

“Our Relationship to the Potter”—Isaiah 64:6-9

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Our Relationship to the Potter”, is Isaiah 64:6-9 → *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls upon Your name, who rouses himself to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities. But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You are our potter; we are all the work of Your hand. Be not so terribly angry, O LORD, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all Your people.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

There is a hymn written by Adelaide Pollard entitled, “Have Thine Own Way, Lord.” While expressing the desire for the LORD’s will to be done in our lives, verse 1 draws on the relationship picture given through the prophet Isaiah in our text. Verse 1 of the hymn says:

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.

The hymn confesses the desire for the LORD to have His way and will be that which molds and guides our lives. It reflects the desire of complete submission to Him.

Unfortunately, there are many—Christians included—whose perspective of relationship with the LORD “sing” the song much differently:

I want my way, Lord! I want my way!  
 I want it now, Lord! Even today.  
 Please let me have it, just as I will,  
 While I am waiting, My wants to fulfill.

It is interesting how sinful human nature quickly re-interprets submission to the LORD into a process of manipulating Him. Instead of recognizing that the LORD made us according to His Will (↓), too often we strive to make Him conform to our will. This idolatrous perspective has revealed itself in sinners throughout every generation, including people in the Old Testament Church. The prophet Isaiah expressed it in Isaiah 29:16 → *You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, “He did not make me”; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?*

In the words of our text, the prophet Isaiah reveals the future captivity of God’s people to Babylon, a captivity which they brought upon themselves because they insisted in their idolatrous sinful desires of wanting to do things their own way, not God’s way. He verbalized how they will confess their sin after having been humbled through the LORD’s discipline. The only hope is for Yahweh to *rend the heavens and come down* with His powerful deliverance (↓) as He had done years ago when He delivered His people from their slavery to Egypt in the Exodus. They are brought to a point of submission evidenced in contrition and repentance, being reminded again Who is in control!

It is only in the midst of a broken spirit that you will recognize the seriousness of your sin and recognize your need for a Savior. Psalm 51:17 says: *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. A contrite heart is one that feels the guilt of sin because*

of disobedience to *our Potter*, the One Who has formed us and made us (↓) to live for the praise of His glory (↑) and obedience to Him (→). Contrition is sorrow over our sin which humbly comes to the LORD in repentance saying, *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.* We want the LORD to have His way and His will to be done in our lives.

Our salvation and living **must** be in God's way, according to His will! Why? Even though He meets *him who joyfully works righteousness* (v. 5), the nature of our condition in sin is so terrible that even *all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment* in His sight. They may even look good in the eyes of others but without submission to the LORD in faith they are like filthy rags in His sight!

Isaiah paints a very bleak picture in verse 7 of our text: *There is no one who calls upon Your name, who rouses himself to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.* It wasn't that there weren't people calling upon His name. It's just that they were calling on His name to manipulate Him rather than calling upon Him in humble submission and faith. It wasn't that there weren't people rousing themselves to take hold of Yahweh. It's just that they were rousing themselves to control Him in sinful pride rather than rousing themselves in contrition and repentance to come to Him **in faith and submission to His will**. Through their captivity they would experience His rejection of their sinful ways and they would "melt"—that is, be brought to recognize that they're not just having a "bad day" . . . or confess, "My bad!" Rather, they would see the seriousness of their sin and confess, "Ugh! I stand **totally helpless** before the Potter!" However, this "melting process" is necessary for re-molding!

It was not just their captivity which brought them to this realization. Various experiences can happen to us which force us to take inventory of our lives in relationship with the LORD. In order for such experiences to bring about contrition you must view them in light of God's Law—the same Law which was proclaimed by Isaiah and the other prophets and is contained in the Bible. Romans 3:19 says *we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.* That's you and I. To what will we appeal if this Law will not help us?

Along with the Old Testament Church we can humbly appeal to our Maker and Redeemer as verses 8-9 of our text reveal: *But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You are our potter; we are all the work of Your hand. Be not so terribly angry, O LORD, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all Your people.* In the midst of humble confession of sin we recognize whose we are—we do not belong to ourselves but we belong to the LORD. We recognize Who has made us and that it is only He Who can save us in our pitiful sinful condition!

The picture of the LORD as our *Potter* Who does with us as He pleases is used many times throughout the Scriptures to describe both our accountability to and dependance upon Him in every area of our lives. It is by His grace that the LORD chooses people to be His own children. Thus, in the midst of those experiences when God's Law lays heavy on your hearts, do not try to manipulate your way out of your sins by bargaining with the LORD or by trying to "get right" with Him through religious actions or good behavior. Faith simply looks to how **He makes us right with Him by His grace!**

As *our Father*, not simply *our Potter*, He has acted in our lives to make sure our sin has been dealt with once and for all! Romans 8:3-4 tells us that *God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us,* who live according to the Holy Spirit's work in our lives! Faith (→) simply trusts in humble submission to Jesus' life, death and resurrection which has restored our relationship to *our Potter* as our loving *Father!* It's not just a matter of God's doing what He wants with you. It's a matter of God doing His best for you in the Person & Work of Jesus, His Son, and the Holy Spirit producing obedience in you to the praise of the glory of God!

No doubt, we are jars of clay—jars which are cracked, chipped and even broken while we deal with the presence of sin and the devil this side of heaven. But 2 Corinthians 4:7 describes us as frail jars filled with the treasure of God's gracious forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. Through His Law and His Gospel the LORD is constantly molding you into the servant He wants you to be. Why? *To show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to you.*

You are in the hands of the Potter, Who is also your loving Father! It is because of His "coming down" and accomplishing your salvation in Jesus Christ (↓) that you can have a faith relationship with Him (→), submit to Him in worship and thanks (↑) and follow His Will and Word for your life (→) as you live according to the Spirit! It is the work of your Father/Potter which confesses:

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!  
Hold o'er my being absolute sway!  
Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see,  
Christ only, always, Living in me! Amen.