

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

Int.

1. Aim: To discuss the text of Jeremiah which teaches us to be moldable by God.
2. Text - Jeremiah 18:1-6 "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 you to hear My words." 3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. 5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: 6 "O house of I srael, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of I srael !"
3. Jeremiah is teaching them: - [I srael was rebelling against God]
 - a. That God has power to do according to His good - will - this appeal should cause them to turn from their evil ways.
 - b. I nstead the people scheme against the life of this preacher of repentance.
4. He uses the I llustration of the Potter and Clay
 - a. Clay was dug from the field, then trodden by the feet of laborers until it became a workable paste, ready for the hand of the potter.
 - b. He had a few simple tools. - wheel that he pedaled - hand tools to shape clay
 - c. He could take this raw product and make it both useful and beautiful.
5. The parable and lessons that we can learn for us today. Five things we will notice in the lesson about the Potter and the Clay: The Potter -- The Clay --- The Pattern ---- The Patience of the Potter ----- Product of the Potter

Discussion

I. THE POTTER

- A. God almighty is the potter
- B. He has an abiding interest in all human affairs
 - 1. Our Creator - maker
 - 2. Sustainer of our life - God is in Control - Acts 17:28 Neh. 9:21
 - 3. Isa 45:9 "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?"
 - a. Potsherd = the piece of pottery or vessel
 - b. Fashioneth = squeeze into shape
 - c. The Potter is in control - not the clay

II. THE POTTER'S CLAY

- A. ISA 64:8 "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." "The potters Clay" Isa. 29:16
- B. Man, like clay, is pliable
 - 1. We can be shaped and molded
 - 2. We go through variable shapes and pass through many changes
 - 3. We can be molded by the Potter or by the world !!!!
 - 4. God the Potter can mold us and shape us through His Word into something that is pleasing unto Him.

5. There are possibilities in the lives of all of us which are capable of being realized if we place our lives in the hands of the potter.
6. ROM 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
 - a. Conformed = fashioned in ASV - Conform to the same pattern
 - b. Transformed = metamorphosis - change from one thing into another thing
 - c. We can be changed from a sinner into a Christian - person of the world to a person who is pleasing to God. +++ We have a choice.
7. ROM 6:16 "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"
 - a. Yield = "present" in ASV
 - b. To the things that are good or bad - It's our choice.
8. Youth is the most pliable period of life
 - a. Like a young plant, or a young animal.
 - b. Like clay, life becomes less plastic as time passes
 - c. It is very important to train and teach children and to encourage them to obey while young.
 - d. ECCL 12:1. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;"
 - (1) Days of thy youth Pleasure = desire

(2) Remember while we are young - if not there may come a time when we have no desire to remember him.

9. We never are too old to change for the better

C. Man is the Clay - God is the Potter

III. THE POTTER'S PATTERN

A. The potter

1. He places his pattern before Him - picture or object - or in his mind
2. He takes the raw material in his hands - shapes it into the likeness of his pattern
3. Every turn of the wheel and touch of the hand plays a part in making the vessel of beauty and usefulness.

B. God's Pattern is the Christ

1. He takes man into his hands, and begins to fashion him into the likeness of the Christ.

a. ROM 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

- (1) Conformed to the image of his Son
- (2) Image = resemblance, profile
- (3) To resemble, be like - Christian = Christ in us
- (4) God is trying to make us like Christ - His son, our example and model

b. COL 3:10 "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

(1) New = fresh, young

(2) Get a new image - allow ourselves to be molded by the Potter to be like Christ.

2. God desires to make every man like the Christ - a vessel of beauty and usefulness

a. Lk. 2:52 "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

b. The model for us to follow:

(1) Wisdom = proper use of knowledge

(2) Stature = physical

(3) God = spirit, soul

(4) Man = social

c. God's Challenge to us

(1) Live as Christ lived

(2) Grow as Christ grew

(3) Think as Christ thought

(4) Obey as Christ obeyed

C. The pattern for the Potter is Christ

IV. THE POTTER'S PATIENCE

A. The potter

1. When the vessel made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter - never throws it away in disgust, but makes it over - remolded it - made it again.

2. Plenty of raw material - continues with the same.

B. Though Israel was marred in His hand - God continued to work with her. Jer. 18:4

C. Though Peter three times denied the Master, the Master loved him and brought him to repentance --

1. Lk. 22:61-62 "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

2. He was marred - denied the Lord

3. He went out later and preached the first Gospel sermon on the day the church was established - Acts 2

4. He became an example of what A Christian is to be like.

D. Rom. 2:4 "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

1. God does not make mistakes

2. Though we are marred in the Potter's hand, he does not cast us aside.

3. He tries to bring us to repentance. His tender touch should soften every heart.

E. An experienced potter makes few mistakes, and in this case we are discussing the divine Potter, who makes no mistakes.

1. The clay is imperfect, the potter's finest plans do not always work.

2. We can Repent and allow God to make us over.

3. The Divine Potter can rework the clay so the final result will be good.

V. THE POTTER'S PRODUCT

- A. The kind of vessel he makes depends largely upon the way the material responds to touch.
- B. Two Kinds of Responses:
1. Impenitent
 - a. The person being molded by God has an impenitent heart is marred in the hands of the potter
 - b. He who hardens himself against the Potter cannot find improvement in his life.
 - c. He refuses to be changed
 - d. Pride-stubbornness-selfishness resists Potter's touch
 - e. God is trying - it is not God's fault - but because that person refuses to be changed that person will not be shaped into a vessel of honor.
 - f. God changes his intentions according as a nation or individual changes his behavior
 - g. Jer. 18:7-10 "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; 8. If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. 9. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; 10. If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them."
 - (1) The nation of Israel refused to respond to the Potter's molding
 - (2) The Same message applies to individuals
 - (3) If we repent God can mold them, but if not then God will punish them

2. Penitent

- a. God works wonders with the penitent - makes him into a vessel of honor.
- b. He takes the clay - base - unclean - unsightly -- and converts it into an object of beauty and usefulness - and valuable
- c. God can take us a human being with a soul made in His image - he can mold us and make us into something very valuable.
- d. By yielding to Divine touch, Peter became Peter the Stone
- e. Saul became the Apostle Paul
- f. EPH 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."

(1) Workmanship

(2) When the vessel is made into the likeness of the pattern, the Potter places his own signature upon it as his own workmanship

- g. REV 3:12 "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

(1) Overcometh

(2) Make a pillar

(3) Write upon him a new name

(4) When we allow ourselves to be molded by God and be created in the image of Christ he will write a new name upon us - the name Christian

C. God calls all men to repentance

1. LUKE 13:3 "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
2. Only by yielding to His call can we be made into vessels of honor.

D. Man has a choice

1. God has granted to man the freedom of choice - that makes man responsible for his conduct.
2. If man were not allowed to exercise his own will power, then God himself would be responsible for all that man does.
3. It is God's desire and will that we obey His will.
4. ROM 9:19-24 "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20. 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? 22. What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, 24. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"
 - a. God has absolute power over all people.
 - b. He desires that all man be righteous - that all people yield to His will and that all mankind repent.
 - c. But if we refuse God must Punish !!
 - d. But he will only bless those who obey -- or are righteous.

- e. He must reject and punish those who disobey.
- f. Man makes his own character - either according to God's directions and with his help, or else he makes a character against God's teaching and willingness to help.
- g. God is righteous in acting in this way.
- h. Whether a man is a vessel unto honor or unto dishonor, he alone is responsible!!
- i. God does not by any direct power make people either good or bad.
- j. But God "would have all men to be saved" 1 Tim.2:4

Conclusion

1. **The Potter -- and the clay.**
 - a. Potter = God is the potter
 - b. Clay = Man is the clay
 - c. Pattern = Christ is the perfect pattern
 - d. Patience on the part of the Potter
 - e. Product = Impenitence or Penitence on the part of man
2. The clay has the possibilities of becoming an object of usefulness and beauty under the hand and skill of the potter.
3. There are possibilities in all of us which are capable of being realized, if we are willing to place our lives in the hands of the Potter.
4. If we do not respond to the Potter then our life can be marred.
5. But the great designer or Potter can redeem us from that unfortunate situation and make us into a useful being.

6. ROM 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
7. "God shapes our lives by the discipline of providence as the potter the clay upon his wheels. The wheel of time spins fast, but not carrying us away, changing but not destroying each separate individuality. In providence there are wheels within wheels. We do not understand their meaning. The clay is pressed now below into a solid base, now above into a dainty rim, but it is difficult to see what the final outcome will be till all is finished. So our lives are pressed on one side and on another - something which in our eyes is indispensable is taken away, something which to us seems needless is added. But out of the dizzy whirl, the rush and confusion of life, God is steadily working out his purpose."
8. God will shape us into a vessel of honour. Will you allow god to shape you?

BI BLI OGRAPHY

Commentaries on Jeremiah

Clarkes, Blackwood, Kiel and Del.

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