessels of honor for His glory. The message encourages surrendering to God's plan, trusting His love, and allowing Him to make something beautiful out of our lives.

Transcript

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Psalm 115 for our Scripture reading. I'll read the first, the omnibus verses, and Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in reading the evens. Shall we stand as we read the Word of God? Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake.

Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? Our God is in the heavens. He has done whatsoever he has pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

They have mouths, but they speak not. Eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not.

Noses have they, but they smell not. They have hands, but they handle not. Feet have they, but they walk not.

And neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them. So is everyone that trusteth in them.

O Israel, trust thou in the Lord, for he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord. He is their help and their shield.

Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord, for he is their help and their shield. The Lord hath been mindful of us. He will bless us.

He will bless the house of Israel. He will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great.

The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children. You are blessed of the Lord, which made the heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

The dead praise not the Lord, and neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord.

Let's pray. Father, how thankful we are that you are in the heavens and that you do what you please. We ask you, Lord, today, as we study the word, that we might be so yielded to you that you indeed can do as you please in our lives.

Help us, Lord, to be totally submitted unto that which you have purposed and planned for us because we know, Lord, that that's the best thing that could ever happen to us. Show us today, Lord, your plan, your love, and how, Lord, we can experience the fullness of that work of your spirit in our lives. In Jesus' name we ask, Father.

Amen. You may be seated. Tonight, Pastor Skip will continue his study through the Bible as we are in Jeremiah 17 and 18.

We encourage you, come on out, join with us. A great Sunday evening service, and Pastor Skip is doing an excellent job leading us through the Bible. This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the 18th chapter of Jeremiah, beginning with verse 1. The Lord spoke to Jeremiah.

He said, Go to the potter's house, and I will speak to you. So Jeremiah said, I went to the potter's house, and he was making a pot on his wheel, and the pot that he was making was marred in his hand. So he made another vessel from that clay that pleased him.

Then the Lord spoke to me and said, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? Behold, as clay is in the hands of the potter, so are you in my hand. As we go with Jeremiah to the potter's house, there are three things that catch Jeremiah's attention as he watches the potter. The first is the potter himself, his skills at making pottery.

The second thing that caught his attention was the clay that the potter was working with. And of course, the third thing that he observed was the potter's wheel, the wheel by which the potter would turn the wheel and by which he could shape the clay that he had there on the wheel. This figure of the potter and his power over the clay is used in the Bible to show God's awesome, sovereign power over our lives.

God becomes the potter, we become the clay, and the wheel are the circumstances that God brings into our lives whereby He can form and shape us into the person that He wants us to be. Isaiah wrote in chapter 64, But now, O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay, You are the potter, and we are the work of Your hand.

Paul wrote to the Romans, Therefore God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardens. You will say to me, How then can He find fault? For who can resist His will? Just who are you to challenge God? Shall the vessel say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me like this? Has not the potter the power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? Now, it is true that God can do with any of our lives just what He pleases, because He is God. And I really have no right to challenge Him with what He does with me.

He created me, and so He can make of me whatever He desires. He has that sovereign power over all. Now, that would terrify me if I didn't know that God loved me as much as He does, and that God, because of His love for me, would never do anything that would be to my detriment or to my harm.

He can make of me whatever He pleases. He can make of me a vessel of honor or a vessel of dishonor, but it pleases Him to make each of us vessels of honor. So He sort of leaves in our hands what I want to be.

Do I want to be a vessel of honor for His glory, or do I want to be a vessel of dishonor? Now, if I will yield myself to Him completely, He is pleased to make out of me a vessel that He can use for His purposes, for His glory. If I say I don't want to yield my life to God, I will be what I want to be. I will make myself what I want to be.

I'm not interested in yielding myself to God. Then you will become a vessel of dishonor. Your life will become marred in the potter's hands as you stiffen and resist yourself to what God is seeking to do in your life.

So I can choose. What kind of a vessel do I want to be? A vessel that brings honor to God or a vessel of no honor at all? It all depends. I can yield to God my life.

He will make of it something that is valuable and beautiful for His glory. The second thing that we observe, of course, in the potter's house beyond the potter is the clay. Clay is one of the most common materials on the face of the earth, and thus in its raw form it has very little value.

Clay, however, has a great potential for value according to the skill of the potter. The potter can take a lump of clay and he can make of that clay a beautiful, expensive vessel that is worth thousands of dollars according to the skill of the potter. All the clay has to do to attain its full potential is just to yield itself completely to the potter's touch.

As the potter begins his work, he first of all just takes the clay and he begins to knead the clay. He begins to work it over in his hands. He's feeling for lumps.

He's trying to create a sort of elasticity in that the clay will mold and conform to his touch. He's looking for a texture. He's looking to make the clay very pliable, and so we see him as he is working the clay.

He's seeking to get out all of the lumps. He's seeking for a consistency in the clay itself so that it will respond to his touch when he puts it on the wheel and he begins to form it into a vessel. Now, sometimes as God begins his work in our lives, we have a tendency to get impatient.

We want to see his shape taking place, and God is still just sort of working us over. He's getting the lumps out. He's creating a pliable bit of clay that he can really work with, and as he is kneading and working in this process, sometimes we think, oh my, you know, ever since I yielded my life to God, it seems like

everything is just going upside down, topsy-turvy, you know.

I can't figure out what's happening. Well, God's getting the clay ready so that he can begin to form and shape it and to make it something of real value that he can use for his glory. The kneading process is an important process in the developing of the vessel.

Unless you take time and really prepare the clay, you'll never be able to make a vessel of any worth or value. The Bible encourages us to be patient with the Lord. Paul said to the Galatians, don't be weary when you're doing the right thing.

In due season, you will reap if you faint not. James wrote, but let patience have her perfect work, that you might be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. The third thing, of course, that we note in the potter's house is the wheel itself.

Behold, Jeremiah said, he wrought a work on the wheel. After the clay has been thoroughly prepared, the potter places the clay there on the center of the wheel, and the wheel is the instrument that he uses in order to shape the clay. In our lives, the circumstances of our lives are the instruments that God is using to form and to shape our lives, our character.

Sometimes it is necessary for God to use pain. There is a certain quality of character. Unfortunately, it seems like it can't be formed apart from pain.

But whenever we're going through painful experiences, we have a tendency to complain against God. We can't understand why he would allow this pain in our lives, but he is forming us. He is making us into a vessel that he can use for his glory, and sometimes it does involve painful situations.

Sometimes as God is forming us, he uses sorrow to form us, to develop character within us. I can remember the sorrow that I experienced when I received the call from the CAP, Civilian Air Patrol, and they told me that they had discovered my brother's plane. It had crashed at San Ofre.

They're in the mountains on the Marine base, and they said, we're sorry to tell you, Mr. Smith, there are no survivors. I knew that my brother and my father were on that plane. They were flying up from San Diego, and the sorrow that gripped my heart when suddenly two men who were so close to me and had brought so much joy and support in my life are gone, and I knew I would never have an opportunity to be with them in that way again, and the sorrow.

I know the sore throat that comes from swallowing so many tears. I know the pain in the heart when you try to work over in your mind, why did it happen to happen, and what could I have done, and you know, all of these crazy things that go through your mind, and yet God was preparing me. It was a part of God's process.

In years to come, I would need to talk with families, families that had lost a close loved one by accident. I understood how they felt. I do understand how they feel, and because I went through the experience, and because I experienced in that time God's help, God's strength, God's comfort, so that I was actually able to do the services for my father and brother because of God's strength and God's help.

I know what God can do when you're going through those heavy trials and hard experiences. Paul the Apostle wrote, Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, who comforted us in all of our trials, that we might be able to comfort them which are in

trouble. By the same comfort wherewith we ourselves were comforted by God, for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ, for we experienced our affliction and sufferings for your sake, that we might be able to console you in your affliction and in your suffering.

So Paul looked at those sufferings that he went through as a part of God's preparing him for the ministry in his ability to minister to others because he had gone through these things, and he could, in going through them, experience God's strength, God's help, and now he could impart that to others who were going through similar circumstances. Oftentimes the potter is pushing pressure on that clay. He'll take his thumb and he'll push on the thumb to get the clay to respond and to shape it into a particular shape.

God oftentimes puts pressure on us, but it's all in the process of molding and shaping us into that vessel that God can use for his glory. Now many times we find ourselves complaining about the pain or the suffering or the pressures that we are going through, but in reality these are all from God. They are the instruments that God uses to shape us into a valuable vessel for his service, and thus to murmur or to complain about my circumstances in life is to murmur against God and that work that God is seeking to do in making me the vessel he would have me to be.

Now sometimes as I'm under the pressure or sometimes as I'm going through the suffering or the pain, I resist. I stiffen. I say, I don't want that, and the moment I stiffen, I mar the work that God is seeking to do in my life.

There is a song that says, let pain and sorrow have her work. God uses them as instruments in molding and shaping our characters and our lives, and sometimes we resist that, and as Jeremiah was watching the potter, he said the vessel was marred in the hand of the potter. Probably there was a bit of hardness that he had not discovered when he was kneading the clay, and when he put pressure on that lump or that hardness, it just marred the vessel that he was seeking to make.

There was a resistance to the touch of the potter. That stiffness, that resistance, it caused the marring of the vessel. Even as we so often when we resist the work of God or we stiffen when God is seeking to mold and shape us, it mars the work that God is doing.

Now, as Jeremiah watched the potter, he didn't say, he didn't take that marred vessel and just to fluff, you know, but he worked it over again, took the clay, took it back to just the lump, and started just working that hardness out of it, the stiffness out of it, so that he could then put it back on the wheel and make the vessel that was in his mind to make. I don't know how many times God's brought me back to just a blob. You know, he was working, and I stiffened, and the work of God became marred in the hands of God, and poof, here I am working me over again and getting out the lumps and so forth and starting over again.

But it's exciting when you begin to see things taking shape, when you begin to see what God has in his mind to make of your life. As the potter begins his work with that clay, in his mind he knows what he wants to make. He knows the vessel.

He can see it in his mind. He knows exactly what he's wanting to make out of that lump of clay. That poor lump of clay doesn't know anything.

It has no idea what is in the mind of the potter. There's only one way the clay can discover what is in the mind of the potter, and that's by yielding completely to the touch of the potter. And by yielding completely to the work of God in your life, gradually we begin to see, gradually we begin to understand the shape that

God is making us, the work that God is wanting us to do, and ultimately we begin to experience the beauty of God's work in our lives.

And we become vessels that God can use for his glory and for his honor. And it's always an exciting thing when God begins then to use us and make of us something that is worthwhile. I see in this analogy that God is the potter, I'm the clay.

The wheel is the circumstances in my life that God brings to make the vessel that pleases him. I realize from the beginning when the potter takes the clay and begins to work with it, to knead it, he already has in his mind a plan, that which he wants to do with that lump of clay, that which he desires to make out of it. I realize that the clay has no intrinsic value within itself, but it does have the potential for great value according to the skill of the potter.

Paul wrote, for we are his workmanship. That is, God is working in us, created in Christ Jesus under the good works that God has before ordained that we should accomplish for him. I realize that the clay can only know what's in the mind of the potter by yielding fully to the touch of the potter.

I realize that the clay has no power to make anything of itself, that without the touch of the potter it will remain nothing more than a worthless blob, a lump. And as far as eternal things are concerned, totally without value. I realize that the potter, because his love for the clay is so intense, he has a plan that is far better for that clay than anything that that clay could ever make of itself or imagine for itself.

For the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the hearts of men the things that God has prepared for those that love him. The future that he has prepared for you as you yield fully to him. Maybe today you've tried to control your own destiny.

Your life has become marred, rather worthless. Perhaps you've resisted the work that God is wanting to do in your life. It's comforting to know that the potter will take that marred vessel, he'll remake it into a vessel of value and usefulness, and he made of it a vessel that pleased him.

And God can do that for you. He can make of your life a vessel that will please him. Father, we thank you for your work in our lives.

And Lord, we do pray that we might become vessels of glory. Vessels that will please you, Lord. Forgive us, Lord, for our stubbornness.

Forgive us, Lord, for our resisting your touch on our lives. May we yield and surrender ourselves, Lord, fully unto you, that you might accomplish in us your eternal plan, your eternal purposes, as you make of us a vessel of glory fit for the Master's use. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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