Jeremiah - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

Words of Truth: Volume 6, Potter's House, The: Part 1

Article from https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb

The direction given to Jeremiah, “to arise and go down to the potter’s house,” seemed to be in the common order of things but “the words which he heard from the Lord;” when there and “the work which he saw wrought upon the wheels,” were most important in their nature, and are of general application.

As the prophet of the Lord to His people, Jeremiah had to say to them, “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.” Indeed, a prominent feature of the prophecy by this son of Hilkiah, is the declaration of the state of the people and the city of Jerusalem, as seen under the old covenant of works; and in the latter part, a glowing description of the future condition of the city and the nation when brought under the new covenant of grace, at the second coming of their Messiah. In fact, God dispensationally does with them what the potter did in type before the eyes of Jeremiah— “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.”

Have we never read “If that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them he saith, Behold the days come saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” The first vessel that he made of clay was marred, for “in that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” This same principle is of equal force as applied to ritualistic and sacerdotal ordinances of worship. “In burnt offerings, and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure; then said I, Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.” Thus, the lesson which Jeremiah learned of “the marred vessel” is true, between Jehovah and Israel as regards the nation dispensationally, broken out of their olive tree, or as respects the old covenant of law and works, or as regards sacrifices, successional ministry and worship, “For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. Indeed, the whole of that economy is summed up in these ominous words, “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope, by the which we draw nigh unto God.” Such are “the words” proclaimed to us by the Holy Ghost in the house of the Son, and the Colossians tells us “the work” by which the first vessel was marred, “blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

But this principle, which the potter’s work on the wheels supplies, is of- far wider application than Israel’s history, whether under the old covenant in Jeremiah’s time, or when under the new covenant of blessing with their Messiah in their coming millennial times; indeed, those who know what the difference is between the outward historical order of God’s actings, and His hidden but divine counsels in Christ, will remember “That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual,” All such will be prepared to see, not the application of a principle merely, but an established rule, arising from the nature of God and what He is, and what man has been proved to be as a responsible creature; “And so it is written—the first man, Adam, was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” If we consider this world as the house of the potter, there were indeed in it “The first man who is of the earth, earthy, and the second man is the Lord from heaven.” We know, too, who He was “That was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; then I was by him as one brought, up with him, and I was daily his delight.” Creation produced the first man; but the mystery of the incarnation introduced the Second—the Word made flesh, who dwelt amongst us. Looked at from everlasting to everlasting, Adam, though first in time, and in the world’s history, was but an image man, “A figure of him that was to come;” so that it can now be said “If any man be in Christ, he is a, new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new, and all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.”

“Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels; and the vessel that he made was of clay.” “And God said, let us make man in our image—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”—this was the creature God had formed. But sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, because that all had sinned—and so the vessel that he made of clay was marred. “God drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” It was not however, till the cross, that man had done his worst, and declared himself an enemy to God by, the crucifixion of Christ; so that there was no remedy where man was, as the betrayer and murderer of the Son of His love. In the secret of God there was another vessel to be wrought, “As it seemed good to the potter to make it; and it was by this last Adam (the second Man) that the first was to be superseded and marred— “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”

The words by the Holy Ghost in “the house of God” are very explicit upon the fact, that man “in the flesh” has been marred and set aside by the judgment of God at the cross for the believer; and that our old man has been crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Like the first vessel that was made and broken in the potter’s house, so the first man, who lost the image in which he was created, has been judicially put to death in the broken body of Christ; and we are consequently not in the flesh but in the Spirit. Like the second vessel that was made, “As seemed good to the potter to make it,” so by incarnation, resurrection and ascension, this mighty power which was wrought in Christ, when God raised Him from the dead, has set Him far above every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come-He is the beginning of the new creation of God.

This divine order of God as regards Adam and Christ, or the first man and the second Man, is likewise the rule by which we learn the lessons of grace and truth which came to us by Jesus Christ. It is of great interest to notice this, in His intercourse with Nicodemus, the master of Israel, by the words which He spoke and the work to which He pointed him. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the

Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee ye must be born again." Nicodemus will not do—he must be born of water and of the Spirit. And what is this teaching from a greater than Jeremiah but the story of the potter's house and the vessel that was marred—only with divine love and grace, when Jesus said— "As Moses, lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life."

So, likewise, in the Lord's intercourse with the woman of Samaria at the well, when He tells her all that ever she did what is it in result but marring the vessel of clay, and forming another on the wheel as seemed good to the potter to make it? "He taketh away the first that he may establish the second." She, in the state in which she came to Jesus, is set aside, as in truth every believer in Christ knows, and is connected with Christ as the well-spring of life and the giver of the living water. How exactly she sets her seal to his marring and to this fashioning power of God; for henceforth Jacob's well is to her a deserted one, and her forsaken water-pot tells plainly enough, to all who still go there to draw, that the woman who once carried it has found in Christ. "A well of water, springing up into everlasting life." She thirsts no more, and her Saviour and Lord has found meat to eat, that others knew not of! The words of the Lord in the potter's house to Nicodemus taught the master of Israel the necessity of his being born again—born of the Spirit—and then showed him the mighty work by which this was to be accomplished, in the lifted-up Son of man. Just as at the well where He sat, He took a place not in death (as the antitype of the brazen serpent) but in the power of life, and giving it, that she who received it should never thirst. "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Redemption, by the work on the cross, has been communicated to the Israelite, and life in Christ has been opened out in living streams to the woman of Samaria. Precious lessons these are for the marred vessels of clay to learn from the lips and under the hand of Him who is wonderful in counsel, and mighty in operation!

This divine order which we are tracing, is further to be displayed in the resurrection of our mortal body, as taught by words and work in 1 Cor. 15, "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" Nicodemus had said, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" The woman of Samaria said, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence, then, hast thou that living water?" As Jesus replied in His day, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth" so Paul answers, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." If we refer to these three examples upon another point, it is to remark how easily every difficulty is solved by the bringing in of God, as above all the questionings of the natural heart and conscience. In John 3, the inquiry, "How can these things be?" was answered from the heart of God— "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In John 4, the demand, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" was met, too, from above— "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink." So in this, 1 Cor. 15, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" gets its unanswerable reply from the almighty power of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will— "God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him." Faith's way of keeping out of all such reasonings and difficulties is by the knowledge of God, and so never entering into them. All things are possible with God; and thus in our measure as walking with Him, all things are possible to him that believeth. We shall find it of the greatest moment to remember the lesson in the potter's house, that' the vessel he first made of clay was marred; otherwise the sophistry of man, and the "cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive," may carry many away by the idea of human improvement and the world's progress. In this magnificent resurrection chapter the most advanced reason will stumble at every step, and, because of its so-called development, nothing but faith and the knowledge of the power of God can get out upon incorruption. What can reason say to the fact in v. 44. "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body"? Faith's answer is triumphant— "God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him." Reason, in this dilemma, must either sink itself to skepticism, or else give place to faith. But to return. God's rule of condemning sin in the flesh at the cross, where it was judicially set aside, is now actually carried out in resurrection for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." These are the words of the Lord, which we have gone down to the house of the potter to hear. Nor shall we find the mighty power of God less remarkable in operation, when put forth for the resurrection of the body, than when displayed in righteous judgment on our Substitute, when our redemption was secured to us by the blood of the Lamb. "Buried by baptism (with Him) into death" —or the first vessel marred—was not more true than "that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"—or made again, another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

(To be continued.)