

Title: “**CLAY IN THE POTTER’S HAND**”

Text: Jeremiah 18:1-11

Subject: *Divine Sovereignty*

Date: Sunday AM – November 8, 2009

Tape # Z-74a

Reading: *Isaiah 45:5-25*

Introduction:

The title of my message is “**CLAY IN THE POTTER’S HAND.**” I want us to go with God’s prophet down to the potter’s house and learn the ways of our God.

(Jeremiah 18:1-4) “The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, (2) Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. (3) Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. (4) 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.*”

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God sent his prophet to the potter’s house so that, by observation and inspiration, he might receive God’s message to deliver to God’s people. The potter had a lump of moist clay on his wheel which he shaped, quickly and with great ease, according to his own will. But something was found in the clay, a stiffness, a pebble, or some displeasing quality. — **“And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it”** (v. 4).

You will notice that the marring of the vessel was **not by accident**. It was **“marred in the hand of the potter.”** If the clay is not used for one purpose, it will be used for another. If it is not to be molded into **a vessel of honor**, it will be molded into **a vessel of dishonor, according to the will of the potter**. Once Jeremiah saw this, the Lord God gave his message to his prophet (vv. 5-10).

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(Jeremiah 18:5-10) “Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, (6) O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter’s hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. (7) *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*; (8) If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. (9) And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*; (10) If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.”

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

In the midst of dangers, difficulties and discouragements, especially with regard to the work of the gospel, **nothing in all the world is**

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so comforting and satisfying as the assurance of God’s total sovereignty. If we give way to carnal reason and unbelief, we are quickly baffled. **How we need to learn the lesson God taught Jeremiah in the potter’s house!** As the potter has an absolute right and absolute power to do with the clay what he will, so the Lord our God has the absolute right and power to do what he will with his own (Matthew 20:15; Isaiah 45:9; Romans 9:20-21; Isaiah 64:8). **The sooner we learn this, the better.**

(Matthew 20:15) “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?”

(Isaiah 45:9) “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! *Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?*”

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(Romans 9:20-21) “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? (21) Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?”

(Isaiah 64:8) “But now, O LORD, thou *art* our father; we *are* the clay, and thou our potter; and we all *are* the work of thy hand.”

Nothing but the pride and unbelief of our own hearts keeps us from the realization of this fact, and prevents us from finding perfect, complete satisfaction in it.

Men have countless schemes of theology and philosophy which have been formed specifically to deny the free grace of God, darken the counsel of God, turn men away from the righteousness of God in Christ to their own righteousness and to limit the power of the Almighty. **Mortal, sinful**

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man dares lift his defiant fists to the sovereign Lord God and say, — “Hitherto shalt thou go and no further!”

But the throne of God is unmoved! Our great God appoints and over rules all things in glorious, absolute sovereignty, according to the purpose of his own will, and declares to all men everywhere, as he did to the house of Israel, — **“Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand!”** — **This is our security for the present and the future, for time and eternity.**

- **Here is the solace of our souls in this present world.** — *“Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand!”*

This we know, “the Judge of all the earth will do right.” Our God is too wise to err, too good to do wrong and too strong to fail. If anything appears to contradict that fact, it is because of the darkness, ignorance and unbelief of our hearts.

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— **God does not give an account of his works to men. Therefore, we cannot fully comprehend them.** He alone declares the end from the beginning, because he alone knows the end from the beginning. **Though what we see may seem to totally contradict it, let us never doubt for a moment that our God always does right.** The time will come when he will make known to the wonder of all creatures, for the praise of his own glory and the everlasting joy of his elect, that everything that is, has been or shall hereafter be, has been done in exact agreement with infinite wisdom, justice and truth.

- **Here is our solace regarding all things future, too.** — *“Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand!”*

Our great and glorious Lord God has appointed a day when he will show all the universe that he has done right in all things and all things shall praise him forever! We shall then see clearly what it is now our great comfort to see by faith,

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— that our God does all things well. In that great day, all God’s people will forever admire his wisdom and goodness and praise him for all that he has done, and all hell will forever confess his justice and truth.

Now, let’s go back to Jeremiah 18 and the potter’s house. There is much to be learned.

I. **THE CLAY**

The clay here represented the house of Israel. Israel had been dug from Egypt like clay from the pit. God brought them up into the land of Canaan, where he gently shaped and molded them. But they were stiff and unyielding. A heart of stone was in them. Therefore that nation was marred in the hands of God; and he turned his grace toward the nations of the world.

The Apostle Paul, by Divine inspiration, enlarges this message and tells us that **the clay represents all men** (Romans 9:18-24).

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(Romans 9:11-24) “(For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) (12) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. (13) As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (14) What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid. (15) For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (16) So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. (17) For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (18) Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth. (19) Thou wilt say then

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unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? (20) Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? (21) Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (22) *What* if God, willing to show *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: (23) And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, (24) Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

Clay is raw material, infertile mud, useless, except in the hands of the potter. That is what you and I are, useless clods of red earth, sons and daughters of Adam. God dug us from the pit of fallen humanity by the hand of his omnipotent

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grace. He filled us with his mercy and fashioned us into the image of his own dear Son.

- God’s elect, sinners chosen to eternal life, are vessels of mercy, made and prepared by God to be filled with mercy.
- All who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are vessels of mercy. – Nothing but mercy comes to God’s elect (Psalm 23:6).
- But there are some men and women in this world who are vessels of wrath.

I intend to talk about this in a few minutes. You can fuss and squawk about it if you want; but if you do your fight is with God Almighty and his Holy Word. Some in this world are vessels of mercy. Others are vessels of wrath (Romans 9:11-24; 1 Peter 2:7-10; Jude 3-4).

(1 Peter 2:7-10) “Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, (8) And a stone of stumbling, and a

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rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, **being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.** (9) But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: (10) Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

(Jude 1:3-4) “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (4) For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were **before of old ordained to this condemnation,** ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and

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denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

II. THE WHEELS

The wheels (plural) **Jeremiah saw in the potter’s house represent the purposes, promises, providence and power of God.** All the circumstances, experiences and events of our lives in this world are wheels used by God to mold and shape his people into the image of Christ, according to his will (Romans 8:28-29; 11:36). **And the wheels of providence and grace move according to God’s eternal purpose of grace in predestination.** Knowing this, we rejoice to sing, with old Cowper...

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform:
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines,

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With never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour:
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.”

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III. **THE POTTER**

The Potter is the Lord God himself. You and I are as clay in the hands of God. He owns us. He has (and always exercises) the right to rule us, use us, shape us and dispose of us as he will. He says, — **“Cannot I do with you as this potter? Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand.”** God is not in our hands. We are in his hands. God is not ruled by our will. We are ruled by his will.

PROPOSITION: — You and I are in the hands of God, like the clay is in the hands of the Potter; and he has the right and power to do with us exactly what he will.

IV. **THE MESSAGE**

Now, let’s read Jeremiah 18:6-10, and hear the message of God from the Potter’s House

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(Jeremiah 18:6-10) “O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter’s hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. (7) *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*; (8) If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. (9) And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*; (10) If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.”

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY — God sent Jeremiah to the potter’s house to show him two things about himself. The first thing Jeremiah learned in the potter’s house is this: — **The Lord our God is irresistibly sovereign** (v. 6).

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(Jeremiah 18:6) “O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter’s hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.”

Throughout the Bible God identifies himself as one who has and exercise total control over all things, at all times and in all places. **His will, his purpose, his plans, his works and his power are irresistible.** He who is God has the incontestable right and the irresistible ability to make, govern, use and dispose of all things according to his own will.

In particular, I want all who hear my voice to understand this. — **You and I are clay in the hands of God.** We belong to God; and God has the right to do with us what he will. He says, to you and to me, — “*Cannot I do with you as I will?*”

The God of the Bible, the one true and living God, the God we worship, trust, love and

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serve, is totally, absolutely, irresistibly, uncontrollably, universally sovereign. He created all things, owns all things, rules all things and disposes of all things according to his own pleasure, even you and me! Nothing in this universe, nothing in heaven, earth or hell wiggles or moves, but by the will of God.

God rules everything, absolutely. In creation, in providence and in grace God is sovereign. — **God is incontestably sovereign over all his works and all his creatures** (Daniel 4:35-37). He is no more a debtor to us than the potter is debtor to the clay. He has the right to make and mar, use and dispose of us as he will. And he is not accountable to us for what he does to us or with us.

(Daniel 4:35-37) “And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say

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unto him, What doest thou? (36) At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. (37) Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”

God exercises his sovereignty with the greatest ease. It is very easy for God to do with us what he will. He **makes us** as it pleases him, **changes us** as it pleases him, **uses us** as it pleases him and **disposes of us** as it pleases him. **We cannot resist him. He’s the Potter. We’re the clay. He’s God. We’re just men!** One turn of the potter’s hand, one spin of his wheel completely alters the shape of the clay, makes it, mars it or makes it anew. So it is with us. Our times and our lives, the times and lives of all

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men are in the hands of God (Job 12:23; 34:29; Psalm 107:33; Isaiah 45:7; 46:9-13).

(Job 12:23) “He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them *again*.”

(Job 34:29) “When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth *his* face, who then can behold him? whether *it be done* against a nation, or against a man only.”

(Psalms 107:43) “Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.”

(Isaiah 45:7) “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these *things*.”

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(Isaiah 46:9-13) “Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, (10) Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: (11) Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it. (12) Harken unto me, ye stouthearted, that *are* far from righteousness: (13) I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.”

And God will be glorified in all his works.
Vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor both reflect the potter’s wisdom, power and skill. Vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy show forth the praise of God. — “*The LORD hath*

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made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Proverbs 16:4).

- **God formed us out of the clay** (Job 33:6).

(Job 33:6) “Behold, I *am* according to thy wish in God’s stead: I also am formed out of the clay.”

- **We are just clay in the hands of the Almighty** (Isaiah 64:8).

(Isaiah 64:8) “But now, O LORD, thou *art* our father; we *are* the clay, and thou our potter; and we all *are* the work of thy hand.”

- **God has the same power over us that the potter has over the clay** (Romans 9:21).

(Romans 9:21) “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?”

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- **We ought to willingly submit ourselves to the will and wisdom of God, being willingly pliable in his hands as the clay is in the potter’s hands** (Isaiah 29:15-16; 45:9).

“Keep silence all created things,
And wait your Maker’s nod;
My soul stands trembling while she sings
The honors of her God.

Life, death, and hell and worlds unknown
Hang on his firm decree;
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.

Chained to his throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel’s form and size,
Drawn by the eternal pen.

His providence unfolds the book,
And makes his counsels shine;

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Each opening leaf and every stroke,
Fulfils some deep design.

Here He exalts neglected worms
To scepters and a crown;
And there the following page He turns,
And treads the monarch down.

[Not Gabriel asks the reason why,
Nor God the reason gives;
Nor dares the favorite angel pry
Between the folded leaves.]

My God, I would not long to see
My fate with curious eyes;
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes may rise.

In thy fair book of life and grace,
O may I find my name
Recorded in some humble place,
Beneath my Lord the Lamb.”

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(Isaiah 29:15-16) “Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? (16) Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter’s clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?”

(Isaiah 45:9) “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! *Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?”*

God’s glorious sovereignty is most clearly revealed in his works of grace (Romans 8:28-34; Ephesians 1:3-14). — I rejoice to know that God is sovereign in creation and in providence, — that he is sovereign and in control of all men and devils, kings and paupers. I am thankful that

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my heavenly Father rules all the thoughts and deeds of men, all the elements, events and influences of the universe. I cannot tell you how that fact rejoices this man’s heart. But, above all else, I rejoice in the glorious revelation of God’s sovereignty in the exercise of his grace.

(Romans 8:28-34) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (31) What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? (32) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (33) Who shall lay

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any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is* God that justifieth. (34) Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

(Ephesians 1:3-14) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (8) Wherein he hath abounded

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toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: (11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (13) In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

- God chose to save a people for himself.

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- He chose whom he would save.
- He found a way to save them – Substitution!
- He predestined all things to secure their salvation.
- And this great, glorious, sovereign Lord God graciously saves his elect, every one of them, at his appointed time, in his appointed place, by his appointed means (Psalm 107:1-3; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 4:7; Psalm 115:1).

This much I know. – **“Salvation is of the Lord!”**
— **“By the grace of God I am what I am!”**

(Psalms 107:1-3) “O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. (2) Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; (3) And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.”

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(1 Corinthians 1:26-31) “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence. (30) But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

(1 Corinthians 4:7) “For who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst

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receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*?”

(Psalms 115:1) “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth’s sake.”

DIVINE JUSTICE — My friend, I want you to know this, and rejoice in it. — God is absolutely sovereign. You are clay in his hands. He can and will do with you exactly as he pleases. You cannot resist him. You cannot control him. But that is not the only lesson to be learned from our text. The message God gave Jeremiah in the potter’s house was twofold. The first lesson from the potter’s house is this: — Our God is irresistibly sovereign. We rejoice in that. But God is not arbitrarily sovereign. So this is the second lesson. — **In the exercise of his sovereignty God is always equitable and just.** That is the second thing Jeremiah was taught in the potter’s house (vv. 7-10).

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(Jeremiah 18:7-10) “*At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*; (8) If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. (9) And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*; (10) If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.”

God dispenses his favors sovereignly and unconditionally. Anyone who speaks contrary to that is a rebel against God and is ignorant both of the Scriptures and of the character of God. **But God does not punish men arbitrarily or unconditionally.** God has not arbitrarily predestinated anyone to hell. Anyone who teaches such a doctrine as that is also ignorant of both the Scriptures and the character of God.

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Our enemies attempt to mar the beauty of the gospel we preach by telling men that we preach a God who has arbitrarily predestinated some people to go to hell and that they cannot be saved even if they want to be. Anyone who lays that charge against us and against the gospel we preach is a bald-faced liar! I have never preached such a doctrine, neither do the men with whom I am associated. — **Salvation is unconditional, without works. Grace is free. But wrath, judgment and eternal damnation are conditional, based entirely upon the works of wicked men.**

- Vessels of mercy were “*afore prepared for glory*” by God. — Vessels of wrath are “*fitted for destruction*” by their own wicked works.
- There are no degrees of reward in heaven, because heaven and eternal life are the free gifts of God’s free grace in Christ. — But there are degrees of punishment in hell, because death and hell, the torments of eternal damnation, are the wages of sin (Matthew 11:20-24).

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- If you are saved, forgiven and an heir of eternal life, if you go to heaven, that is all God’s work and God’s praise. – He chose you. – He redeemed you by the precious blood of Christ. – He called you by the irresistible power and almighty grace of his Spirit. – He keeps you in his omnipotent hands of mercy, and will not let you go.
- But, if you are lost, if you die in your unbelief and sin, if you go to hell, that is all your own work and your own fault. – You earned it. – You deserved it. – You chose it. – And you shall eat the fruit of your own ways and be filled with your own devices (Proverbs 1:23-33).

God is always equitable and just in the exercise of his sovereignty (Psalm 89:13-14).

(Psalms 89:13-14) “Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand. (14) Justice and judgment *are* the

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habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.”

When God threatens wrath, if the sinner repents, he will be merciful (vv. 7-8).

(Jeremiah 18:7-8) “*At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; (8) If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*”

God cannot and does not change his mind; but he does change his course of action, at least as it appears to men. We see this repeatedly in the Book of **Judges**. Whenever the nation of Israel repented of their evil and turned to the Lord, he forgave them and delivered them. — Certainly, God’s dealings with **Nineveh**, in the Book of Jonah, shows this in a remarkable way.

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When God bestows his blessings upon a people, as he has our households, if they despise his mercy, he will turn against them in wrath (vv. 9-10).

(Jeremiah 18:9-10) “And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*; (10) If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.”

- The Nation of Israel
- Eli’s House (1 Sam. 2:30; 4:21)

(1 Samuel 2:30) “Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed *that* thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”

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(1 Samuel 4:21) “And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.”

The Lord God Almighty is so righteous and just, so holy and true, so good and faithful that he will not save any sinner without a suitable Substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21).

(2 Corinthians 5:21) “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

- God demands righteousness.
- God demands satisfaction.

The Lord God Almighty is so righteous and just, so holy and true, so good and faithful that he will not save any sinner without a suitable Substitute. Be sure you get that; but be sure you get this,

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too. – **The Lord our God is so merciful that he will not turn away, or condemn, or refuse to be gracious to any sinner who turns to him in faith, trusting the Lord Jesus Christ** (Romans 10:9-13).

(Romans 10:9-13) “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (11) For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (12) For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Faith in Christ is the redemption purchase of Christ’s blood, the evidence of redemption by

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Christ; and none can perish for whom the Son of God shed his precious blood at Calvary!

(Jeremiah 18:11) “Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, **Thus saith the LORD**; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: **return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.**”

There is only one way you can “*make your ways and your doings good,*” and that is by faith in Christ. Turn to him now. Trust him now; and go home with “*your ways and your doings good*” before God!

(Jeremiah 17:14) “Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou *art* my praise.”

My final word is for you, my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are but “*clay in the*

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Potter’s hand.” How thankful we ought to be. Our omnipotent, gracious, sovereign Potter, the God of all grace, will never suffer his chosen vessels of mercy to be marred in his hand!

THE RUINED HANDKERCHIEF — A long time ago, someone in the company of the 19th century artist, was holding a very expensive handkerchief that had been a gift. When ink was spilled on the handkerchief, Ruskin’s friend lamented, “Oh, look! It is ruined. Nothing can be done with it. It’s absolutely ruined!” “Are you sure?” Ruskin asked. “Let me have it awhile.” A short time later the handkerchief came back by mail. His friend hardly recognized it. Ruskin had skillfully used the ink blot as a basis for a beautiful design. The handkerchief was now much more valuable than in its original condition.

We often see things as ruinous, fatal blots upon life; but if the life is the life of one of God’s elect, the blot comes while the clay is in the

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Potter’s hand; and it will prove to be that which ultimately beautifies and improves the chosen, loved, redeemed vessel of mercy. — (David’s Sin! — Peter’s Fall!)

Our sov’ reign God maintains
His universal throne;
In heaven, earth and hell He reigns,
And makes His wonders known.

His counsels and decrees,
Mountains of brass, they stand;
Jehovah does whate’er He please,
And none can stay His hand.

All worlds, our God controls,
By His own sov’ reign will;
Has mercy on all chosen souls; —
And hardens whom He will.

Jacob by grace He saved,
And gives no reason why;
But Esau’s heart, He left depraved; —

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Who can His right deny?

What, if the Potter takes,
Part of a lump of clay,
And for Himself a vessel makes,
And casts the rest away?

Who shall resist His will?
Or say, “*What doest Thou?*”
Jehovah is the sov’ reign still,
And all to Him shall bow.

Let humbled souls adore
The Lord in all His ways. —
His sov’reignty I can’t explore,
But I will trust His grace.

Amen.