

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Potter and His Vessels

There is a song we sing from time to time entitled "*Have Thine Own Way*." The first stanza of the song says, "Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter; I am the clay. Mold me and make me After Thy will, While I am waiting, Yielded and still." What a beautiful song this is and when we as God's creation fully realize and understand that we are simply God's vessels and that He is the Potter (our maker), then we can humble ourselves to the point of doing whatever service we have been molded to do for the Lord!

The Vessels of God

God is truly our Potter. We can read this in the book of Jeremiah chapter 18, verses 1-12, and also in Romans 9:22 where Paul says, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:" Here, Paul likens us to the vessels of God and that is truly what we are. Have you ever noticed a potter working with his clay, molding that clay into a fine vessel? There is a lot of time and patience that is involved in the potter's work. Likewise, God has spent much time and effort in the creation of His vessels, you and me. In the verses pointed out above in Jeremiah and in Romans we can read where God is long-suffering with His vessels and does the very best He can with them. It is through us (His vessels) that we can see the riches of God's glory. "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory" (Romans 9:23).

There are all kinds of vessels out there. There are some vessels of wrath (Romans 9:22), and there are even dishonorable vessels. Paul says, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Romans 9:21). He echoes those same words in 2 Timothy 2:20. But, we can see from Romans 9:21 that there are also vessels of honor and of mercy in Romans 9:23.

We Are Individual Vessels Made by God

God has molded each one of us into a vessel. But, He has given each of us a mind of our own to either respect our maker (The Potter), or reject Him. The choice is entirely left up to us. That is why it is so important for us to realize that had it not been for "The Potter," we would not even be here today. Therefore, knowing this, why is it that so many still choose not to honor the very one who allowed us this opportunity to live and enjoy our short time on this beautiful earth that He also created? We can become honorable vessels unto the Lord by heeding the call. Paul says in Romans 9:23-24, "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" One heeds the call of God by simply obeying His commandments (John 14:15).

Characteristics of an Honorable Vessel

The characteristics of an honorable vessel is that one is sanctified, fit for use, and prepared for all good works. This is what the apostle Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:21, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." One must purge himself from evil and join himself with doing the things of honor, approved unto God Almighty! Then when one proves himself to be a vessel of honor unto the Lord, certain glory will result as Paul said in Romans 9:23. What is that glory? The same glory as Paul was sensing when he told Timothy, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). When we prove ourselves a worthy vessel, one that is serving the purpose that God designed for us to do, then we can enjoy a life eternal with God our Potter. But, when we decide to do our own thing and rebel against our maker then our end is certain destruction (Romans 9:22). Why not let "The Potter" (God) have His own way with His vessels (you and I)?

- Richard Thetford

Share a Quote . . .

Love is not arrogant [1 Corinthians 13:4]. Love is not compatible with an arrogant, self-righteous attitude. A brother or sister who feels a sense of superiority over other members of the brotherhood does not understand that a spiteful sense of superiority endangers his or her own soul. John makes that truth clear by writing, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death." (1 John 3:14).

- Bob Murray

The Great Reality!

There exists a great reality for every person:

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31).

One of God's messengers announced this truth in one of the great settings for latest news, discussion and careful thought (at least the opportunity for): the Areopagus of Athens, Greece. It is accurately recorded in the Holy Scriptures. What can we know, and what does it mean for us?

(1) The "times of ignorance" is past! No person living today will be justified on the basis of "I didn't know!" His preachers were sent forth into all the world (Mark 16:15; cf. Colossians 1:23). Their message was from God: "repentance and forgiveness of sins" (Luke 24:47). Our very existence depends upon God, our Creator (Acts 17:25-26). In days gone by, in His great patience and wisdom, He "waited" (cf. 1 Peter 3:20) in the cases of some people. Prior to Christ there was no universal, systematic and continuous plea for repentance toward God issued to the entire world. Because of what God has revealed, those who choose to remain in ignorance are "without excuse" (Romans 1:18-32). The true knowledge (2 Peter 1:3) is available and none will be justified in not knowing it!

(2) "God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent". Being a loving God that is not willing for anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9), His desire is "for all to come to repentance." Repentance is a change of mind, a change of heart. It involves turning to God from darkness and doing works of righteousness (Acts 26:18, 20; cf. Acts 14:15; Deuteronomy 30:10). The penitent heart obeys the will of God. Man should *re-think* his status before God based upon the facts presented on this occasion.

(3) The reason this is so vitally imperative: "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness". The Judge that "He has appointed" is Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; cf. John 5:22-29). The standard by which mankind will be judged is the righteousness of God (Romans 2:5). Where is His righteousness revealed to us so that we may certainly know? Concerning "the gospel," Paul said, "it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, . . . For in it the righteousness of God is revealed" (Romans 1:16-17; cf. John 12:48-50; Romans 2:16). Hearing the gospel produces faith, which makes one righteous and alive (cf. Romans 10:17; 2:7). Each person's deeds will be examined (Romans 2:6); those who obey the gospel will be rewarded, but "those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," will receive

the "wrath and indignation" of God: "There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil," (Romans 2:8-9).

(4) God has "furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." This indestructible evidence clearly establishes the guarantee of the coming Judgment and the identity of the impartial, all-knowing, righteous Judge. Paul wrote of this descendant of King David: "who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord," (Romans 1:4). Luke also affirmed this most documented fact of ancient history: Jesus "presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs," (Acts 1:3; cf. 2:24, 31-32; 3:15; 1 Corinthians 15). God would not have raised Him from the dead if He had not been the very Son of God and the one appointed as Judge of the living and the dead!

One may find it interesting that after Paul had established the fact of the one, true and living God to these pagan idolaters, and then called for their repentance, he proceeded to establish the truth of an appointed, righteous Judge and a Judgment Day for all mankind. The same is heard in his message to governor Felix while being falsely accused by the high priest Ananias: "there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." "But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened" (Acts 24:15, 25). Paul could have stated many other things about the life of Christ, but instead he went straight to the serious and unmistakable examination of every man's life in view of God's Son. The entire world will be judged (Matthew 25:31-46). This is the great reality for all mankind! The severity of it for the unrighteous will not be lessened nor cancelled by *unbelief!* Denying the truth of an impending Judgment Day does not make the fact disappear. Ignoring the truth will provide no person with a pass to escape! And the hard reality is that most will be lost because of unbelief (Matthew 7:13-14).

Friend, are you living by this great reality?

- Gary Smalley

* "The best ammunition misses the mark if the aim is bad!"

* "If you want faith to be strong when you arrive at your destination you had better possess and strengthen it on your journey!"

* "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness!"

* "Sometimes wisdom's best announcement is to remain silent!"

* "God answers knee mail!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)