

## Jeremiah 18:1-6 (Edward Henry Chater) 52823

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"The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. 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. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 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." Jer. 18:1-6.

Let us in spirit pay a visit with the prophet Jeremiah to the potter's house, and may both writer and reader be caused to understand the words of the Lord.

What did the prophet see? The potter busy at work, fashioning a vessel on the wheels. And as he watched their swift revolutions, behold, "the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter." We almost see the look of disappointment upon the faces of the workman and the prophet as the beautiful vessel upon which he had spent such pains became suddenly marred in his hands and worthless.

But a vessel he must have, and hence, returning to his work, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. The second time, the work succeeds; he forms a vessel suited to his taste. Evidence of the workman's skill is perceptible throughout; perfect symmetry and matchless design characterize his work; there is not a single flaw. The potter is satisfied; it has turned out exactly as he wished; the vessel is as it seemed good to him to make it.

Jeremiah remains a silent spectator of the scene. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD," etc. We are at no loss then to perceive the significance; for the words show us that the potter is a figure of Himself, and the clay of Israel.

Israel was chosen by the Lord for His own glory on the earth. The Lord fashioned this privileged people as a choice vessel for His own praise. How marvelous the plans and purposes of the divine workman! How excellent the skill employed in the work! But alas! alas! the vessel was marred in His hand. Israel is marred. The Lord was disappointed [if we may use the word] in His people, and was compelled to set them aside. To this day, they are a marred vessel on the earth, a people scattered and lost. Scripture even speaks of them being scattered among the nations "as a vessel wherein is no pleasure" (Hos. 8:8).

But how blessed to know that there is a moment coming when once again the Potter will remold the clay, and Israel shall be a beautiful vessel upon the earth for His glory, the fruit of His own perfect skill. The Lord will put His own comeliness upon His people; His law shall be written in their hearts (Jer. 31:33, 34); no longer stony, but hearts of flesh. And Israel shall be "another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel."

But may we not gather further instruction, under the Spirit's teaching, from this interesting passage?

As with Israel, so is it also with man. God created man for His own glory, after His own image and likeness. Man was a beautiful vessel of clay, the workmanship of the divine workman. Wondrous indeed the power and skill displayed in the work. But, alas! this vessel too was marred in the hand of the potter, and man became a moral ruin on the earth.

Now it is deeply important to receive God's thoughts about man's state. We are very slow to accept His judgment with regard to it, and to believe that our case is as bad and as hopeless as it is. And yet how plain His word. Scripture after scripture testifies to our fallen condition. (Rom. 3:23; 1 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-19; 2 Tim. 3:1-5.) But men are blind, and their very blindness adds but one more proof of the fact. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Cor. 4:4.

And not only so, but one would think that the scene around, its misery, disease, and death, the daily record of horrors, would open men's eyes in some measure to their state, and lead them to consider their latter end. (Deut. 32:29.) But no, men love darkness rather than light, and hundreds of thousands swiftly tread their short path of life, blind, and content to be so.

Some time ago the writer with two Christian companions was passing the night in a town beautifully situated in a fertile valley, surrounded with wood-clad hills, and mountains in the distance. It was a lovely evening in June, when nature was clothed in its most beautiful garb. Having visited one or two in the town, and finding we had an hour to spare before dark, we strolled outside. Coming upon an isolated hill covered with trees, we climbed the narrow winding path which led to the top. The view of the surrounding country was exceptionally beautiful, and the setting sun added to its charm. But what was our surprise to find ourselves in the midst of a large cemetery, with hundreds of tombs among the trees, or in the open plateau which crowned the hill.

Casting the eye to the left, on the face of the opposite slope stood an immense structure. This, upon inquiry, we found to be the county asylum.

Again looking off to the left, among other buildings, a large hospital met our view. And fronting us, towering on a rocky height overlooking a river, stood a large castle and prison.

To this beautiful locality thousands of tourists direct their steps every year. How many, we wonder, look upon it with the same eyes as we did! The scene was lovely, but sin was manifestly there and marred all. How powerful this silent testimony to the utter ruin of man, and yet how few have eyes to see it! And this is only one spot among thousands on this sin-stricken earth, where a similar testimony may be seen. How fearful the effects of sin in the human race! A prison for men, because of the terrible fruits of their evil wills; an asylum for those who lose the reason given them of God; a hospital for the poor body racked with disease and suffering; and a grave at the end of their toilsome pilgrimage on earth!

What further proof need we of the fall of man? Surely the vessel is marred, utterly marred, in the potter's hand. And reader, after death comes the judgment (Heb. 9:27). God has said it.

But oh, how blessed to turn our thoughts away for a moment from such a scene, and to read in the wondrous Book of God the glorious words, "If any one be in Christ, there is a new creation"! 2 Cor. 5:17; J.N.D. Trans.

Yes, God has returned again to His work. He has made it again as seemed good to the potter to make it. The first vessel, the first Adam, the first man, is marred, utterly marred. God has cast it aside as a worthless thing. The cross of Christ, His Son, is man's judicial end—in one aspect the testimony of God to man's utter ruin and worthlessness. The vessel was marred in paradise at the outset. Traces of its original beauty remain, but the vessel itself is utterly worthless, and God in grace has begun over again. God wanted a vessel for His glory—to suit Himself—and He has made one as it seemed good to Him. This vessel is the new creation.

Glorified as to sin in the finished work of Christ, God raised His Son and glorified Him, the beginning of the creation of God (Rev. 3:14). And now all believers in His name, washed from their sins in His precious blood, are a new creation in Him

"If anyone be in Christ, there is a new creation" (J.N.D. Trans.): "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God," etc. 2 Cor. 5:17, 18.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," etc. Eph. 2:10.

"Having put on the new man" (J.N.D. Trans.) "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:24.

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew... but Christ is all and in all." Col. 3:10, 11.

Wondrous work of God, the new creation! Here the foot of Satan has never trod. The empty grave of Christ stands between all in Christ and the enemy of God. No defilement there; no sin there; no evil there. All is perfect; all is in Christ, in Christ forever before God. No patchwork mending of the old vessel, but an entirely new vessel altogether. No human busy bodying here. "Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship." Eph. 2:9, 10. This is God's masterpiece—the heavenly Potter's most excellent work. A new vessel, all His work; the manufacture, pattern, and design, are suited to His eye and heart. No possible flaw here; all is of God, as it seemed good to Him to make it.

How blessed for all who are the subjects of His grace! What do you think about it, dear reader? There is no salvation out of Christ, and nothing suited to God but what is His own work. Then why extend useless efforts in trying to improve the flesh, and vainly seek to mend the vessel that God has long given up as marred, utterly marred, and worthless? Wherefore labor for that which satisfieth not (Isa. 55:2)? God has begun over again. By faith we receive pardon, are justified, and have eternal life. And having believed, we are sealed (Eph. 1:13). And having eternal life and the Holy Ghost, we are in Christ a new creation, where all is of God. We form part of the new vessel, so to speak, the blessed and eternal handiwork of God.

But God has further purposes and plans soon to be matured. Meanwhile, many in Christ are left for a moment on earth. What for? To glorify Him. To do this, we must search and obey His Word. God looks for conduct suited to the favored position and portion into which His grace has brought us. Many are the exhortations to practice addressed to all that are a new creation in Christ. Space fails to call the reader's attention to more than one.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God [Christ] rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Col. 3:12-17.

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