

WILL THERE BE A SECOND CHANCE?

TEXT: **Jeremiah 18:2-4:**
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.

Very often, people have asked us this serious question: *If we die without Christ, will there be a second chance to get saved and become right with God?* I want to answer that question for you today from the Bible.



I have read to you from the **Book of Jeremiah** how God wanted to speak to his prophet on this subject of Life's Second Chance. Jeremiah was discouraged and depressed over the moral failures of the children of Israel. The Lord wanted to give an illustrated sermon, because this question – if not properly answered – leaves too much room for misunderstanding. It is a wide open area for the devil to slip in with false doctrines which bring worthless hopes to the lost. God knows how to handle the subject. God also knows what is going to happen before it does take place, which is why He uses prophecy effectively in the Bible. Here God uses His insight into the future in a very remarkable way.

He called Jeremiah and sent him down to the house of a potter. He said:

Jeremiah 18:2: “Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words.”

Jeremiah need not expect God to talk to him any further if — instead of obeying Him — he went to the grocery store, blacksmith shop, or to the Burger Chef for a hamburger.

The path of obedience is the surest way to have the Lord talk to us again and again. The Lord told Elijah to go to the Brook Cherith and *THERE I have commanded the ravens to feed thee:*

The path of obedience is the surest way to have the Lord talk to us again and again.

1 Kings 17:2-6:

² And the Word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

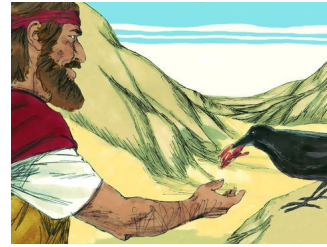
³ Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the

brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

⁴ And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

⁵ So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

⁶ And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.



Elijah would have starved to death trying to get something to eat during that awful depression if he didn't have sense enough to go where God told him to go. Elijah's second test was even harder, for the Lord sent him to a poor widow's house and said: "*THERE will I sustain thee.*"

1 Kings 17:8-9:

⁸ And the Word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

⁹ Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

Only a preacher trained in God's Bible School would even go to a poor person's home. God loves the poor.

James 2:5: Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?

The prophet Jeremiah, too, was wise enough to do what the Lord said, as we now read:

Jeremiah 18:3: Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

As Jeremiah looks on, there are four things he noticed there:

A potter

A potter's wheel

A lump of clay being made into a vessel on the wheel

Clay that was pliable in the potter's hands.



Gradually the vessel was taking shape under the skillful hands on the wheel. After looking on for a good while as the pot neared completion, something suddenly happened, just as the Lord foresaw. It was something that does not happen often — a little defect was found in the clay. It was a piece of foreign substance, perhaps a little stone or piece of twig. It did not appear on the ball of clay when it was first placed on the potter's wheel. When the discovery was made, the Bible says: "*The vessel was marred*" right there in THE POTTER'S hand.

Jeremiah 18:4: 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.

The potter did not pull the bad substance out and then put a patch in its place, nor did he throw the clay away. As Jeremiah is watching and listening for the Lord to speak and show him the purpose in sending him here, God spoke.

Jeremiah 18:5-6:

⁵ 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.

Even before Jeremiah was born, God spoke this word thru Job:

Job 10:9-10:

⁹ Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?

¹⁰ Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?

Genesis 2:7: And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The story of the creation of our bodies is wonderful to learn about, but in the very next chapter we see satan placing the foreign substance into the clay – the substance of doubt and disobedience — and alas the clay was marred in the potter's (God) hands. Though men sin and mar God's plan, yet He is merciful, gracious, and long-suffering. God did not throw away the man whom He had made. No, He didn't.



Adam and Eve were vessels of beauty, for they were covered with the glory of God. The sin they committed cost them their glory clothes and covering, and now they looked disgraceful. They felt so ashamed that they ran and hid themselves

from the Presence of the Lord. We will have to write Ichabod over them, just as the daughter of Israel's priest Eli who so named her child when the Lord's Glory was departed. But God did not throw Adam and Eve — our parents — away. He prepared a costly covering for them out of animal's skin. The lambs gave their life as an atonement for their sins, and also provided a God-made covering for them.

Again read about the Lord talking to Jeremiah, telling him what to preach:

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.

Our loving God was offering to remake their wrecked and ruined lives. This is a wonderful message of hope, and it tells more than appears on the surface. The first important fact that the Lord is telling us is we are in His hands – in His care. Next: He wants to make us into a vessel unto honor, meet for the Master's use.

1 Timothy 2:20-21:

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

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.

Out of the illustrated sermon God gave Jeremiah, Paul is making an application which we want to look at more closely. If you notice the first vessel is gold, then follows silver, wood, and finally earth.

Jeremiah had said: *"The potter makes the marred vessel into another one, not the same one he first intended to make."* When Paul placed each in the order in which he did [gold, silver, wood, earth], we note that the valuation lessens from the first to the fourth. This is the very similar picture God gave in a dream to Nebuchadnezzar of the image made with a head of gold, then a breast of silver, thighs of brass, and legs of part iron and clay.



When Jeremiah comes to the potter's house, the potter is not idle but is busily working on a vessel. He is making something out of next to nothing. A mere lump of clay is being made into something wonderful and useful. The valueless becomes valuable only by the concern and expert workmanship of the potter. Jesus, our Potter, is the Author and Finisher of our faith, as recorded in:

Hebrew 12:2: Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God.



We are not a finished product when we are saved. There is much more to be done by the Potter on us, and that is why Jesus is called the Author and Finisher of our faith. There is a finishing process that must be completed to present us to Himself, a glorious Church, and a Bride without spot and without wrinkle.

Philippians 1:6: Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ

You see, the Lord Jesus will not quit what He has started in us. He will make a finished product. So we see further in this same Book:

Philippians 2:13: For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

It makes us feel real good to know God is taking great pleasure in His workmanship in us. We see here to what extent the work will be done and recognized by all people.

Ephesians 2:10: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

I would like to call your attention to this same truth as given also in the Old Testament. The Bible is shown to be a unity, and there is no difference in the way God works before Calvary than after Calvary. David is speaking about the Lord working on him here:

Psalms 138:8: The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of Thine Own Hands.

Here, David recognizes himself as God's workmanship, and he also sees the work as incomplete, that he is an unfinished product. He knows that he is not yet all that God intends him to be. But he is also declaring his faith in the Lord that He will not leave the job unfinished which He has begun. David is calling us the WORK OF GOD'S HANDS. He is asking the Lord not to get discouraged in this difficult task of making him what he ought to be. "Lord, don't give up on me. . . please don't quit."

David knew there had been marring things that had gotten into his life and nearly wrecked him. He had been marred by committing adultery, and worse still, he saw to it that one of his soldiers got drunk in an effort to cover up this sin with the man's wife. Then he stooped lower still in having the man placed by the commanding officer of his armies at the fiercest part of the battle to be killed. He nearly lost out with the Lord over these wicked things he allowed satan to put into his heart.



So, in **Psalms 51** he is begging the Lord to *please take not Your Holy Spirit from me, and do not reject me as worthless and cast me into the potter's field.*

Psalms 51:11: Cast me not away from Thy Presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

The potter's field, of which we shall speak later, is the place where all the rejected, wasted, worthless vessels were cast. It is like a rubbish pile. We would call it the city dump.

Thank God He did not cast David away and count him a hopeless case. God's mercy is great, and He continues to DEAL WITH OUR HEARTS. Sometimes the work that needs to be done looks hopeless and impossible. But God, the worker of miracles, is well able to make us what we ought to be. This is what being Saved and the New Birth is all about. To be born-again is the same as saying: "God is making the vessel of his creation over once more."

As long as we are in the Potter's hands there is hope for us. Paul tells us:

Hebrews 13:20:

²⁰ Now the God of peace, that brought again the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of everlasting covenant,

²¹ Make you perfect in every good work to His Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; Whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.



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I am talking to you who may be discouraged, and satan has been tempting you to go back into the world. There are things in your life that you know ought not to be, and you have had a real battle over them. Paul tells his own experience in:

Romans 7:14-15:

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under

sin.

15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

A child of God hates sin, while a sinner loves it. In this struggle to overcome temptation, Paul cries out:

Romans 7:24: O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Maybe even you have cried out like this, sooooo – read on:

Romans 7:25: I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

God did not give up on Adam nor Israel when they miserably failed.

For this very reason, Jeremiah has been sent by the Lord to this potter's house. He is about to receive the message of hope for Israel who were the children of God. They were discouraged, felt all help and hope was gone, and that God had given up on them.

So you, too, can look up and yield yourselves unto the Lord. Place your life in His hands and let Him make you what you ought to be. Only the Lord can take a worthless piece of clay and a valueless life and make something beautiful out of near nothing. Nothing, that is, but a lump of clay – that is what we are. We have been marred by the devil, just as Adam and Eve were. Satan is the thief who has come to kill, to steal, and to destroy, as Jesus said in:



John 10:10: The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Luke 9:56: For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.



What a comforting and encouraging promise this is. Then Jesus encourages every weak and tottering and feeble Christian by pulling this Scripture out of the Old Testament:

Isaiah 42:3: A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

Matthew 12:20: A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory.

In His Name shall the Gentiles trust.

Matthew 12:21: And in His Name shall the Gentiles trust.

What is Jesus trying to tell us? This double figure of the bruised reed and smoking flax have both the same meaning. Just like the Lord gave the dream to Pharaoh of the full ears of corn and the fat cows — both speaking of a time of prosperity; then the skinny ears and the lean cows spoke of a time of depression; Jesus is saying that wounded, bruised, or injured followers of His — having been marred and partially cut off from the True Vine — He will not sever or cut off.

A smoking flax, or one whose spiritual fire is just about gone out, is a Christian who has allowed the world, the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches and sin to creep into his life. So now he is nearly backslidden and his light is about gone out. Perhaps by neglect or carelessness, maybe by failure to walk in the light, he has grown cold and defeated.

You are like this smoking flax, or a smoking wick of a lamp when the oil is low: it begins to cloud up the glass. So a weak Christian, when the fire of God gets low in his soul, will begin to smoke. It is evidence of a fire being smothered out. Jesus said a smoking flax will He not quench, nor will He put the little remaining sparks of fire out. The bruised reed He will not break off, but He will restore both again to what they should be.



Peter was such a bruised reed, or smoking flax. He followed Jesus afar off, denied he even knew Him, and began to curse and swear. But Jesus, with a tender look of compassion on his faltering disciple, gave him new hope and courage. Jesus didn't throw Peter away, nor gave up on him. He remade him — converted him — until Peter became one of the strongest and best of all the apostles.

So, don't give up on the Lord — He has not given up on you.

The Lord will rebuild and remake the marred vessel again into another vessel. This work of His we read about again in:

Jeremiah 18:4: 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.

Jeremiah watched the potter who did not throw away the vessel that was marred in his hands. Instead, he took it and re-molded it into another vessel. This is a very important point the Lord wants to get across for you to see.



John 3:3, 5:

³ Jesus answered and said unto him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

The Lord is not here merely patching up old lives, but He is remaking them. When we are born-again, we are made into a new vessel — a new creature in Christ. Old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17: Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

This new vessel will not contain what the old life had – that strange, foreign substance of sin and wickedness. That which marred the life will be removed, and you will be remade. The blemished life is reproduced and made into a new life and a vessel unto honor. This is the good news of the Gospel of Christ.

**You are not
beyond hope**

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God will do this very thing for you, as was illustrated in this potter’s house experience. You are not beyond hope, and God is able to do abundantly above all we can ask or think.

Ephesians 3:20: Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Come with me once more to the potter’s house, and let us learn another lesson together. It appears on the surface as though the potter failed. For the clay was marred in his hands, though on a wheel. The marring was not a mistake by the Potter, however. It was a blemish – perhaps a stone, a weed, or piece of stick — that was discovered in the clay when it began to take shape. It was not noticed when the clay was a lump of shapeless and formless mass. It was hidden in the clay until the potter began working on it.

A lot of things have been hidden in your life, too, but when God begins working on you, they will show up. Well enough that these things will be discovered now.

These secret sins must be found out before we leave this world. For life's second or third or fourth chance to be remade over again are only in this world.

Some things concealed for years have marred your life. Just like the potter did with the clay, as Jeremiah looked on, so will the Lord do with you. He will remove the evil and will remake your life into something beautiful and useful.

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I read of 56 fathers and mothers arrested in Chicago that were fined for neglect of their dear little children. The parents just let them go and were out drinking, partying, committing adultery, and stealing. If all were arrested for marring their lives and those of their offspring, the jails wouldn't hold them all. Their arrest, then their conviction by the courts, and their jail sentence do not remake their marred, wasted lives. One judge told me it is a hopeless task to rehabilitate these offenders . . . that about 78% of them are repeats.

He never loses interest or becomes indifferent to your need.

Although many parents just don't care anymore about how they live or even about their children, I am here to tell you that God cares. He never loses interest or becomes indifferent to your need. He will spare himself no pain to reach your lost soul. Just like the prodigal son who was wasted away and in the hog pen, his father's love and mercy restored him back into the fold and remade his ruined life.

There is hope for every backslider when they come back to God. As the potter does not throw the clay away but took it and made it over again into another vessel, so this work

AGAIN is used by Jesus in the story of the Prodigal Son. He was dead – and is alive AGAIN. He was lost and is now found. This has reference to the backslider.

Luke 15:27, 32:

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

This is the only second chance that the Bible teaches. Being restored to life again and remade into a new creature in Christ is only done in this world. As long as you are still in God's hands, there is hope. What is implied in the expression: IN THE POTTER'S HAND – is God telling you that the Lord is still dealing with you, that there is still hope, and that you are not a cast-away.

1 Corinthians 9:27: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Outside any potter's house is the potter's field. Here the broken vessels are discarded as rejects. Judas played the part of a fool and ended up on God's trash pile of eternal destruction.



There are several things suggested by this experience:

God has a plan for every life, just as the potter did.

God had a plan for Jeremiah before his birth.

He had a plan for Moses and for Paul.

God has a plan for you .

However, if you ignore God's plan for you and refuse to submit to "the Potter", you will be forever yourself — what *you* have chosen to be. If you try to run your life, you can only mar it.

Jeremiah 17:9: The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

In closing, let me suggest that you step outside of the potter's house and look in your mind's eye at the potter's field. Judas purchased one with the reward of his iniquity. If you would walk out there, you would feel the crunch of broken earthenware under your feet. How did it get there? Did the potter make a vessel in order to break it up and throw it away? NO. These are those hardened in their sins on whom God gave up. Their consciences have been seared, and there is no hope for them. They are beyond redemption. They have gone too far against the strivings of the Spirit, and He can no longer deal with their hearts. The door of mercy is shut to such forever.



Jesus said in:

John 6:44: No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him:

As long as God is drawing and convicting you; you are still in the Potter's hands. Please do not trifle with your soul and lose and forfeit it.

Mark 8:36: For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

As long as God is speaking to your heart, you have another chance to get right with Him, and He only promises you today to be saved.

Hebrews 3:15: Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Today is the day of salvation. If you harden your heart against the Lord and willfully go on in your sins – then the potter's field of Hell will be your doom.

***Today is the
day of
salvation.***

I am saying to every lost soul out there – let Jesus remake you. Let Jesus do it now. He alone can save you and make you his workmanship, fit for Heaven and remade for this life. Once you die, it is too late then to have another chance to be saved from your sins.

Hebrews 9:27: And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

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