

### The Potter and the Clay 1

Rom 9.19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? 22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? 25 As He says also in Hosea: “I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved. 26 And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there they shall be called sons of the living God.” 27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. 28 For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.” 29 And as Isaiah said before: “Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.”

\* **Why is this** a difficult passage for many?

\* **God’s sovereignty** and wrath are featured in Rm 9-11, but the star of the show is his \_\_\_\_\_. Rm 9-11 has the greatest concentration of the Greek word for \_\_\_\_\_ of all Paul’s writings, and his takeaway from the entire passage is: “I beseech you, brethren, by the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice ... to God” (Rm 12.1). If that’s not where we end up, we are \_\_\_\_\_ something.

\* **In vs 20-24**, Paul calls to mind 3 OT passages involving the potter and the clay — Jer 18.2-17; and Isa 29.13-16 and 44.21 - 45.23. What do these passages have in common?

**1) They concern** God’s \_\_\_\_\_ of his covenant people thru the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586BC, God’s preservation of a remnant, and God’s renewal of his people by blotting out their sins and moving King Cyrus to allow the remnant to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

**2) They \_\_\_\_\_** fwd to God’s purging of his covenant people thru the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70AD, God’s preserving of a remnant, and God’s renewal of his people thru Christ—blotting out their sins, filling them with his Spirit, and building the “heavenly Jerusalem” which is the “church of the firstborn” (Heb 12.22-24).

**3) They use** the potter and the clay to emphasize God’s \_\_\_\_\_ and patience toward his covenant people; his right to purge his people for chronic, unrepentant unfaithfulness; his right to reshape his people when he rebuilds them; and the ludicrousness of fallen men, particularly unbelieving, rebellious covenant members,

thinking they know better than God what to do with his people.

**Jer 18.2** “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.” 3 Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter ... 6 “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the LORD. “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel! 7 The instant I speak concerning a nation ... to destroy it, 8 if that nation ... turns from its evil, I will relent ... 9 And the instant I speak concerning a nation ... to build ... it, 10 if it does evil in My sight ..., then I will relent ... 11 speak to ... Jerusalem, saying, “Behold, I am fashioning a disaster ... against you. Return now every one from his evil way ...” 12 And they said, “That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans ...” 15 “Because My people have forgotten Me ... 17 I will scatter them ... before the enemy...”

– What does “marred” mean? What is the problem?

– How are the potter’s mercy and patience seen?

– Why can’t Israel be blessed as she is?

– God tutors Israel on how he \_\_\_\_\_ the nations.

– God tells Israel his sovereign intentions, just as he did \_\_\_\_\_ (Exo 9). This shows God’s \_\_\_\_\_.

– Like \_\_\_\_\_, Israel hardens her heart (12).

– Covenant members with this kind of heart are \_\_\_\_\_ clay.

– God will preserve a remnant and rebuild Israel, but she won’t \_\_\_\_\_ exactly the same as before.

– How does the exodus generation exemplify this principle?

– What did this look like in Jesus’ day?

**Luke 19.41** Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, “If you had known ... the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For days will come ... when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, 44 and level you ... to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

**Isaiah 29.13** "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, 14 therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people ... for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish" 15 Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, and their works are in the dark; They say, 'Who sees us?' and, 'Who knows us?' 16 Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made it, 'He did not make me'? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?"

- What did this look like in Jesus' day?

Mat 15.7 "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' " (see Isa 29.13)

John 11.47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." 49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own ... but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. 53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.

Acts 4.27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done."

- What prophet of the OT gave into this impulse for a while?

**Isa 44.22** "I have blotted out ... your transgressions, and ... your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you. ... 24 ... I am the LORD ... 28 who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." ' ... 45.1 Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held ...: 2 "I will go before you and make the crooked places straight ... 4 For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name ... 5 ... I will gird you, though you have not known Me, 6 that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me ... 9 Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'? 10 Woe to him who says to his father, 'What are you begetting?' Or to the woman, 'What have you brought forth?'" 11 Thus says the LORD, The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: ... 12 "I have made the earth, and created man on it. I—My hands—stretched out the heavens, and all their host ... 13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; He shall build My city and let My

exiles go free" ... 22 Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. 23 I have sworn by Myself ... that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath."

- Why is Cyrus an appropriate type of Christ?

Jer 31.33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the LORD: "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Phil 2.9 God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord ... (see Isa 44.23)

Heb 12.22 "But you have come to ... the heavenly Jerusalem, ... 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant"

\* **What was** the rub in Jesus' and Paul's day?

Isaiah 56.6 "Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants ... 7 even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." 8 The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, "Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him."

Mark 11.15 ... Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple ... 17 Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him ...

\* **What was** always God's purpose with Abraham and Israel, including Israel's long and tortured, downward trending OT history?

Rom 7.12 ... the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. 13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. 14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.