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Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume IX
Issue 209

The Potter's House

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The Word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you 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 to me, saying, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?" said the LORD. "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel (Jeremiah 18:1-6).

In the Scriptures Father is spoken of as a Potter, an analogy that places great emphasis upon His ever-present hand and His well-designed plan in our lives.

The Potter always has complete power over His clay. He designs and makes His clay-creation according to His own masterful plan. He is active in His craftsmanship, with His hands-on skill.

The passage that we have here from Jeremiah the Prophet illustrates Father as Potter over Israel. Isaiah the Prophet also confirmed this important principle.

But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our Potter; and we all are the work of Your hand (Isaiah 64:8).

Paul validates this universal principle of Father as the Potter, and we as His clay.

Who are you who reply against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, "Why have you made me thus?" Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? (Romans 9:20-21).



DOWN TO THE POTTER'S HOUSE

It is critically important for the believer to "go down to the Potter's house." It is only here that we will ever gain the true reality of the divine perspective. When Jeremiah went down to the Potter's house, there he saw the Potter fashioning "a work on the wheels."

The Potter Is in Control

Of course Jeremiah could clearly see the clay for what it was – just passive material – and that it was the Potter, and the Potter alone who was steady at His important work.

It was the Potter who "wrought a work on the wheels." A visit to the Potter's house reveals that it is *all* about the Potter. The clay, after all, was just soil from the earth – completely powerless over its own design and destiny.

... Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who works all things after the counsel of His Own will (Ephesians 1:11).

The Potter's House2009
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The Potter Is Responsible

Whatever is made of the clay on the Potter's wheel is *totally* the responsibility of the Potter. Clay does not have the power to make itself into anything. Nor does it have the power to resist the Potter's purposes.

MARRED VESSELS

And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter...

Jeremiah saw that the vessel was "marred," but do not miss this! It was "marred in the hand of the potter..."

Of course it was! The clay can't mar itself! If the clay vessel is "marred," it is the Potter's responsibility.

A trip to the Potter's house will reveal the hand of the Potter in *everything*, even in *all* of life's brokenness. After all, He is the One Who mars the vessel. It is His doing. Clearly and simply, any vessel is what it is because of the Potter.

Marred, but Still in the Potter's Hand

We are in the hand of the Potter. He is making us. Regardless of the stage of the clay's formation on the wheel, it is always in the Potter's controlling hand. Not only is the clay on the wheel in the Potter's power, the clay is also always close to the Potter – for His hands are all over the clay. This speaks of the closeness of the Potter and His clay.

What peace we have who truly consider these words. It matters not what our lot in life may be, or what our circumstances may be like; each of His vessels rests ever secure in His able hands.

For in Him we live, and move, and have our being ... (Acts 17:28).

This is the central truth that will allow us to,

Be careful for nothing ... (Philippians 4:6).

William Mealand (1873-1957) wrote of this wonderful truth.

How great a thing it is to realize ourselves as in His Hand! What equipoise and calm! For then, should wayward circumstance, or mood's despair come near, it is to find us still within

Bible Student's Notebook[™]

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume IX, No. 209 – October 6, 2009

This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

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that hand. As our “faithful Creator” His Word is confirmed to our hearts in all its fine gradations: “I have made, and I will bear. Even I will carry, and will deliver you.”¹

He Made It Again – Another Vessel

He made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it...”

Jeremiah also saw a process. He saw the Potter making the clay over again into another vessel. If the clay is “made again another vessel,” that, too, is equally and entirely the Potter’s responsibility. The Potter is always responsible for whatever He makes.

The Potter is faithful to continue His work until He has made the clay into the vessel of His own desire and plan. This is simply the Potter’s way: the clay is marred and then made new. We see it in the entire story of creation, for there is coming a day when there will be a “new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness” (II Peter 3:13).

TRUSTING THE POTTER’S WORKMANSHIP

At the Potter’s house, Jeremiah could see the ever-spinning wheel and the constant pressure of the Potter’s designing hands.

Life is hard – really hard. It is so by the design of the Potter. He is taking each of us somewhere, and molding and making us – all along the way. We are all on different paths, but all paths of His Own wise choosing.

The Spinning of the Potter’s Wheel

Be honest: Do you not often feel that your life is spinning out of control? Does it not seem to you to be quite a mess? That it is simply marred (ruined, vain), veering wildly on a purposeless course?

This is nothing more than the spinning of the Potter’s wheel beneath you.

The Pressure of the Potter’s Hands

Do the pressures of life bear down hard upon you? Does the pressure feel too much at times, more than you can bear?

1. *In the Hand of the Potter*, in the *Unsearchable Riches Magazine*.

Paul, our Apostle, felt these pressures greatly. They seemed unbearable and life-ending. Listen to his heartfelt expression, that he was:

...Pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life (II Corinthians 1:8).

Know this truth: These are not the mere pressures of “circumstances” that you feel, but the hand of the Potter pressing ever so firmly on the surface of your clay. Do you think that this pressure is hindering the work of the Potter in your life? No, indeed, *IT IS* the work of the Potter!

Beloved of the Potter, do not be discouraged with His loving work of wisdom. Trust Him implicitly. Patiently wait upon Him as He performs His life-long work on you. After all, you are His workmanship, and He alone is responsible.

Do not be disappointed with His work; His methods and His timing. Simply trust Him unreservedly. He is absolutely skillful and faithful and He will accomplish His work (you) to supreme perfection!

Do not fret. His work is larger and grander than we can see from the vantage of the spinning wheel. You *are* who you *are* because God has made you that way. You are *ever* changing – marred and remade, because He is the Potter, and you are His clay. The Potter is steadily and devotedly working His clay. He is working, making you the vessel of His Own choosing.

... Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, “Why have you made me thus?” (Romans 9:20).

Because you are God’s clay – His “workmanship” – He is responsible for who you are at every stage of the process. God will use His turning wheel and the firm pressure of His hands at His Own discretion.

We rejoice in the words of Arthur P. Adams (1847-1925):

God has created me for a definite purpose. That purpose I shall ultimately fulfill in His economy. It is a wise and good purpose, one with which I should be perfectly satisfied and contented if I only understood it all. Toward that end I am continually moving. All things tend to advance me in that one direction and I shall surely arrive. I shall surely ►

fulfill the purpose of my creation, and all I have to do is to leave myself in His hands as clay in the hands of the potter to be fashioned according to His will.

... Take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds (Genesis 43:11).

We also rejoice in the words of William Mealand (1873-1957):

Surely, even today, the Potter desires vessels to contain His Own spiritual-fruit. He desires for us to be fruit-filled vessels.

He takes pleasure in His Own work. Its far-reaching issues are to constitute the delight of God's will, and its excellency will be celestially apparent above all earthly showing ... Vessels of honor for and in the Potter's hand – made not only by Him, but for Him.

But the Spirit's fruit is love, joy, peace ... (Galatians 5:22).

He is *always* the Potter, and we are *always* His clay.

Vessels for Light

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps (Matthew 25:4).

THE POTTER'S HONORABLE VESSELS

The Potter is now in the long process of making us honorable vessels for His use. In the Scriptures we can see a number of honorable uses of "vessels."

Light-containers are also common uses of vessels in the Scriptures, and we, too, are designed by the Father to be bearers of divine light.

Vessels for Service

Vessels are containers. They are designed to hold things. There are many kinds of "vessels" mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, some that God made use of; honorable vessels for His use. Here are some examples:

For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen [clay] vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (II Corinthians 4:6-7).

... The holy vessels of God ... (I Chronicles 22:19).

Paul spoke a couple of verses earlier of "the light of the glorious gospel." This was the "treasure in earthen vessels" (i.e., Christ dwelling in us!). This reference to the earthen vessels can hardly help but remind us of Gideon (Judges 7) and the pitchers that were broken so that the light could be released.

*... Vessels of **service** in the house of the LORD ... (I Chronicles 28:13).*

God's glorious Light dwells in us, but it is only in our brokenness that this divine illumination radiates forth from us.

*... Vessels for the house of the LORD, even vessels to **minister** ... (II Chronicles 24:14).*

... Bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD (Isaiah 66:20).

RESTING IN THE WISDOM OF THE POTTER'S HOUSE

Notice the words – "service" and "minister." Today, we are His vessels for such service and ministry in this present age. It takes the molding of the Potter's hands to accomplish this process, that ultimately we might be of service and ministry to others.

Much richness is to be found in the Potter's House. The believer must allow his experiences and emotions to give way to the truth of Father's wise craftsmanship.

Vessels for Fruit

In the Hebrew Scriptures we read of vessels being used to contain fruit.

What of all the trials and hardships pushing heavily upon our hearts and souls? No worries. It's just His hand pressed upon our clay!



The Household of Faith

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10-11).

Paul presented believers as being family – “the household of faith” (“the family of faith” – CLT). In the book of I Thessalonians Paul describes his relationship with the saints in family terms, as that of a:

Gentle Mother – “as a nurse cherishes her children”

But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us (I Thessalonians 2:7-8).

Concerned Father – “as a father does his children”

For you remember, brothers, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: as you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his children, That you would walk worthy of God, Who has called you unto His kingdom and glory ... (I Thessalonians 2:9-16).

Loving Brother – “brothers”

For yourselves, brothers, know ... For you remember, brothers ... For you, brothers ... But we, brothers, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see

your face with great desire (I Thessalonians 2:1, 9, 14, 17).

The saints were not social acquaintances to Paul. They were not “parishioners.” Paul did NOT view his relationship with them as a religious one. Rather, he regarded them as family – God’s family – his family!

FAMILY-OF-GOD AFFECTIONS

Paul saw things from their divine perspective. He saw the saints as family. He had a special and tender relationship with them. Notice Paul’s words to the Ephesians:

Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, dealing graciously among yourselves, according as God also, in Christ, deals graciously with you (Ephesians 4:32, CLT).

Paul had great love for the saints at Ephesus and they had great love for him in return.

And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship (Acts 20:37-38).

Family Terms

Family terms are Paul’s greatest form of speaking of our relationship to each other. Often this subject does not get the attention that it deserves, probably because of its very familiarity. After all, he uses brother and brethren (brothers) over 130 times in his letters. ►

To Paul, “brother” was not some formal description or religious title; it was an attitude of relationship, of personal commitment to family ties.

And through your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you sin so against the brothers, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat makes my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands, lest I make my brother to offend (I Corinthians 8:11-13).

Love is the Key

Love is the key factor of family life. Without it a “family” does not really exist. So it is with Christ’s Body.

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you (I Thessalonians 3:12).

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment (Philippians 1:9).

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another (Romans 12:9-10).

Put on, then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, pitiful compassions, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another and dealing graciously among yourselves, if anyone should be having a complaint against any. According as the Lord also deals graciously with you, thus also you. Now over all these put on love, which is the tie of maturity (Colossians 3:12-14, CLT).

Be therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-

smelling savor (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Love Is Positive Action

Love is manifested not in mere feeling but in concrete active service. Love gives itself irrespective of the recipient’s reactions.

And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved (II Corinthians 12:15).

Family life is to be based upon divine love – an unconditional, unfailing, *no-matter-what* kind of love. It has to do with the fundamental attitudes of patience, humility, tolerance, kindness and generosity. These attributes lead us to a depth of relationship with each other which is *unmatched* by simple earthly relationships.

THE DISPLAY OF GOD’S FAMILY-LIFE

God’s *family of faith* has divine life. It should show forth its unique relationship of family ties, those of closely knit relatives – siblings. This bond can be seen, actively displayed in many ways, in the ministry of Paul:

House Meetings

The saints gathered with each other in homes – the place where families live.

*Likewise greet the **church that is in their house** (Romans 16:5).*

*... Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, **with the church that is in their house** (I Corinthians 16:19).*

*“Salute the brothers which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and **the church which is in his house** (Colossians 4:15).*

*And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to **the church in your house** (Philemon 1:2).*

Shared Possessions

The saints shared their material possessions with each another – as families do.

Distributing to the necessity of the saints ...
(Romans 12:13).

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10 – note the priority of the saints in this matter).

Eating Together

The saints ate together, the table being a very family-oriented place.

When he therefore came up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even until break of day, so he departed (Acts 20:11).

Warm Greetings

The saints greeted each other warmly – in a family way.

Salute one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16).

... Greet one another with a holy kiss (I Corinthians 16:20).

Greet one another with a holy kiss (II Corinthians 13:12).

Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss (I Thessalonians 5:26).

Hospitality

The saints showed hospitality toward one another.

– Instruction was given to the saints, that they were to be,

... Given to hospitality (Romans 12:13).

– Hospitality was to be characteristic of leadership.

A bishop then must be ... given to hospitality ... (I Timothy 3:2).

For a bishop must be ... a lover of hospitality ... (Titus 1:7-8).

– Hospitality was to be characteristic of widows considered for support (I Timothy 5:10).

... If she has lodged strangers ... (I Timothy 5:10).

There are many examples of hospitality in Paul's letters (c.f. Acts 16:15; 21:8, 16; Romans 16:23; Philemon 22).

Widow Care

The saints cared for their widows (I Timothy 5:1-16). They did so because this is the activity of an extended family.

Use of Family Terms

The saints used terms that reinforced the concept of family.

– Brother (used 31 times by Paul)

– Brethren (brothers, 100)

– Sister (4)

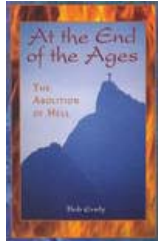
What pleasure there is for parents when there is love and harmony among their children. How true this must also be for God.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! (Psalm 133:1).

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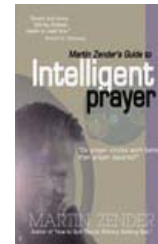
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