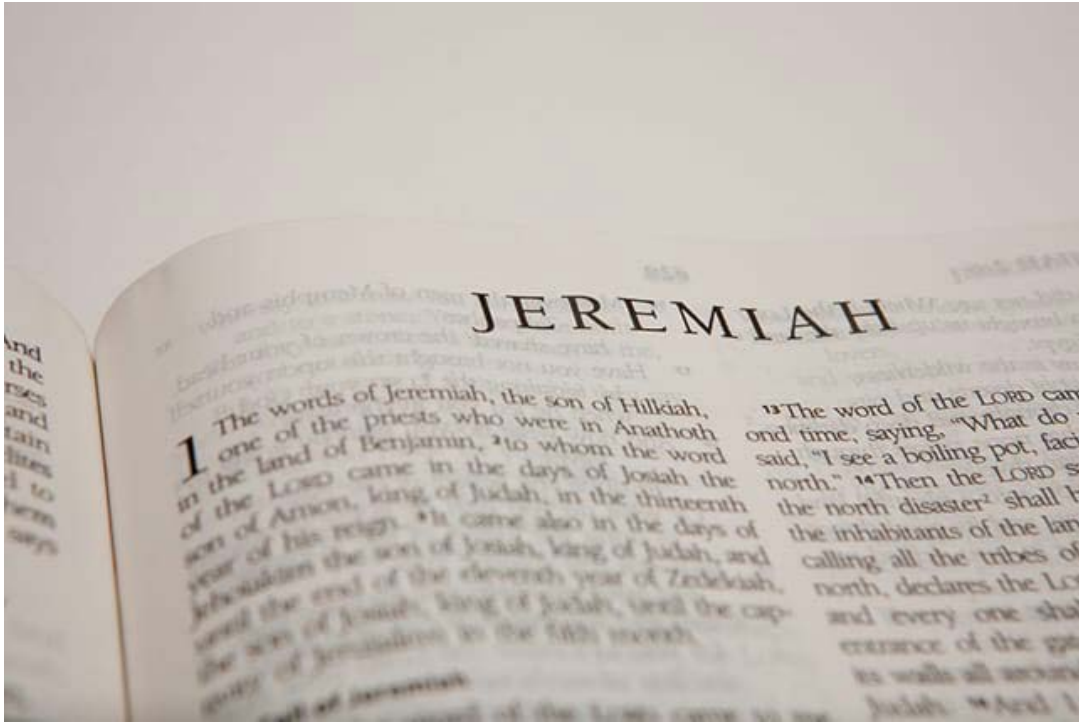


THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH
THE POTTER AND HIS VESSEL:
JEREMIAH 18-21



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Potter and His Vessel: Jeremiah 18-21

The Potter and His Vessel: Jeremiah 18-21
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Introduction to Jeremiah 18-21

The leaders of Israel turned the heat up on Jeremiah, because God was turning the heat up on them.

Jeremiah used a potter's vessel to demonstrate how thoroughly devastating the coming judgment of God would be. Still, no one took him seriously. Instead, they humiliated him publicly.

Then, when Nebuchadnezzar showed up at the gates of Jerusalem, well, they took a different tone toward the persistent prophet.

But his tone toward them remained the same: Faithful to God's Word.

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1 The Potter's Vessel

Pray Psalm 33.13-17.

The LORD looks from heaven;
He sees all the sons of men.
From the place of His dwelling He looks
On all the inhabitants of the earth;
He fashions their hearts individually;
He considers all their works.
No king *is* saved by the multitude of an army;
A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
A horse is a vain hope for safety;
Neither shall it deliver *any* by its great strength.

Sing Psalm 33.13-17.

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

God from His throne looks down on men; He knows our works and made our hearts.
Let not Your Church, let none depend on strength or skill or human arts.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 18.1-11.

Prepare.

1. Where did God send Jeremiah “to hear” His words?
2. What happened there?

Meditate.

Here is a lesson in how the Lord makes His will known to His faithful people. God sent Jeremiah to the potter's house, where he found the potter busy at his wheel, making a “vessel” (vv. 1-4). It wasn't quite what he wanted, so “he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.”

Then the Lord spoke to Jeremiah. He was like that potter. He owned the clay. He could make a vessel to please Him. But He had the right to destroy any vessel that did not suit His purposes. The vessels were the kingdoms of the world, including the Kingdom of Judah. God had made them and given them their time in history, that they should seek and serve Him (cf. Acts 17.26, 27). If they did not, God, like the potter, was free to refashion or reject them, to “pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy” (vv. 5-7). But in His mercy, God sent prophets to call the people to turn from their evil ways, so that He might “relent of the disaster” He planned to bring against them (vv. 8, 11).

But those nations and peoples who will not hear the Word of God, and who refuse to turn from their wicked ways, God, like the potter, will break and cast them aside, and begin the work of making a new vessel according to all His will (vv. 9, 10).

Now Jeremiah was ready to go yet again to “speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem” about the Lord's plan to destroy them, and to call them yet again to repentance (v. 11).

The combination of revelation through creation and revelation through the Word was meant to have clear and sure effects on Jeremiah. That potter, at work over his wheel, would have been vivid in Jeremiah's mind as he made his next round of preaching throughout the Kingdom. And, as we shall see, that vision would serve him in his preaching in the Valley of Hinnom (ch. 19).

The Potter and His Vessel: Jeremiah 18-21

God reveals His will through His Word. But He reinforces, makes vivid, and sets the teaching of His Word in our souls by complementing it with revelation from creation and culture. He intends for us to read both these “books” of revelation, with the written Word giving direction to the creation, and the creation clarifying and firming-up the teaching of the Word. In the purest and most compelling form, this twofold revelation – by Word and creation – would be presented to the world in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Reflect.

1. How do God’s Word and God’s world work together to help us know His will?
2. What do we learn about the sovereignty of God from this story of the potter’s work?
3. What can you do to improve your use both of God’s Word and His world to know Him and His will better?

*Whatever is discerned by the eyes arrives to the judgment and understanding of the soul through every other sense, through hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, but is retained even more so by the mind. Thus, the prophet was commanded to go to the potter’s house and there to hear the instructions of the Lord. Jerome (347-420), *Six Books on Jeremiah* 4.2.4-7*

Show me Your will, O God, and I will...

Pray Psalm 33.18-22.

Thank God that He watches over you at all times. Call upon Him for help and to shield you against all sin and wickedness as you trust in and walk with Him.

Sing Psalm 33.18-22

Psalm 33.18-22 (Truro: [*Shout for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love;
He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

2 Plot against Jeremiah

Pray Psalm 59.1-3.

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
Defend me from those who rise up against me.
Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,
And save me from bloodthirsty men.
For look, they lie in wait for my life;
The mighty gather against me,
Not *for* my transgression nor *for* my sin, O LORD.

Sing Psalm 59.1-3.

(Neumark: [*If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*](#))

Deliver me from all my foes, Lord; set me on high secure away.
From all who seek to work me woe, Lord, deliver me from day to day.
For, lo, they seek to take my life; fierce foes advance to bring me strife!

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 18.12-23.

Prepare.

1. How did the people respond to Jeremiah's preaching? What did they propose to do?
2. How did Jeremiah respond to that?

Meditate.

Recall that Jeremiah has been preaching to the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem (v. 11). Their response was to say, "That is hopeless!", even though Jeremiah's message held out the hope of forgiveness if the people would return to the Lord (v. 10). The people considered Jeremiah's message hopeless only because they were not willing to go along with God's demands. Instead, they would just go their own way and follow their own plans (v. 12).

Makes you want to ask, "How's that workin' for ya?"

So Jeremiah continued speaking as from the Lord (vv. 12-17). A people ought not reject and turn from their source of life. Jeremiah did not change his message merely because the people found it unpalatable. His message was true. They were ungrateful, unfaithful, rebellious, and disobedient; and God had long ago promised that such conduct would not receive His blessing, but His wrath (cf. Deut. 28). They may not have liked what they were hearing, but Jeremiah could do nothing other than proclaim the truth.

So the people determined to mount a media campaign against him (v. 18).. They would publicly reject his message – even to the point of burning his book. And they would flood the streets of Jerusalem with false promises and vain hopes. They would try to drown out Jeremiah's preaching with words of their own.

And if that didn't work, well, they would figure out something else.

Jeremiah knew where his strength was (vv. 19-27). He called upon the Lord, not to relieve him of his ministry or to tamp down the message, but to protect and defend him as he continued faithful in his calling. Jeremiah knew that his life was on the line (v. 23); but that was not what mattered. He stood before the Lord to speak good for the people (v. 20), but they rejected his message and were making his preaching into a lie. Jeremiah knew that God would fulfill His threats against the people. And He would protect His faithful prophet, so

that he could fulfill all his calling.

God has given us His Word and Spirit, and called us to be witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1.8). This may not be what the world wants to hear, but we must be faithful.

Reflect.

1. What can we learn about sin from the response of the people to Jeremiah's preaching?
2. How did Jeremiah seek to fortify himself against those who wanted to silence him? What's the lesson in this for us?
3. How can believers encourage one another to remain faithful in our calling to be witnesses for Christ?

This expresses the thought both of the Jews at that time against Jeremiah, or the Lord our Savior, and of the heretics today against the Lord's servants. They seek to spread slander and to precede holy people with an accusation, nor do they think about the truthfulness of what they say but only of the lies that they disseminate. Jerome (347-420), Six Books on Jeremiah 4.8.2

Strengthen me to be Your witness today, Lord Jesus, as I...

Pray Psalm 59.4-17.

Praise God for His power and Presence, and call upon Him to enable you to live for Him in everything you do today.

Sing Psalm 59.3-17.

Psalm 59.3-17 (Neumark: [*If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*](#))

Not for transgressions they assault me, nor any sin which I have done.
With nothing they can charge or fault me, and yet to trouble me they run.
Arouse Yourself, O Lord, awake, and come with haste my foes to break.

Like dogs at large within a city, they bark and howl fierce threats at me.
They boast of evil without pity, but You, O Lord, their treach'ry see.
Because of them I watch for You, O God my strength, forever true!

My God in steadfast love will meet me, and let me look triumphantly
On all my foes, who would defeat me did not He shield and shelter me.
That men may know Your pow'r, O Lord, subdue and rule them by Your Word.

But as for me, Your strength I'm singing; with joy I sing Your grace, O Lord!
My trials and troubles I am bringing to know the shelter of Your Word.
O God, my strength, I sing Your praise; You are my stronghold all my days.

3 The Broken Flask

Pray Psalm 2.7-10.

“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”
Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.

Sing Psalm 2.7-10.

(Agincourt: [*O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High*](#))

Proclaim the message far and wide, that God has exalted the Crucified!
From heav’n He sent us His only Son, Who has for us salvation won.

To Christ the Lord be given all Who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 19.1-15.

Prepare.

1. What did the potter’s earthen flask represent?
2. Before whom did Jeremiah break this flask and preach?

Meditate.

The message of the broken vessel was good enough for Jeremiah; it was also good enough for the kings of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. By employing dramatic gesture and uncompromising proclamation, God was doing everything He could to impress His people with the need to repent.

Jeremiah led the people into the very valley where Baal was worshiped and children had been offered to false gods. There he smashed the potter’s vessel and declared the judgment of God against His people (vv. 4-13). The coming judgment of God would be terrible, including slaughter, cannibalism, and the defilement of the dead. But this is what the people had chosen. God had been warning them through Jeremiah and other prophets that He must be faithful to His Word, even though they were not. And now His faithfulness required that He give them the choice they had made, and bring them to destruction before those who worshiped false gods.

From the valley of Tophet Jeremiah went to the court of the temple and proclaimed the Lord’s judgment against Jerusalem and all the surrounding towns. God’s stiff-necked people would finally receive the long-threatened judgment of God, and it would not be pretty.

God’s Word – like His covenant – is a two-edged sword. It cuts open the blessings of God for all who obey Him; and it cuts down the pride and rebelliousness of those who oppose His Word. Let us only ever be found on the victorious end of that unyielding and unfailing Word.

Reflect.

1. When God's judgment falls, it is because people have chosen it. Explain.
2. God used both visual and vocal revelation to shock His people into repentance. Does He still do that? How?
3. What is repentance? When is repentance needed?

*Let Christ be your King: let him rule you with that rod, not crush you with it. For that rod is "a rod of iron," an inflexible rod. "You shall rule them with a rod of iron and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Some he rules; others he "breaks in pieces." He "rules" those who are spiritual; he "breaks in pieces" those who are concerned about earthly desires. Augustine (354-430), *Expositions on the Psalms* 45.16*

Use me today, Lord, as a vessel of grace so that I...

Pray Psalm 2.9-12.

Commit yourself to love and serve Jesus throughout this day, whatever He commands, wherever He sends you, whatever He requires of you.

Sing Psalm 2.9-12.

Psalm 2.9-12 (Agincourt: [*O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High*](#))

To Christ the Lord be given all Who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

Rejoice with fear in Jesus' grace, and worship before His exalted face!
Beware His anger and judgment grim: How blessed are all who rest in Him!

4 Undaunted

Pray Psalm 75.1-3.

We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks!
For Your wondrous works declare *that* Your name is near.
“When I choose the proper time,
I will judge uprightly.
The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved;
I set up its pillars firmly.

Sing Psalm 75.1-3.

(Galilee: [Jesus Calls Us](#))

We give thanks, Lord, we give thanks for Your all-glorious Name is near!
Men Your wondrous works declare, Lord; let all living creatures hear!

When you choose the time of judgment, You will judge with equity.
Then the earth and all within it by Your hand no more shall be.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 20.1-6.

Prepare.

1. What happened to Jeremiah in these verses?
2. How did Jeremiah respond to being set free?

Meditate.

Clearly, Jeremiah was getting under the skin of Jerusalem’s leaders. Pashhur, who was the temple administrator, decided to teach him a lesson. He “struck” the prophet and put him in the stocks at the Benjamin gate of the city. Not only was Jeremiah assaulted and detained; he was subjected to public scrutiny for a full day (vv. 1, 2).

Pashhur probably expected Jeremiah to be grateful and contrite the next day, when he released him from the stocks (v. 3). Wrong.

If anything, Jeremiah was more firm in his convictions than ever. He continued his preaching, directing the Word of God directly against Pashhur and all his friends (vv. 3, 4). Jeremiah said his name would be changed to “Terror on Every Hand”, because he would bring the terror of the Lord against himself and his friends by his unjust act against the prophet and all his false teaching. And all that Jeremiah had been prophesying against Jerusalem and Judah, he reinforced once again: God was sending the Babylonians to destroy and plunder everything that was precious to the people of the land (vv. 5, 6).

And as for Mr. Terror on Every Hand, he would be taken to Babylon where he and his friends would die. Their false prophecies and vain assurances to the people would catch up to them all in Babylon. Then they would know that God is the Lord, and Jeremiah was His prophet.

Those who have been entrusted with the Word of God – and that’s all believers – do not back down from its truth because of pressure from those who disagree. We don’t cave in to the spirit of the times; we rest in the Spirit of God and live and proclaim our witness for Christ, come what may.

Reflect.

1. Is the message of the Gospel “popular” in our day? Explain.
2. Like Jeremiah, persecution and opposition should strengthen our resolve, not weaken it. Why?
3. How can believers encourage one another to faithfulness in living and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus?

*But here the Prophet shews that he was not cast down or disheartened, though he had been most contemptuously treated; he bore patiently the buffetings and stripes he had received, and also his incarceration. We know that such outrages are so bitter to ingenuous minds, that they can hardly sustain them. But Jeremiah teaches us, by his own example, that our constancy and firmness ought not to be weakened though the whole world loaded or almost overwhelmed us with reproaches. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Jeremiah 20.1-6**

Lord, let me neither falter nor fail in my witness for You today; help me to...

Pray Psalm 75.4-10.

With whom can you share the Good News today? Seek the Lord to prepare and strengthen you to be His witness.

Sing Psalm 75.4-10.

Psalm 75.4-10 (Galilee: [Jesus Calls Us](#))

Warn the boastful, warn the wicked: “Do not boast or raise your horn!
Do not raise your boastful voices; do not speak with pride and scorn!”

Neither east nor west nor desert shall exalting bring to man.
God is Judge, He puts one down and makes another one to stand.

For the cup of judgment foams in Jesus’ sovereign, holy hand.
He has mixed it and will pour it out on every wicked man.

As for me, I will declare it: Evermore to God be praise!
He abases all the wicked, but His righteous ones He saves!

5 Jeremiah's Lament

Pray Psalm 7.1-5.

O LORD my God, in You I put my trust;
Save me from all those who persecute me;
And deliver me,
Lest they tear me like a lion,
Rending *me* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.
O LORD my God, if I have done this:
If there is iniquity in my hands,
If I have repaid evil to him who was at peace with me,
Or have plundered my enemy without cause,
Let the enemy pursue me and overtake *me*;
Yes, let him trample my life to the earth,
And lay my honor in the dust.

Sing Psalm 7.1-5.

(Finlandia: [*Be Still My Soul*](#))

O Lord, my God, in You do I take refuge;
save me from those who my poor soul would tear!
Deliver me from my foes' angry deluge,
lest I be swept beyond all hope and care.
Let not injustice, let not evil stain me,
lest to the dust my glory trampled be.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 20.7-18.

Prepare.

1. How did Jeremiah respond to his being mocked and persecuted?
2. How did he express his confidence in the Lord?

Meditate.

Like us, Jeremiah was only human. He didn't like not being liked (vv. 7, 10). Indeed, he wished he'd never been born to take up this calling (vv. 14-18). His life in the ministry of the Word had become "labor and sorrow"; he was continually "consumed with shame" (v. 18). At one point, so tormented was he, that Jeremiah resolved just to keep quiet about the Word of God (v. 9). The people were throwing his words back in his face, mocking his warning to Pashhur and threatening to report every word he preached to those who were looking to prevail against him and to have revenge on him for his preaching (v. 10).

But Jeremiah could not remain silent about the Word. The Word of God was alive in his heart, "like a burning fire, shut up in my bones". Try though he may to refrain from preaching, he could not hold it back (v. 9). For he knew that God had called him, and God was with him "as a mighty, awesome One". He knew that God's Word would not fail, and those who were opposing and harassing him would receive the judgment due them for opposing the Word of the Lord (v. 11).

Jeremiah bared his heart to the Lord (v. 12), and despite his pain, he praised God and rested in His delivering grace (v. 13). He rejoiced in the Lord and His salvation; but he nearly despaired in his daily ministry. As a true servant of God, Jeremiah could know both, and take both of these experiences to the Lord in prayer. Being God's witness is not always a pleasant experience. There will be many who don't want to hear the

Good News, and some of them will do their best to annoy, intimidate, harass, and silence us. That won't be pleasant, but we shouldn't try to avoid it. In the midst of every difficulty, we know God has lodged His Word in our hearts, and we can go to Him with praise and thanksgiving, trusting in Him to fulfill all His Word and keep all His promises.

Reflect.

1. It's not wrong for us to become upset or troubled. How should we respond at such times?
2. Jeremiah could not hold back from speaking the Word of God. How can we get to the place where we feel this way as well?
3. What does God see when He tests your heart and mind?

Whenever, then, we are reduced into straits, and seem to be, as it were, rejected by God himself, let us still wait patiently until he may be pleased to free us from the hand of the wicked; without misery and distress preceding, we should never sufficiently acknowledge the power of God in preserving us. Thus Jeremiah confesses that he was for a time miserable and oppressed, but that he was at length delivered, even when the ungodly and wicked thought themselves victorious. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Jeremiah 20.13

Give me grace and strength, O Lord, that today I may be faithful as Your witness as I...

Pray Psalm 7.6-17.

Seek the strength and Presence of the Lord to go with you this day, and to sustain you through any trials or temptations.

Sing Psalm 7.6-17.

Psalm 7.6-17 (Finlandia: [*Be Still My Soul*](#))

Arise, O Lord, rise up in wrath to save me!
Let rage and judgment fall upon my foes!
From all around to You let thanks and praise be.
Rise up on high; the wicked curse with woes.
O Judge of all, observe my just demeanor
And vindicate me by Your grace, O Lord.

Bring to an end the evil of the wicked,
but let Your righteous ones established be.
You are my shield, my soul will not be stricken;
You save the upright; You will rescue me!
You are a righteous Judge in every way;
a God of indignation every day.

Let all repent or know Your piercing sword!
Your bow is bent and ready for the fight!
Take deadly weapons in Your hand, O Lord,
and fiery arrows, aimed against the night.
The wicked fall and stumble in their mischief,
but to my soul Your grace will bring relief.

All praise and thanks to You, O righteous Savior!
My hope, my trust, my confidence are You!
Embrace me with Your kindness and Your favor,
and to Your glory make me ever true.

The Potter and His Vessel: Jeremiah 18-21

We sing Your praise and glorify Your Name,
Who brings our foes to judgment and to shame.

6 The Vessel Smashed

Pray Psalm 57.1-3.

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!
For my soul trusts in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,
Until *these* calamities have passed by.
I will cry out to God Most High,
To God who performs *all things* for me.
He shall send from heaven and save me;
He reproaches the one who would swallow me up.

Sing Psalm 57.1-3.

(Fabien: [*Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens Adore Him*](#))

Lord, be gracious, gracious to me, for my soul retreats in You.
In Your shadow keep me safely till the storms of life are through.
I will cry to You, the Most High; You do all things well for me.
You will save me when I thus cry, routing all who threaten me.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 21.1-14.

Prepare.

1. What did Zedekiah want Jeremiah to do?
2. What did Jeremiah say to tell him?

Meditate.

The Potter is about to smash His vessel; Zedekiah, Jerusalem, and the people of Judah will all fall to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. This is the sum of Jeremiah's message to Zedekiah, King of Judah.

The king sent Pashhur and Zephaniah, two priests, to get some favorable word from the Lord. We can count on the fact that all the other "prophets" were tickling the king's ears; but he wanted to know what Jeremiah might say. The long-threatened Babylonians had arrived, and Nebuchadnezzar had laid siege to Jerusalem (vv. 1, 2).

Jeremiah did not hesitate. He sent the priests to Zedekiah with the message of complete destruction. God Himself had come to Jerusalem in the person of Nebuchadnezzar to shatter His chosen vessel Judah and send the people into captivity (vv. 3-7). The only word of hope Jeremiah had for the king was that they should surrender to Nebuchadnezzar and go into captivity without resisting. That way, at least, they would save their lives (vv. 8-10). To resist Nebuchadnezzar was to resist the Lord Himself; and all such resistance would be futile.

Jeremiah called on Zedekiah to do the right thing and give himself and the people up to Nebuchadnezzar (v. 11). Only thus would he be able to deliver the people from death at the hands "of the oppressor." If Zedekiah did not do this, the full wrath of God would fall upon the city and all who were in it (vv. 11-13). This is not what Zedekiah wanted to hear.

The Word of God is not required to conform itself to our interests, hopes, tastes, or convenience. It is what it is. Our duty is to hear and obey, for God always knows what's best for us and for His glory. If we dither before the clear Word from the Lord, we may miss His blessing and come under His discipline (Heb. 12.3-

11).

Reflect.

1. How do we see that God is sovereign in the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon?
2. Why was God smashing His chosen vessel at this time? Does God still do this? Explain.
3. Even in the face of disaster, God offers hope. How do you see that in these verses?

They had become first torpid in their evils, and then such was their contumacy that they sought to subject God to themselves. As then their stupidity and their obstinacy were so great, the Prophet could not, with any hope of success, have exhorted them to repent and offered them the mercy of God; it was therefore necessary for them to be so smitten as to perceive that they were wholly lost, and that God was so angry with them that they could not be saved by any human means. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Jeremiah 21.5

O Lord, keep me in the path of righteousness, and do not let me stray, so that I...

Pray Psalm 57.4-11.

Exalt the Lord, and call on Him to keep your footsteps from straying or becoming ensnared in sin today.

Sing Psalm 57.4-11.

Psalm 57.4-11 (Fabien: [*Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens Adore Him*](#))

Send Your truth and lovingkindness; raging lions seek my soul.

Threats and sland'rous words without rest they against me fiercely roll.

Be exalted o'er the heavens, let Your glory fill the earth!

To Your Name all praise be given, let all men proclaim Your worth!

Nets and pits they set before me; overwhelmed, my soul bows down.

Let them all in their own works be thrown and scattered on the ground.

Let my heart no more be shaken, I will sing Your praises, Lord!

Harp and glory, now awaken to extol God's faithful Word!

Praise and thanks among the nations I will sing with all my might!

For Your truth and love are stationed far above the highest height!

Be exalted o'er the heavens, let Your glory fill the earth!

To Your Name all praise be given, let all men proclaim Your worth!

7 The Persistent Prophet

Pray Psalm 86.10-12.

For You *are* great, and do wondrous things;
You alone *are* God.
Teach me Your way, O LORD;
I will walk in Your truth;
Unite my heart to fear Your name.
I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
And I will glorify Your name forevermore.

Sing Psalm 86.10-12.

(Andrews: *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

For You are great, You wondrous deeds do;
You are the only and sovereign Lord.
Teach me Your way, let me give heed to,
with all my heart, Savior, all Your Word!
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
praise Your Name forever, Lord!

Review Jeremiah chapters 18-21; meditate on Jeremiah 19.1-3.

Prepare.

1. What two ways of revealing His will did God send Jeremiah to use in these chapters?
2. How did these two forms of revelation reinforce one another?

Meditate.

God's love for His people is evident in the extent to which He bore with them in their sin and continued trying, by various means, to get them to repent and return to Him. Jeremiah had been preaching throughout Jerusalem and all Judah. His message was ever the same: Repent, for the judgment of God is coming.

But the people would not listen. Their leaders not only would not listen, but they subjected Jeremiah to public humiliation by putting him in the stocks.

Potter's vessels of various kinds would have been in widespread and common use among the people of Jerusalem and Judah. For God to choose this aspect of local culture to embody His message to His people made perfectly good sense. Once they'd seen Jeremiah break that flask in the Valley of Hinnom, they would think of that whenever they went to get a pitcher of water, or when they threw out an old flask or bought a new one. The Word preached and the Word dramatized would be in all their minds, and they would be without excuse once God's judgment began.

The flask by itself could not proclaim God's Word. But working with the Word, the potter's vessels brought clarity, drama, and a powerful reminder, impressing the Word of God on the hearts and minds of all the people.

Jeremiah was a persistent prophet. He was beaten and subjected to public mocking. But that's just the beginning. More misery is to come. But he stayed the course of his ministry; and though at times he seemed to have doubts, yet he knew that God had called him to this work, and he would not fail to perform it.

Just so, God has called us to the work of seeking His Kingdom in our Personal Mission Field. Let the example of Jeremiah bolster our resolve and shape our outlook as we daily take up our callings with faithfulness and joy.

Reflect.

1. How did the potter's vessels reinforce Jeremiah's preaching?
2. Jesus did this same thing in many ways. Can you give an example?
3. How should these two forms of revelation work to help you in your walk with the Lord?

*The Prophet is here bidden to buy an earthen vessel of the potter, and at the meeting of the people to break it, that all might understand that they were like earthen vessels, and that being thus admonished of their fragility, they might no longer be proud, as though they possessed a firm and perpetual state of happiness. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Jeremiah 19.1-3**

Remind me of my calling throughout this day, Lord, so that I...

Pray Psalm 86.1-9.

Call out to God for His help and protection, and to prepare you for the work before you in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 86.1-9.

Psalm 86.1-9 (Andrews: [*Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*](#))

Bow down Your ear, O Lord and hear me;
I am afflicted and much in need!
Rescue my godly soul, be near me;
save me, O God, all my crying heed!
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
all day long I pray and plead.

Lift up my soul, fill me with gladness;
Lord You are good, You will soon forgive.
Show me abundant lovingkindness;
let all who call on You ever live.
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
heed to my poor pleading give.

When in my trouble, Lord, I call You,
You answer me; there is none like You!
There are no works like Yours, and all whom
You have created shall worship You.
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
all shall glory give to You!

The Potter and His Vessel: Jeremiah 18-21

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What was the purpose of the two potter's vessels mentioned in this section?
2. How does the revelation of God in creation and culture work together with the revelation of God in His Word?
3. How did the opposition to Jeremiah try to silence him? How did he respond?
4. Jeremiah laments his having been called to this work, but he didn't give it up? Why?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Jeremiah 18-21? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.