

Submit to Divine Discipline  
July 10, 2011  
Allen Power

We're in Jeremiah 19

What we missed from last week...  
Jeremiah 18

At the Potter's House

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." 3 So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. 4 But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

The point of that illustration was:

"The Lord doesn't reject us when we fail but patiently works to make us what He wants us to be."

As the old hymn beautifully says it:

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!  
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.  
Mold me and make me after Thy will,  
While I am waiting, yielded and still.*

- Those last three words are the key: "yielded and still".
- The clay can be "reformed" because it "yields" to the potter's hand...it is soft and can be molded

Scripture affirms: "God never stops loving His people. When they are selfish and disobedient, God lovingly disciplines His people in various ways to draw them back to a right relationship with him."

- But, some of us are "hard headed" instead of "yielded and still"
- That was the case in Jeremiah's day so...
- This week, In Chapter 19, God again uses "pottery" as an "object lesson" in Jeremiah's message:

Jeremiah 19

1 This is what the LORD says: "Go and buy a clay jar from a potter. Take along some of the elders of the people and of the priests 2 and go out to the Valley of Ben Hinnom, near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate. There proclaim the words I tell you,

Picture this:

- Jeremiah has a clay pot he's holding up over his head
- He summons the religious leaders...elders, priests...to follow him
- The Potsherd Gate...literally "strewn" with shards of broken pottery
- Overlooking the "Valley of Ben Hinnom"
- In Old Testament times it was the place where people sacrificed babies in the fire to the idol Molech
- In New Testament times it was called:

"...gehenna. That is the word attributed to Jesus as one of the several designations for hell (Matthew 5:22). Because of its ancient association with fiery sacrifices, the valley came to symbolize the place of torment reserved for those who reject God's offer of salvation."

Butler, Trent C. Editor.. "Entry for 'HINNOM, VALLEY OF'". "Holman Bible Dictionary". <<http://www.studylight.org/dic/hbd/view.cgi?number=T2787>>. 1991.

- Holding the clay pot over his head he says what God has told him to say:

Jeremiah 19:3-6

New International Version (NIV)

3 and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah and people of Jerusalem. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Listen! I am going to bring a disaster on this place that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.

- In that verse: What did God say He was going to do? DISASTER!
- Why would He do that? Verses 4-6:

4 For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned incense in it to gods that neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. 5 They have built the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as offerings to Baal—something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. 6 So beware, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.

- These people have forsaken God for "foreign gods"
- These people are worshiping other "gods"
- They "burn their children as offerings to Baal"
- God says, "I'll turn the Valley of Ben Hinnom into the Valley of Slaughter!"
- Wait a minute, Jeremiah is still standing there holding this clay pot above his head...what does he do with it?
- Someone read Chapter 19 Verses 10-12:

Jeremiah 19:10-12

New International Version (NIV)

10 "Then break the jar while those who go with you are watching, 11 and say to them, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I will smash this nation and this city just as this potter's jar is smashed and cannot be repaired. They will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room. 12 This is what I will do to this place and to those who live here, declares the LORD. I will make this city like Topheth.

- Question: What is the difference between the pot on the potters wheel in chapter 18 that we read earlier and the pot Jeremiah just smashed on the ground?

Look at 19:15:

Jeremiah 19:15

New International Version (NIV)

15 "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Listen! I am going to bring on this city and all the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words.'"

When the clay of our hearts and our behavior is soft and pliable, the potter (God) can gently fix the flaws and mold it into something beautiful. When the clay has hardened there's no choice but to break it. That's spelled DISCIPLINE.

Proverbs 3:11-12 says...

New International Version (NIV)

11 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline,  
and do not resent his rebuke,  
12 because the LORD disciplines those he loves,  
as a father the son he delights in.[a]

Remember...

Scripture affirms: "God never stops loving His people. When they are selfish and disobedient, God lovingly disciplines His people in various ways to draw them back to a right relationship with him."

- After Jeremiah smashed the clay pot he went back to the temple and gave his message to everyone there.
- Guess what the chief officer of the temple, Pashhur, did?
- Had Jeremiah "beaten and put in stocks
- "We don't want to hear your message Jeremiah...and we'll make you a public spectacle so no other 'prophets' try this kind of thing!"
- Get out of here Jeremiah!
- But before long Pashhur had to "eat" those words
- You see Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon was marching toward Judah
- King Zedekiah sent Pashhur to ask Jeremiah to "inquire of the Lord on our behalf"
- "...perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all His wonderful acts, so that the enemy will withdraw from us." (Jeremiah 21:2)

Jeremiah 21:3-5

New International Version (NIV)

3 But Jeremiah answered them, "Tell Zedekiah, 4 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I am about to turn against you the weapons of war that are in your hands, which you are using to fight the king of Babylon and the Babylonians[a] who are outside the wall besieging you. And I will gather them inside this city. 5 I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm in furious anger and in great wrath.

- God sent word: "Not only am I not going to fight FOR you...I'm going to fight AGAINST YOU!"
- I've warned you about your disobedience and you wouldn't listen!

John MacArthur:

*"God used an invader as His judging instrument. The Jews have not only Babylonians as their enemy, but God."*

- Why would God do that?

If we look ahead to Jeremiah 22:8-9

Jeremiah 22:8-9

New International Version (NIV)

8 "People from many nations will pass by this city and will ask one another, 'Why has the LORD done such a thing to this great city?' 9 And the answer will be: 'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God and have worshiped and served other gods.'"

Remember...

Scripture affirms: "God never stops loving His people. When they are selfish and disobedient, God lovingly disciplines His people in various ways to draw them back to a right relationship with him."

However, we also see:

When the clay of our hearts has hardened there's no choice but to break it. That's spelled DISCIPLINE.

DISCUSSION

Let's bring this lesson down to our everyday lives...

What are some ways God's children (not unbelievers) abandon God today?  
(Discussion)

What can we expect God to do in response to spiritual unfaithfulness? Put another way, what are some EXAMPLES of how God might DISCIPLINE His children for abandoning Him? (Discussion)

Let me pause and make AN IMPORTANT POINT...God's DISCIPLINE is NOT to make us PAY FOR OUR SIN. Romans 8:1 says "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Our sin was paid for by CHRIST's DEATH on the cross. We couldn't pay for our sin if we wanted to. God's DISCIPLINE is NOT making us PAY for our sins.

So WHY DOES God DISCIPLINE His children?

John MacArthur says there are three reasons why he believes God disciplines the believer: retribution, prevention, and education.

Retribution - Is correction when we sin (NOT PAYMENT FOR SIN!)

Prevention - Obvious...to keep us out of trouble by teaching us boundaries

Education - Also obvious but different from PREVENTION...He's TEACHING us what we need to learn in life

The writer of Hebrews covers this subject of God's loving DISCIPLINE

Hebrews 12:5-13

New International Version (NIV)

5 And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, (*quoting Proverbs 3:11-12 that we read before...*)

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,  
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,  
6 because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”[a]

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*Chastening is the evidence of the Father's love. Satan wants us to believe that the difficulties of life are proof that God does not love us, but just the opposite is true. Sometimes God's chastening is seen in His rebukes from the Word or from circumstances. At other times He shows His love by punishing (“the Lord ... scourgeth”) us with some physical suffering. Whatever the experience, we can be sure that His chastening hand is controlled by His loving heart. The Father does not want us to be pampered babies; He wants us to become mature adult sons and daughters who can be trusted with the responsibilities of life.*

So, how should we RESPOND to God's DISCIPLINE?

Hebrews 12:7-11

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How

much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! 10 They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Verse 7: We are to ENDURE hardship as God's discipline

Verse 8: What does verse 8 say discipline INDICATES about us? Legitimate children of God

Wiersbe again:

*I have met in my ministry people who professed to be saved, but for some reason they never experienced any chastening. If they disobeyed, they seemed to get away with it. If I resisted God's will and did not experience His loving chastening, I would be afraid that I was not saved!*

Verse 11 sums it up: DISCIPLINE isn't pleasant "at the time" but it produces a "harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

Arthur Pink said,

*"God always chastens twice, if we're not humbled by the first time...Form the habit of heeding His taps, and you will be less likely to receive His raps."*

So, What's the TAKEAWAY?

Scripture affirms: "God never stops loving His people. When they are selfish and disobedient, God lovingly disciplines His people in various ways to draw them back to a right relationship with him."

However, we also see:

When the clay of our hearts has hardened there's no choice but to break it. That's spelled DISCIPLINE.

- We are to EXPECT the Lord's DISCIPLINE when we are unfaithful to Him or when we are BLIND TO SIN in our lives.
- When it comes, we need to ACCEPT God's DISCIPLINE as LOVING CORRECTION from our FATHER