

Title: POTTER'S HOUSE

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POTTER'S HOUSE

I'm not preaching the message I prepared. I felt the Lord speak to my heart and I'm going to obey that inner compulsion, and go to the place that I've been with this church more than once, that God wants us here today—Jeremiah 18.

“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.” In the margin of all of my Bibles, I've written G. Campbell Morgan's translation: “Behold, He wrought His work on the wheel.” “And the vessel that He made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so He made it again another vessel.” And this is the verification of the translation of Morgan: whether the original is clear or not, it is obvious it's not just a random, free-expression work of art; but it is a purposeful work—“The potter wrought his work on the wheel”—because when the clay is marred in the hand of the potter... “so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make.”

The sixth verse makes it clear: there is a human-God relationship application. “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand.” Now I've probably preached on this chapter a hundred times, but as with so many truths of God you got to realize them.

Seventy-five German Christians in 1727 were praying and seeking God, and the Holy Spirit fell on them and the Moravian Revival began. Those 75 German Christians went out and did more missionary work for God in a very short time than the entire church had done in 200 years. Count Zinzendorf writes of them and their great work.

Their lives touched Charles and John Wesley. Charles received a deeper experience of commitment with God, and he and John—the sophisticated Anglican preacher, were on shipboard in the Atlantic when a storm hit that frightened the sailors. The only people who weren't scared on board were the Moravians—a little band of Moravian Christians, and John came upon them; and they weren't praying—they were singing. He said, “Why aren't you praying?” They said, “If it be the Lord's will that we drown in this storm, then we have instant entrance into Glory; and that's what we all want.” John began to talk to the leader and ask him what they had; he wanted what Charles had already gotten from God and they had, and the leader said “It's of grace.”

And John said, “I don't have it. Should I quit preaching?” And the very wise leader of the Moravians said, “No, preach *grace* because it's in the Bible. After you get it, preach it because you have it; but preach it first because it is in the Word.”

The older I get and the more I serve the Lord, the more I understand that God is kind enough to give me insight into His Word. And there are lots of things that I've preached in His Word that I thought I had realized, but now I know I only touched them and only had a glimpse of them. And as the life with God

brings the reality of engraftation, until the truth is in-grown, you can't really realize them. That is why some passages of Scripture that you've read a hundred times will, as Karl Barth has said, "leap out and seize you like a beast" at certain points of your Christian journey; because they give meaning to what is happening and give direction through an experience.

I feel like I've never preached on the potter's house before because God has engrafted new truth from it. And I hope it reaches you today because I never have any desire ever to just preach a sermon. The word "sermon", as you know, comes from *sermo* in the Latin. John's Gospel opens: "In beginning was the *sermo* and the *sermo* was with God; and the *sermo* was God." There is only one "Sermon", and that is when God's life as revealed in Christ comes through and you hear that "other Voice" and you forget the preacher. I want that to happen today.

I don't want any distraction away from God's Word and God who can speak to each of us today. If you haven't got it already written down, I want you to write four words in the margin of your Bible because those four words let me hang the truths of this illustration in a way that you can retain them. There is too much preaching that is like seed falling on the well-traveled path in the "Parable of the Sower". We just get dinned a little bit with one message; and here comes the next message and it dings us a little and nothing really penetrates.

When the Word of God comes forth anointed by the Spirit, it is going to penetrate. When Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, it says of that mocking mob, "They were pricked in their heart, and said 'what must we do to be saved'?"

And now, "The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah," and I want four words written alongside that 18th chapter: "Principle"... "Purpose"... "Process"... "Person". The strongest men that God ever had to deal with—and that's very significant to me, the strongest men that God ever had to deal with, He forced them to learn the lessons of the potter's house. And He forced them to learn it in the context that once for all they would understand that this is the way God deals with His people.

You are never going to find anybody in human flesh tougher than Jeremiah. Sinking in a pit up near to his waist in a dungeon of mud and mire for doing nothing but preaching God's Word; and with certain doom in the natural facing him, he declares his faith in God by sending out an offering, and defying circumstances by having his relative invest in his inheritance under God in Anathoth as though God—and God alone, was in control of him and whatever circumstance he was in. He was tough.

Zechariah, we know, was that flame of fire that got God's people working again when they came back from bondage to build the Temple. He was tough. When everybody else was ready to lay down on the job, Haggai—an old man, and Zechariah—a young man got them going again. God took him to the potter's house.

In the New Testament, nobody is tougher than Paul. What he bore up under, I really believe I couldn't bear up for a day under it. Yet it never slowed him down. God made him go to the potter's house. Isaiah, when everybody else had forsaken God and given up when Josiah died, Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne.

These are men who in the natural pointed in a direction—their tenacity, their determination, their courage, their willpower, their abilities, their ingenuity. They would have made a mark wherever they went. God picked them. But before He could maximize their use, they had to learn this lesson of the potter's house. You take the message of the potter's house and try to fit it over much of the preaching

that attracts men and women to God... today, and it's going to jar with a dissonant note.... because God is boxed up (though He's never called that), God is boxed up somewhere as needing a new sales pitch every day that can bring man to God, to where man will accept—as though the Lord of glory is tremblingly waiting for acceptance, to where man will accept God.

Well, the potter's house reverses it all and gets it all straight, and that the toughest guys that God ever had to work with had to learn this principle tells me something. And our self-will and our continued attempts to try to find what we call "God's will"—which in essence boils down to trying to get God to approve our will.... And what some people call struggles and confusion as they deal with God, which really boils down to the same thing again.... We want God to approve our will—or change in some degree, or in some small part of His unchanging will, so that God can accommodate us and our wants a little bit more easily. The potter's house settles it.

Now I've been in potters' houses all over the world. I've preached on this chapter so many years. I made it a habit wherever I was in a primitive society where the potter's work as a craftsman work was still in effect; I'd seek out a potter's house from the high plateaus of Columbia and Bolivia to the squalor and heat of Calcutta. They are all the same. There is a potter, there is clay, and there is a wheel. Those are the elements. The clay may be different in texture, it may be different in color; but it's always a potter, clay, and a wheel. The principle that comes as you watch it is that the clay doesn't have any rights. The principle is—because God is the potter in this parable, and that's why He interpreted it Himself—the principle is: God, as the Potter, can do what He wants; He has absolute right to work His will on the clay.

Now one of the tough guys—Isaiah, coined the phrase in ludicrous picture. In one of Isaiah's passages he imagines the ridiculous. He says, "Doth the clay say to the potter, what makest thou?".... "What are you doing with me? What are you shaping me into? Just stop this spinning bit and shaping bit and crushing bit long enough for us to have a talk; and let me find out what it is you are making with me because I may not like it."—"Doth the clay say to the potter, what makest thou?" Nonsense! God has all the rights.

You've heard me preach on this. I have heard "sin" called everything from automobiles to the hem on your skirts. They used to say in Oroville, when my dad would go up to the Free Pentecost Church, he could preach under the anointing only if he took off his tie. I've heard everything called "sin". It all comes from one root. Isaiah said it: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we've turned every one to our own way."

You need not think that that is going to change just because you are in the church. You need not think that that's going to change suddenly because you had an experience with God. I see people in the church more determined to have their way, than all the sinners I've ever met in my life; and they are the worst kind, because they hunt and peck until they find a Scripture to justify it.

Sin is rooted in the desire to have my way; and that root inevitably produces the compounding effect of sin that God hates. The desire is not to sin, but "we are corrupt," as Paul said, "according to deceiving desires." And the corruption produces rebellion. That's the sin God has so much trouble dealing with. We've passed a certain point. We now are no longer just wanting our way. We're rebellious against anything that seeks to stop it.

It is like a horse that you haven't got tamed yet, and you can't get the bit in his teeth. Man, I had one once. My cousin had trained him—fastest quarter horse I ever knew about; won every race he was ever

in; and my cousin had trained him that when you squeezed your knees, he was to “take off”. Well the very natural response when you get on a horse is to squeeze your knees. First time I got on the horse, I squeezed my knees; and I had air under me instead of the horse. He was gone! That’s rebellion... when that horse got no bit in its teeth!

The potter’s house teaches, and I want to learn it. I thought I had learned it, but I really want to learn it. God has got a purpose, and He didn’t send His Son to die and “peddle cheap grace”, as Tozer says—with hat-in-hand outside the door of men’s hearts hoping they will finally wave at Him with consideration. God set out to fill a gap in heaven—emptied by Lucifer when he was cast down.

Brooding over the face of the deep that was hit with a cataclysm, He said, “Let us make man in our image”; and He created man with a purpose. That purpose, as Niebuhr puts it, included what is “an indigenous quality of God’s image in us.” The very essence of God’s image is self-determination—self-determinative creative ability; that “free” side of God that makes us say: “Praise God!”...not like the Puritans that say, “God, in order to be God, must be good.”

God, in order to be God, just has to be all powerful. He doesn’t have to be good, but He is. With absolute power He has proven Himself, and revealed Himself faithful and good with the freedom to be otherwise. He put that in us; He created us in His image with that little capacity in us that can corrupt the freedom to choose other than what He wants. It is as stupid as an ant talking back to a locomotive, but God was not creating a machine. He wanted other sons like His own dear Son; and He put into man the capacity which is freedom, which is the essence of God-ness. Man misused it—continues to misuse it, and that’s the root of sin.

At the choice between God’s will and what we want, the inevitable chapter is written in every life in front of me... throughout our lives: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we’ve turned every one to our own way.”

Those things we call sin—the so-called catalogue, which by the way can all be chopped off, and I can become the holiest looking man in town according to the behavior list—if you don’t take care of the root. God sees the heart and sin is: “I want my way”. The potter’s house teaches only one way is going to rule in His house because the potter’s house is His house. He wants clay that doesn’t talk back; He wants clay that is in His hands; He wants clay that surrenders.

Go back to every message of the last two weeks. In Psalm 84, the way to move into the presence of God where the Lord of Hosts stands was... at the altar. At an altar, death occurs and absolute recognition of God’s rights is settled. The principle of the potter’s house puts in visual form everything we’ve been saying from God’s prose. I can’t make you do it. As we preached last Sunday, unless the Word of God finds that honing device in us—which is that residue of His image—it is not going to take root. If our sin has reached such a rebellion that we ricochet it off and don’t apply it to ourselves... (Why, I always preach to me first; you’ve never ever heard me preach a sermon that didn’t go through Gene Scott before it got to you. As we move into what I believe God is doing to me and going to do in this church, let’s get it straight.)

Some of my earlier remarks might seem unkind. I don’t want us beginning in the Spirit and ending in the flesh, and caught up in our own spiritual pride and deciding we’ve figured out this is what God wants. And I don’t know what God would have done if I hadn’t been the one that “prayed it down”. There is only one boss—God! That’s the “Principle”.

What does He want? Since it is a choice between my wants and His wants, what does He want? God has never ever varied in what He wants. That is the second word: “Purpose”. God is not a free-expression potter. When He made man, what did He say? Say it with me, “Let us make man in our own image.” God is not a bellhop. God is not a waiter. God is not a butler. God is not a banker. God is not a cook. God is not even a coach.

First and foremost, He is a Potter with a purpose which is to take this hunk of clay and shape it. And His problem with us... we’ve got all kinds of designs in this crock of clay. And when the Spirit of God comes, the New Testament writer says concerning that Spirit of God, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.” One translation says, “We have this treasure in a crock of clay.”

God created man, put His image in him, walked and talked with him; and in his innocence he could have grown along with God. Man blew it! God said, “For sin comes death.” The problem that God was having with man was the barrier created by His own integrity between God and man—when man had sinned. Like sheep they sought their way. They wanted that tree and the fruit of it, and a barrier came up.

The Ephesians letter says God broke that partition between us and God. And His own dear Son—worth more to God than all of us put together, emptied Himself of heaven’s glory, and turned from what He wanted—and prayed the norm of His life when He said, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: but nevertheless not as I will... but thine.” And on Calvary, poured out His life and took upon Himself all of our sins, and as the Mediator paid the debt for every sin—past, present, and future—not just that we might get to heaven... and flap around on a cloud... and play a harp... and walk golden streets. But that He might now put His hand as the Potter back in the restored clay and rework it.

Salvation—*soterion* in the Greek, is a continuous process. I taught last night on Festival from Philippians: we are to “work out” that is “carry to the completed process”, our own salvation. Not “work *for*” our salvation. Having been saved and in Christ, we are to work out the process to completion; we are to aggressively make ourselves hang on. Well, now the reverse side is there. The partition was broken that God might reach down and grab hold and apprehend, to use Paul’s words, this hunk of clay—and put His Spirit in it and shape it.

God doesn’t give a hoot or a holler about Gene Scott being a great preacher. He doesn’t care at all that the town see big crowds spilling out of this building. God wants one thing. This is the one-on-oneness with every one of us. He wants the image of Himself to come forth in us.

Here is that dual nature we preached about last Sunday—that little dove in our nature to which the Holy Spirit can find a joining place; and that blackbird in our nature which is the flesh, and its desires to which that evil supernatural force—the raven from hell, can coagulate. And God wants the nature planted in us, capable of being fused with His Spirit and bringing forth the image of God. That’s all He wants! He wants the dross and the other stuff out. Every passage in God’s Book says that.

You know my feeling about “promise boxes”. You know if they help you, use them. But as Follette says, it is usually going and finding an isolated Scripture, and pulling it out like a club and trying to beat God over the head with it saying: “I found this. Now, You may not want to do it, God; but I got you. You better do it.” Romans 8:28 is in all of them boxes: “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them which are the called according to his purposes.” Literally in the Greek: “God enters into all things,” including the messes that we create with our self-serving rebellious natures. “God enters into all things.”

Some people are so prone to over-interpret every circumstance. They are running around whispering and saying what they know God is going to do. We create a lot of our own messes, but that doesn't make it hopeless. The literal Greek of Romans 8:28 is: "God enters into all things." Every situation that has gotten out of sync with His purpose, God enters in like the marred vessel in the hand of the potter. "He enters into all things and worketh his good in those that are called according to his purposes."

What is His "good"? Not to make me rich, I said. He's not just going to be a banker for us—not just cater to a mutated shift of my wants. His "good" is the 29th verse. If I had the money and could buy up every promise box in this world, I would pull out of it Romans 8:28—unless they put the 29th verse with it, because the 29th verse says what the "good" is. A synopsis of them both: "He enters into all things and worketh his good to them which are the called according to his purpose", and which His good is... that we might all "be conformed to the image of his own dear Son."

Lots of people say, "Well, you know God is causing it to happen." Hogwash and pickle juice! We get out of step sometimes and cause it to happen. God didn't wind us all up like a bunch of clocks, because what He wants demands that "the will" finally surrender and that a choice freely given—without which no love is expressed, be made. So we mess it up. Then the old hard-headed sheep nature comes back, and we seek our own way. Now God enters in. He has had one purpose from the beginning. That purpose is to make us in His image; and He is going to start shaping when our will surrenders to make that circumstance further His purpose, which is one-on-one with you and me to make us like Him. Period.

The Ephesians letter I referenced said there was a barrier between us and God. God by His grace gave His Son, split the barrier apart, and now we become the habitation of God through His Spirit; and we have this "treasure in an earthen vessel." And as literally as the substance of God went through a stone and a locked door and sailed off to glory; that nature—the *hupostasis* in the Greek, the literal essence of God's own nature itself—now comes and joins with us and penetrates my being and finds a root in that side of my nature that is God's image that can respond to Him. And with the barrier broken to let His Spirit come, we've become the habitation of God through the Spirit.

Does that mean the "old man", the raven in me, is gone? No, he is still there. That's why Paul says you've got to "crucify him daily". Does that mean because He has come, it's all a-okay; God's work is finished, now let me get on bouncing around my little crock doing what I want? Paul prays they might begin to comprehend the height, the depth, the breadth of that which is available to them in God. And then he says to those saints which had given their bodies to the habitation of God's Spirit: "God gave some, apostles..., prophets..., evangelists..., pastors and teachers..., For the perfecting of the saints..." The word is that which means "to bring forth to full completion of purpose". And that—"the perfecting of the saints" is done by those gift ministries to the church by bringing us all to "a unity of the faith" until our diverse views of what ought to be... jell into one character that "we might all come to the knowledge of the perfect man."

And we're not left to understand what that perfect man is. "The Word was... with God"—of the same essence as God, "and that Word was made flesh, and tented among us." And John 1:18 says, "No man has seen God... but Christ has declared Him"—*exegesis*, "led Him forth from behind a curtain and put Him on display." That is what His nature looks like. God's purpose never changed. He struck the "proof coin"—one of the seven characteristics the Hebrews letter opens with in naming what Jesus is. He is the absolute "proof coin" struck in flesh..., the measurement from which every other coin must be

taken. God struck it in flesh and—though “No man had seen God...”, from behind the curtain Jesus led Him forth and, in the flesh, put on display what it means to be like God.

Now to those Ephesians that were inhabited by God’s Spirit and had the residue of the energizing life—in order that they might know whether it was the old man coming out or the new man in Christ Jesus, God gave gift ministers to the church whose function is neither to take up offerings... massage the saints... carry on a social enterprise, or be a butler or a banker or a bellhop or His crying towel. He gave those gift ministries to the church “to perfect the saints, to the work of the ministry... till we all come to the unity of the faith”—which is brought about only by a “knowledge of the perfect man”—from this Book we know what it is like, until “we all come to the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ.”

Now the essence.... I could preach for two hours on what it means to be like Jesus. I’ve done it many times here—more than two hours at various times added up. But if there is an essence to what it means to be like Christ, it starts at the root. Here is the One who “thought it not robbery to be equal with God: yet took upon Himself the form of a servant.” And you study the life of Jesus—you sit down and read any Gospel through from start to finish—and one root leaps out. He treated this life as though it had only one reason for existence: that He might do the will of the Father that sent Him. Every claim, every natural force that competed with that He pushed aside.

As a boy, His parents had laid a claim on Him too much. He said, “Don’t you know I must be about my Father’s business?” When He began to express His call, His family thought He was beside Himself. Shattering to His mother, He had to say, “These are my relatives, those that do the will of the Father that sent Me.” That must have hit her with a blow. As soon as He got disciples around Him—they had their ideas of what the Kingdom of God ought to be—to the one closest to Him He finally had to say, “Get behind me Satan... you speak as a man.”

Finally, He had to fight it out in His own soul. I’ve already quoted it; Calvary became fact in principle, before it was effectual. In that Garden when He prayed, and the capillaries burst and His sweat was His blood as He said...

—And I thought I had said this and meant it, and I am sure I did, thousands of times in my life; I’ve never said it as much as I’ve said it the last three days: “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”—because there’s lots of things I still want. There’s lots of things I wanted a month ago I don’t care about any more as God has dealt with me. But there are some things I know way down deep if I could twist God’s arm for them, I’d sure do it. But I think I am finally beginning to understand I’ve got to give it all to Him. If I hold any of the reins, His purpose is going to be thwarted and marred. It’s going to be a mixture of His image and a little bit of what I want. I’m not here saying today I’ve settled it, but I can tell you on some things it’s starting to get settled.

Jesus never had my wavering and your wavering. He sweated it out and He settled it: “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” You know, we’ve talked of the cross on Good Friday; it ought to be called “Bad Friday”. We’ve dimmed the reality of what He faced and I don’t really think flesh and blood can imagine the One that the book of Hebrews said, “spoke and from nothing the world was formed.” He would hang on a cross and be mocked and could say, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.” The King of Glory died that day for me and for you; but as He fought it out in that Garden, He was clothed with every human desire that we have.—

...He said, “Not my will, but thine.”

Kick the old dumb sheep in the head once for all and stop being a bucking bronco and become clay! The “principle” is not going to change. God is not a compromiser and He doesn’t make adjustments. He wants only one kind of household—clay that doesn’t talk back. He has all the rights. There’s no bargaining; there’s no adjustment; there’s no negotiation. And He has already said what His plan is. He’s not interested in a bunch of little “Gene-y boys”; He wants “little Christs”. Your career, your marriage, your family, whatever you are involved in is the Lord’s work and God is with you in that; but first and foremost, God wants every circumstance of our life to be that opportunity for Him to bring forth His image.

That leads me to the third word: “Process”. What’s the process? I mean, once I settled it that God is the Boss, and once I beat myself down enough to the purpose to where I understand He wants to make me like Jesus..., man do I get creative! I tell Him exactly how to go about making me like Jesus; and He messes it up every time because He just grabs hold of me and flings me on that wheel and it’s going whir-r-r-r! I don’t like it! It bends me out of shape. And here I sit and defy the principle of the potter’s house on my wheel complaining about: the upholstery—or the lack of it..., the speed..., the direction..., the angle. The wheel is nothing more nor less than where you are—your circumstance. That’s the other half of meaning in Romans 8 where “God enters into all things and worketh His good.”

I really believe—in fact if I were to put a spiritual interpretation on some of the pain I’ve gone through in these last days, I would say God has entered in to make it work for Him. He knows exactly what it takes to get me in the shape and the position He can work on. And I really believe what I’ve preached for years: if you want God’s will—really want it; it’s harder to get out of it, than it is to stay in it.

Now some people are in a panic from morning to night trying to find God’s will. Well, if you are not certain, don’t leap. Stay where you’re at because God never leads in uncertainty. God’s Word says, “The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord.” God’s Word says, “If we acknowledge Him in all our ways, He will direct our path.” God is not playing hide and seek. He is not a sadist. He didn’t send His Son to find us as lost sheep, and then hide from us thereafter.

If you put your life, and if I put my life in God’s hands, He’s going to guide it. Our problem is we’ve come to Him and we suddenly don’t like the path; or we falter and mess it up and when His hand enters in to straighten it out, we don’t like it. The wheel is our circumstance that God is going to enter into... like the hand of the potter to work on us.

Peter taught this. He didn’t talk about a potter’s house, but that’s exactly what he is saying to scattered Christians all over Asia. God knows exactly what it takes to squeeze us into shape. The potter knows exactly the speed to spin that wheel... knows exactly the angle... knows exactly the placement on which to put the clay. He knows where that clay has to be on that wheel in order for His hand then to work on that clay. I have watched them; that absolute, undivided attention of the potter as he works that wheel, and speeds it up and slows it down, and puts the clay on it.

That’s exactly what Peter said to those scattered Christians. He didn’t say: if you will pray, or go listen to this preacher; or read this book; or go down to the bookstore at the corner of whatever street, you’ll find exactly the way to get out of your pressure cooker. He said eulogize God, let your life exhibit certain things; and this very pressure cooker is going to be the means by which God squeezes out of you that side of your nature that has got to be put down. And if you didn’t have the squeezer on you, you wouldn’t see it. You’ll never know you don’t have faith until you are put in a pressure cooker that calls forth faith. You never know how mad you can get until something makes you mad so you can deal with that side of your nature.

I don't like the upholstery. If you want to know what I'd like to do to the wheel that God's had me on for the last two weeks, I would like a double-edged axe to use on it. A few times what I could do to that wheel would rival what a rock-crusher does to a rock, if God would let me have my way. Stay on it! Quit attacking the wheel!

Open up to the Hand that is working on you. Turn the eyes off of that pressure—quit the bucking; quit the punching; quit the wiggling, because you see God wants us to be like clay. The problem with the analogy is we aren't clay—we've got the choice. Quit the fighting and let Him do His work.

The last thing I'd say about that purpose and process is in the New Testament. I don't know how to explain this, but I've watched a potter. I don't think there is any work that I have ever seen—even that of an artist that is as concentrated in its focus as the potter working on a wheel and handling that one pot. He gives it undivided attention.

Here's where the analogy sort of blows apart as we deal with God. I don't know how to explain it; I take Jesus' word for it. "The hairs of your head are numbered." He "sees the sparrow fall". And in God's omniscience and power, if I today with words could communicate it, some of you that are on a wheel that is bending you out of shape could begin to get hope. God has that ability; and He not only has it, He's doing it... to keep each of us in that focus with the same attention that the potter has on that one pot.

The devil has whispered in my ear. I have reached out desperately and said, "God, help!" A lot of it was flesh crying, "Help my way," but I have come again to know what I've known all my life but never realized it quite as much—I'm in God's hands. And you are in God's hands.

I can say a Psalm I've quoted a thousand times, but it's true for me today and for you. "Lord, thou knowest my downittings and mine uprisings, thou understandest my thoughts afar off." When I can't even put it in words, You understand. "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, thou art there. If I say, Surely this darkness will cover me; even the night will be light about me." He sees through it whether I do or not. And as I've said—though I learn more as I go along in experience, the Word has been true that's been preached. As I have said, "Don't doubt in the dark what God tells you in the light."

And God's Word says—and I've hung onto this, "He'll not tempt us beyond what we're able: but will with the temptation make a way of escape." And the Greek has it that as particular as your temptation is—just that exact, God has already worked out the way of escape and has got the key in the door. He has escape routes worked out for people that never take them because His individuality is such that as He works on you and as He works on me on, that wheel—that which is pressing us... He already has the answer.

I don't know what your problem is. I sure know what mine is. I know what my answers are, but I'm coming to the point that as He keeps spinning me around on the wheel—His will. His finger is going to work His will.

Now let me end it. I said there is one last word: "Person". The Old Testament picture of the potter's house is a tough one. If He can't get that pot under control, out it goes, rejected and cast into the potter's field. That's it.

Jesus called Judas “friend” when Judas came to deny Him—that amazes me. After the reality of what Judas had done reached him, he tried to cleanse himself of the damage. He went back to the priests, and the Scripture has it he took those 30 pieces of silver that represented the price of Jesus’ life—the price that he sold Him for, not knowing He was going into redemption, and he flung them on the ground.

The story says—and this is the last reference to the potter’s house in the Gospel record, the story has it they picked up those pieces of silver and bought a potter’s field with them. I don’t think that is an accident that God would control the circumstances in such a way that the price of Jesus’ life that purchased our redemption ended up buying the field where all the rejected and broken pots—the symbol of failure of life in relationship to God...., they were all there, buried.

The price of Jesus’ life.... It is God indelibly putting a footnote saying, “You got another chance.” It’s not quite like the unbending Old Testament frame. The price of Jesus’ life bought the whole field that if you want it not in figurative language but in direct language, go to Matthew 13 where it says, “God paid the price for the whole field to get the treasure that is in it.” When I consider what God has taught me and led me through over these years, I never have felt worth very much to God. One of the reasons I’ve always worked so hard for God is that sense of unworthiness. But this gives me a surety—God is used to marred vessels; and the price of Jesus’ life, for everybody listening to me today.... if God’s Spirit has penetrated.

And as I started to say when I opened the message—and this is a better time to say it—there are two Greek words for “piercing”. There is a Greek word that is used when the Roman soldier pierced Jesus with his sword. It’s not the same word as the word that is in Acts 2 when it says the words of Peter “as they went forth” resulted in this: “they were pierced in their heart” (a literal and different Greek word is used which is a deeper piercing). The Word of God under the anointing of the Spirit had penetrated even deeper than the sword that was used to pierce Jesus. When God’s Word penetrates like that, there are bound to be people that know they haven’t cooperated much with God’s work as a Potter.

Well, He bought the whole field full of messed-up, broken, marred vessels. So why don’t you just come on back and let Him start over? Oh, let me tell you the terms won’t change. He is still going to be the Boss. He is still going to work His purpose. That hasn’t changed. He is still going to use the process, and it is still going to hurt and the wheel isn’t going to fit. But thank God, we can start over. Every marred vessel here today, every marred vessel listening to me today, the Master Potter can still work if you will let Him.

God is still working on your pastor. It is... he finds it easier to pray than he does to preach, but God wouldn’t have me preach this today if there weren’t some vessels that were sort of kicking against the wheel, and some vessels that need to get it straight again and recognize who the Boss is and submit to His process.

You heard me say earlier this week if you listened on television, Charles G. Finney once said it is morally wrong to just preach the Word of God as theory, and not apply it. We are all hunks of clay here today. We’ve all got our ambitions; we’ve all got our wants; we’ve all got our desires; we’ve all got our involvements, but the bottom line is: Are we willing to let God do and have what He wants?

I closed last Sunday saying I want this church and I want this pastor to be a place where the Holy Spirit can find rest. I am saying today I want this pastor and this church to be a place where God can find some clay He can do His work on. If 75 Moravians could shake the world and bring the Methodist

movement into being, and bring the Salvation Army into being; what do you think God can do with us if we will offer ourselves—marred and broken vessels, back to the Potter?

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