



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Jeremiah; Lamentations Sermon Series

Supports Session 5: Shapes

Sermon Title: "Rework Our Work"

Passage: Jeremiah 18:1-12

Connection to Session 5

The Lord graciously reworks His people for His purposes.

Introduction/Opening

Most of us have seen a potter work on a jar or bowl. We may have even tried our hand at creating a jar only to find out it is not as easy as it looks. We may want to rework it, seeing the flaws.

Jeremiah visited a potter's house and saw a potter remake a flawed jar from wet clay. The potter reworked the clay (Jer. 18:4), and he worked it as it seemed good to him. The Lord uses this image to describe His work with Judah, Jerusalem, and us.

We are flawed, too; flawed by our sins. These sins include sins of commission. When we deliberately act in ways that violate God's standards, we commit sins of commission. This is a serious matter to God. John wrote, "Everyone who commits sin practices lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). These also include sins of omission. When we do not do what we are supposed to do, we mar ourselves with sins of omission. James wrote, "So it is sin to know the good and yet not do it" (Jas. 4:17). These may include a failure to tithe, witness, attend church, pray, repent, serve, or meet a need. Finally, sins of disposition mar us. A sinful disposition can flaw our hearts, marriages, families, churches, neighborhoods, or places of work. Paul wrote of these things as of the flesh, naming especially ". . . strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions . . . envy" (Gal. 5:20-21).

How does the Lord rework His people when sin has marred them with flaws?

Outline

1. Through Obedience (Jer. 18:1-4)

- a. The Lord commanded Jeremiah to go to the potter's house and promised if he obeyed, God would provide a word for Jeremiah to preach. When Jeremiah did what he already knew the Lord wanted him to do, the Lord gave him more direction.
- b. Spiritual progress does not always consist of learning something new. Sometimes it consists of doing something old.
- c. To grow into the person the Lord desires for us to be, we need to do what we already know to do so the Lord will do more in our lives.

2. Through Brokenness (Jer. 18:5-6)

- a. The Lord told Jeremiah that He handled His flawed people the same way a potter handles pliable clay. He reworked it as it seemed good to him. The reason the potter could rework the clay is that the clay was not hardened. It was still pliable.
- b. The biblical word for pliable is “meek” or “humble.” The devotional word is “broken.” Jesus promised, “Blessed are the meek [broken], for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5, ESV). The word “meek” often described a broken horse that was trained enough to carry a rider. In this case, through training, the horse was broken of its will. After breaking, the horse was meek. A meek horse could be trusted with a rider and would obey the rider’s wishes.
- c. For God’s people to become what He envisions for them, they must make their hearts as pliable as wet clay. Their wills must be flexible so that they will prioritize the Lord’s will.
- d. If it were not so tragic it would be amusing to see some of us pursue our own wills outside the Lord’s will. With the personal histories we have, why do we still have supreme confidence in our will over the Lord’s will? We have sin, He has perfection. We confess sin, but He has none to confess. We ruin relationships, but He reconciles them. He controls all of creation and we still struggle to control our tongues. Should not these provide us with enough humility to break away from our wills and enthrone His that He might rework us as it seems good to Him?

3. Through Choices (Jer. 18:7-12)

- a. The Lord told Jeremiah that He would either destroy His people or build them based upon what they chose to do with His message. Their choices would activate the Lord either to destroy or build. If they choose their own will, the Lord would “uproot, tear down, and destroy” them (Jer. 18:7, 10-12). If they choose to repent, the Lord would “build and plant” them (Jer. 18:8-9).
- b. The Lord gives His people the power to ruin their futures with disobedience or forge great futures in His will.
- c. Believers do not have to wait for people and things to improve before they improve. Believers can choose to follow Jesus, knowing that doing so will give them the peace they desire regardless of life situations and if anyone else chooses to follow Jesus.

Conclusion

Before the Lord will use us, He must rework us. The Lord will only use those He shapes. Our utmost priority must be conforming to His shaping of our lives. Because of this, we must prioritize the Lordship of Christ. If we will make sure we possess obedience, meekness, and godly choices, the Lord will shape us into a people He can use.

Jesus promises, “For whoever has, more will be given to him, and he will have more than enough; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him” (Matt. 13:12; see also 25:29). This offer still stands.

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