

THE CHARACTER OF GOD – YOUR HOPE FOR A FRESH START

Jeremiah 18:1-11

by Pastor Larry Pabiona

As we anticipate the New Year, some of us face it with many regrets. Perhaps some of us did wrong things we can't undo; or neglected certain things and think it's too late to catch up. Our passage reveals certain things about the character of God that are instructive, in case you're tempted to despair. They're part of a trillion truths about God, but they are enough to bring peace and hope to troubled hearts who wonder if they can begin again.

Let's see how the character of God helps us start over:

1. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IS SHOWN IN THE CREATIVE ACTION OF THE POTTER ON THE CLAY. vv. 1-3 So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel.

- What are the obvious things about a potter doing his job?
 - o First, the potter chooses his material. The clay has no choice.
 - o Next, the potter decides on the reason for being of the material. The clay has no decision in the matter.
 - o Finally, the potter decides the final disposition of the finished product. He can sell it, use it for himself, hide it, break it, anything he wants to do, he can and he will.
- Realize this: if you are genuinely saved, you are not in the hands of a ruthless, eccentric artist who wantonly and randomly destroys His works of art. No, you are God's obra maestra, His poetic masterpiece (Eph. 2:10), and He will do everything to make sure you are reshaped into the mold of His most Beloved – His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:28-30).

The sovereignty of God steadies a believer who thinks that life is out of control. God is in control, and nothing can separate you from His love.

2. THE GRACE OF GOD IS SHOWN BY THE REDEMPTIVE TREATMENT OF THE POTTER TOWARDS THE CLAY. v. 4 But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot,

- Jeremiah was allowed to see that something in the material needed the skillful hands of the potter to be reformed, and the potter did what He does best – make something beautiful out of what less skillful hands couldn't have.

- 2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure [the gospel and the Christ of whom it is about] in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. His glory [Philippians 2:12-13]. God alone can make all things work in such a way as to always fulfill both purposes.

3. THE GRACE OF GOD IS PROVEN BY THE SINCERE INVITATION OF THE FATHER TO THOSE THAT HE LOVES: VERSES 5-11

a) If God announces impending doom and the person or nation repents – He will not carry out the threat; e.g. Nineveh.

b) If God promises blessing but is then willfully disobeyed, He doesn't have to carry out that promise of blessing; e.g. Israel.

God's bottom line is v. 11 "turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions." He said "each one of you". An individual will not be punished for the sins of a group, nor should a group be punished for the sins of an individual. Though the sins of each may affect the other, each have their own accountability before the Judge who never errs.

The grace of God ensures that while we cannot fathom all the implications of His sovereignty, each of us is accountable for responding to God's invitation to repent – both for salvation and our sanctification.

Final Thoughts:

We need to keep reminding ourselves that the Bible is less of a "How to" but more of a "Who is". It teaches us who God really is, and the more we know our God – the more we realize His holiness, His sovereignty, and yet His love and care for us – the easier it is for us to trust and obey Him. When we do, we find that we can start over if we need to. Because God loves reshaping His people and giving us second chances; just don't be surprised by some pain in the process.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!