

Introduction: ‘You’re not the boss of me!’ was something I heard my next door neighbor and cousin Chucky say on the playgrounds at school and in our neighborhood dozens of times from fourth grade through sixth grade. He came right out and said what many people aged nine to ninety-nine feel but are afraid to say because of what people might think of them. *** Life is not black and white. There are many shades of grey; and, all the beautiful colors of the rainbow God gave to Noah as a sign of mercy and grace after the catastrophic flood (Genesis 6-8: three chapters!). In order for many people to work together in harmony to provide something good for the benefit of their community, leadership is important. A leader must have authority to get all people to work together, not as totally independent contractors accountable only to themselves. Authority must be accompanied with the right amount of power to get dozens to hundreds of people to reach their common goal. But, as many of you know, there is always the danger of Lord Acton’s dictum: absolute power corrupts absolutely. *** I hope all of you listening know what Jesus said about the ideal leader, namely Himself. When addressing the Twelve after James and John made a ‘power grab’, He said the (human) leaders of the nations ‘lord it over’ their people; but, He, the true King of kings (1 Timothy 6:13-16), came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:35-45). *** This is what our Bible passages tell us this morning. *** Yahweh (whose Name is – Father, Son, Holy Spirit) showed Jeremiah that a potter breaks down and reshapes a deformed clay vessel into something beautiful. Then, He tells Jeremiah to proclaim to His people that He has Authority to destroy them for their stubborn rebellion; then, after the discipline of exile, to restore His image in them. *** Through a song He gave to an anonymous Levitical musician serving in the Temple, Yahweh said He formed the hearts of all people, sees everything on earth, and has Power and Authority to save all who fear Him and submit to Him. *** Let’s fill out these high level truths by examining together the details of Spirit-inspired Scripture.

I. Yahweh sends Jeremiah to a potter who reshapes a corrupted clay vessel, then He tells Jeremiah He is the Potter to His people’s clay and has the Authority to destroy His people in their stubborn pride. (Jeremiah 18:1-12)

A. Yahweh sends Jeremiah to a potter’s house where he sees a potter reshape a corrupted clay vessel until it was right in his eyes. (Verses 1-4)

1. The word which was to Jeremiah from Yahweh: Arise! Go down to the house of the potter, and there I will make you hear My words. (Verses 1-2)

Word to Jeremiah: Yahweh commanded Jeremiah to go to a man who creatively formed things.

2. I went down to the potter’s house, and behold, he (is) working a work on his two wheels. (Verse 3)

Working a work: The potter worked with two wheels mounted on an axel that went into the ground. With his feet, he moved the wheel just above the floor, and with his hands he formed his vessel or object from clay at waist level.

3. Then the vessel which he (was) making was corrupted in the potter’s hand, and he made it again into another vessel as which (is) right in his eyes. (Verse 4)

Re-made vessel: The potter reformed the lump of clay that was corrupted into a vessel that was right (or straight) in his eyes.

Bottom Line: Creative craftsmen or women have the wisdom to start over when their creation is corrupted.

Most people agree with this statement. Now God gets personal and applies this to Himself and all people He created including Jeremiah, Israel and us!

B. Yahweh explains that He is the Potter and His people are the clay, and because they will not repent, He has Authority to punish them with destruction to restore them later. (Verses 5-12)

1. Then it was the word of Yahweh to me: As (is) according to this potter, will I not be able to do with all you of the house (family) of Israel? Behold! As the clay in the hand of the potter so are all of you in My hand, house (family) of Israel. (Verses 5-6)

Yahweh and Israel: As the potter took down the corrupted clay vessel and remade it, Yahweh’s word to Israel through Jeremiah is He is able to do to His people Israel, as the potter did to the clay in front of Jeremiah.

In other words, the Creator has full authority over His Creation to make it right in His eyes, not the ‘eyes’ of the clay creation (Deuteronomy 12:1-8; Judges 19-21; Proverbs 16:1-3; 21:2)

Yahweh illustrates His authority over people with a potter and clay

2. In the moment I will speak about a nation or kingdom to pull up, break down and destroy (it), then that nation turns from its evil which I spoke, I will be moved to compassion to relent over the evil which I thought to do to it. (Verses 7-8)

Repentance: With these words Yahweh gives His people of Judah one last opportunity to repent. If they do, He will have compassion to relent of the disaster He has threatened. There is precedent. Over one-hundred-fifty years before this, Nineveh repented at Jonah’s presence and message and was spared (Jonah 1-4): Yahweh says, repent and experience the blessing of My Authority!

Yahweh illustrates His authority over people with a potter and clay

3. In the moment I will speak about a nation to build and plant (it) and it does evil in My eyes to not hear (to obey) My voice, then I will be grieved to sorrow of the good I said to do to it. (Verses 9-10)

Grieved to sorrow: The word meaning ‘compassion to relent’ means ‘grieved to sorrow’ in the context of becoming as stubbornly corrupt as Judah.

Jeremiah: The prophet Jeremiah wept with his God over Judah’s unfaithfulness (Jeremiah 8:20-9:1; Lamentations 3:48) and the coming destruction of Judah and Jerusalem.

Yahweh illustrates His authority over people with a potter and clay

4. And now, you must say, please, to the men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: Behold! I am forming against you evil and thinking a thought against all of you; you all must return, please, each one from his evil way and make good your ways and deeds. (Verse 11)

Form: Yahweh is forming, as the potter Jeremiah saw, to destroy His corrupt people if they do not turn to Him again to do what is good in His eyes.

5. They say: (It is) being desperate, so we will go after our own thoughts, each in the stubbornness of his heart, we will do evil. (Verse 12)

Stubborn: Tragically, the men of Judah 'double down' on their stubborn corruptness to Yahweh!

Application: We must be convicted by the Holy Spirit to seek God to be made soft and malleable clay in His hands IN Jesus and the Holy Spirit so He may do His good works in and through us (Philippians 2:12-13).

II. Yahweh says the foreign idol worshippers are more faithful than His people, so He will scatter them; He who formed all hearts has Authority and Power to save those who fear Him and submit to Him. (Jeremiah 18:13-17 & Psalm 33:13-19)

- A. In a poetic prophecy, Yahweh says no other nation has been unfaithful to its (false) 'gods' as His people who have forgotten Him and will be scattered. (Jeremiah 18:13-17)

1. Therefore, thus says Yahweh / you all must ask, please, among the nations // who heard as this? / a very horrible thing has done the virgin Israel. (Verse 13)

Any other nation: These lines call to mind the longest chapter in Ezekiel (16) which starts with Yahweh finding Israel as an abandoned young woman whom He cleaned up and married, but she turned to harlotry with other 'gods'.

2. Will the snow of Lebanon leave the rock of the field? / (are) the cold flowing waters from a foreign (place) pulled up? (Verse 14)

Water taken away: The answer to these rhetorical questions is no! All creation but man does its Creator's purpose. But, people, who must make choices, often make the wrong choices!

3. Because My people have forgotten Me / they burn incense to what is false // they have stumbled in their ways (from) the old paths / to go the tramp's way, not the way of the lifted up. (Verse 15)

My people forgot me: Because Yahweh's people have forgotten Him they worship false 'gods' and wander as vagabonds on back roads rather than as God's people on His paths.

4. They make their land a horror, an everlasting (object of) hissing / each passing over it (the land) will be horrified and will shake his head. (Verse 16)

Horried: Their stubborn unfaithfulness to Yahweh has led to the ruin of the land they inherited, so all foreigners who pass over the desolate land will be horrified.

5. As the east wind will scatter them before the enemy / I will show them (My) back and not (My) face in the day of their calamity. (Verse 17)

Scattered: Because they forgot their Covenant God and were unfaithful to Him, they will experience the calamity of being scattered with the face of Yahweh no longer on them (Numbers 6:24-26 ... cause face to shine).

Application: We must fear the consequences of disobeying Yahweh's Greatest Commandment so we will show our love to Yahweh in faithful obedience to Him.

- B. Yahweh, who formed all hearts, sees everything on earth; only He has Authority and Power to save, so fear Him while submitting to Him in patient hope. (Psalm 33:13-19)

1. From heaven, Yahweh looks down / He has seen all the 'sons' of men // from the place (He) sits / He has seen all inhabiting the earth. (Verses 13-14)

Yahweh sees: Though Yahweh sits in heaven, He sees everyone on the earth – all the people He created in His image to represent Him to the rest of His creation (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:15).

2. He (is) forming their heart together / understanding all their works. (Verse 15)

He formed all hearts: Yahweh is forming the heart of all people as a potter forms the clay with which he works. This poetic line echoes what Yahweh demonstrated to Jeremiah in the potter's house.

3. Not a king (is) being saved by his great army / a warrior will not be delivered by his great strength // false (is) a horse for salvation / its great strength will not deliver. (Verses 16-17)

Only Yahweh: The truth that a king and a warrior cannot be saved or delivered by their great strength, even in numbers, or by the strength of a war horse leaves only one conclusion:

Only Yahweh has the Power and Authority to save and deliver His people.

Yahweh illustrates His authority over people with a potter and clay

4. Behold! The eye of Yahweh on those fearing Him / on those hoping in His steadfast love // to deliver their soul from death / and to keep them alive in famine. (Verse 18-19)

Fear Yahweh: All people who wait in the hope of Yahweh's strong life-giving, life-changing LOVE, fearing Him as their Creator to obey Him in the faith of His Son Jesus, letting Him form them into the image of Jesus (Romans 8:28-30) will be delivered by Him!

Yahweh delivers those He formed who hope in His unfailing love

Application: We must all be moved by God's Word and Spirit to 'trust and obey', and to fear and submit to Yahweh as our ultimate Authority through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: Yahweh sends Jeremiah to watch a potter who reforms a corrupted clay vessel into something beautiful. He then tells Jeremiah He is the Potter and His people are the clay. Moreover, He has the Authority to destroy His people in their stubborn pride. Then Yahweh tells His prophet in a poem song that foreign idol worshippers are more faithful than His people, so He will scatter them. A Temple musician wrote a song to teach worshippers that He who formed all hearts has Authority and Power to save those who fear Him and submit to Him.

Yahweh illustrates His authority over people with a potter and clay