

Clay and the Potter

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. (3) Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. (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. (5) Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, (6) 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 18:1-6 KJV

I am in the potter's house, not as an observer, but as a marred vessel, and he is working on me. I am not sure what kind of vessel I will be after he is done, or if the process will be over in this lifetime, but it will not be the same as what he started with. His hands are gentle, his touch is warm, and he is not interested in destroying me. He understands many of the feelings that I have because no doubt he had them too.

The reforming of a vessel does not happen by itself. The potter takes that piece of clay in his hands and begins to work. His hands are in constant contact with the clay as he works out the lumps, the parts that have left it visibly marred. When he is done it is not the same vessel as it was when he started.

I am not a potter, so I do not know the steps that it takes to finish the vessel for use. However, I imagine that sometime, he has to apply the fire to the finished vessel to make it hard enough to be useful. I am not sure if there is a direct step by step application to this. I do know that the fiery trials come, and they test our vessel, and it becomes hardened and useful. Not hardened in heart or in spirit but tested in faith.

I suppose the main point of this example is not the firing process, but the remolding of the vessel. The potter did not throw the clay away and say it was not worth anything. No, he took that same clay to make a better vessel for his use. That comforts me because in my mind, I have every reason to think that my past failures have made me an inferior vessel, and worthy of being discarded and forgotten. Yet I have never seen God's scrap yard of discarded useless vessels; that is not the way he works. He is a master in the vessel remaking process.

Unlike natural clay which has no choice in the process, we do. I have the choice to allow the Lord to mold my vessel to his purpose. We cannot do this alone, of course, it takes his power to make it happen. However, we supply the willingness, and he the power.

Sometimes we may not even know that our vessel is marred. It could be some deliberate choices that we have made, or it could be the experiences in life that leaves us with some traits or lumps that the potter would like to remove to make us better suited for his service. It may not be clear to us at the moment what the Lord is trying to do with us, but our part is to be willing.

At this point I am still in the potter's house and do not know what the Lord is trying to make of me. I do see some of the lumps and imperfections that he is removing. However, it seems that rather than there being just one lump, possibly there are many little ones, and it is taking time for him to take them out. Perhaps he knows that he cannot just take them out because they are a part of my life, so he is kneading them gently between his fingers to soften them and they are becoming a blended part of my vessel. It takes patience on my part as he works. The marring did not happen overnight and so I should not expect the removal to happen in an instant. If I can wait on him, he works them out, bit by bit, prayer by prayer. But the love I feel in the process is wonderful.

I guess the amazing part is how a mighty, perfect Father can love an ugly, broken, and discarded piece of clay like me.