

Crystallization-Study of Jeremiah and Lamentations

#5: God as Our Sovereign Potter Making Us His Vessels, His Containers, to Contain Him (10/5-10/11)

OL Summary: **I.** God as our sovereign Potter has absolute right over us as His pottery; it is crucial that we see a vision of God's sovereignty: **A.** Sovereignty refers to God's unlimited authority, power, and position: As the sovereign One, God is above everything, behind everything, and in everything. **B.** Romans 9:19-23 refers to God's sovereignty: "Who withstands His will? But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?" (Romans 9:19b-20) /We need to realize who we are; we are God's creatures, and He is our Creator. /"Does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" (Romans 9:21). **C.** God's sovereignty is the basis of His selection; His selection depends on His sovereignty.

II. God as our Potter has sovereignty created us to be His vessels, His containers, to contain Himself according to His predestination: **A.** God's purpose in creating man was to make man His vessel, His earthenware container, to contain and be filled with Christ as life for the building up of the Body of Christ as God's great corporate vessel for His expression. **B.** The basic teaching of the whole Scripture is simply this: God is the very content, and we are the containers made to receive the content; we must contain God and be filled with God so that we can be vessels unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work. **C.** If we do not contain God and know God as our content, we are a senseless contradiction. [Chinese translation: Contrary to the purpose that God created us as a vessel, it has lost its significance.] **D.** All of Paul's fourteen Epistles can be summed up in two words—open vessel: The degree to which God can dispense Himself into us depends on the degree of our openness. /Decadence starts from self-complacency; progress starts from hunger and thirst.

III. In His sovereignty God as our Potter has the authority to make the ones whom He has selected and called to be vessels of mercy unto honor and glory: **A.** We were chosen by God according to His sovereign mercy; God's mercy is the most far-reaching of God's attributes, saving us out of our wretched position into a condition that is suitable for His grace and love: Man's disobedience affords God's mercy an opportunity, and God's mercy brings man to salvation. /Because of God's mercy, we responded to the gospel when others did not respond, we received a word about Christ as life when others refused to receive it, and we took the way of the Lord's recovery when others drew back from taking this way. **B.** "I will have mercy on whomever I will

have mercy'... So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Romans 9:15a, 16): If we know God's mercy, we will neither trust in our effort nor be disappointed by our failures; the hope for our wretched condition is in God's mercy. / The expression sovereign mercy means that God's mercy is absolutely a matter of God's sovereignty; being a vessel of mercy is not the result of our choice; it originates with God's sovereignty. /The only thing we can say to explain God's mercy to us is that in His sovereignty He has chosen to be merciful to us. /Because of His mercy to us, we seek Him day by day. /The more we see that everything related to us is a matter of God's mercy, the more we will bear our responsibility before the Lord; however, even our willingness to bear responsibility is of God's mercy. /Regarding His recovery, God has mercy on whom He will have mercy. **C.** Romans 9 reveals the principle that everything depends on God's mercy: Concerning this matter, our eyes need to be opened at least once; there must be at least one time when we see that everything depends on God's mercy. **D.** "Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help". (Hebrews 4:16). **E.** In His sovereignty God the Father has had mercy on us; therefore, we must praise and worship Him for His sovereign mercy: "Father, Thy mercy with Thy love and grace / Did we obtain; / And in Thy mercy, with Thee face to face, / We'll e'er remain; / And for Thy mercy we would worship Thee / Through all our days and through eternity". (Hymns, #25, stanza 3). **F.** We were created to be vessels of mercy unto honor to contain Christ as the God of honor so that we may honor God and men: Vessels unto honor are those who honor God by living and walking by the Spirit and those who honor men by ministering the Spirit to them. **G.** We were created to be vessels of mercy unto glory to contain Christ as the God of glory: The release of the glory of Christ's divinity was His being glorified by the Father with the divine glory in His resurrection through His death; in Christ's glorification He, as the last Adam, became the life-giving Spirit for His divine dispensing. /We have this treasure, Christ as the God of glory, dwelling within us, the earthen vessels; "this treasure" indwelling us is "the face of Jesus Christ", the presence of Christ, "the person of Christ". /When we turn our heart to the Lord, we are beholding the Lord Spirit as the presence of Christ in our spirit, and we are "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18) /To behold the glory of the Lord is to see the Lord ourselves; to reflect the glory of the Lord is to enable others to see Him through us.

CP1: God created man as a vessel to contain God.

As believers, we need to be open vessels

Jeremiah 18:6 Am I not able to do with you, O house of Israel, as this potter does? declares Jehovah. Indeed, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so you are in My hand, O house of Israel. **Acts 9:15** ...This man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. **Eph. 3:19** ...That you may be filled unto all the fullness of God. **OL1:** God as our sovereign Potter has absolute right over us as His pottery; it is crucial that we see a vision of God's sovereignty. **OL2:** The basic teaching of the whole Scripture is simply this: God is the very content, and we are the containers made to receive the content; we must contain God and be filled with God so that we can be vessels unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work. **OL3:** In His sovereignty God as our Potter has the authority to make the ones whom He has selected and called to be vessels of mercy unto honor and glory.

All spiritual progress begins when God initiates a good work in a person through the Holy Spirit by creating a longing within....The Holy Spirit makes us feel that our present condition is wrong and that our spiritual life is too shallow. The first work of the Holy Spirit is to give us a sense of dissatisfaction and to create in us a desire to be better....This is the beginning of spiritual progress. Putting it another way, all failure and decadence is the result of self-complacency. ...Our feelings of dissatisfaction with ourselves indicate that the Holy Spirit has begun His work in us and that it is the time for us to go forward....Decadence comes from self-complacency, whereas progress comes from hunger. This is a fact, and it is true throughout our Christian life. Invariably the Holy Spirit first creates a desire in us for more, and then God comes in to satisfy us and fill us.

Application to new ones, Youth/College students

First, you, as a creature, need to realize the sovereignty of God the Creator and make Him God. **Rom. 1:20** For the invisible things of Him, both His eternal power and divine characteristics, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being perceived by the things made, so that they would be without excuse; **21** Because though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or thank Him, but rather became vain in their reasonings, and their heart, lacking understanding, was darkened. **25** Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Second, you should know you are created as a vessel to contain God. **Romans 9:23** In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory, If we do not contain God and know God as our content, we are a senseless contradiction. Recently, a number of famous actors and actresses have committed suicide one after the other.

They were successful in their work, but unfortunately, they felt inconsistent and empty in their lives because they didn't know that man is a vessel for God to enter.

Third, you should call upon the name of Jesus. After the revelation in Romans 9 that we are God's vessels, it reveals in chapter 10 how to fill the vessels with the Lord. **Rom. 10:12** For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;

Fourth, you as God's vessel need to be continually open to God. The summary of Paul's fourteen epistles is "open vessels". The degree to which God can dispense Himself into us depends on the degree of our openness; Decline starts from self-complacency; progress starts from hunger and thirst. You must never fall into self-complacency. The Lord supplies the Spirit without limit, so you need to be continually open. **John 3:34** For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for He gives the Spirit not by measure. For example, during your midterm exam, you called upon the name of the Lord and studied with Him and your grades went up a bit. You were happy and praised the Lord. But you were so satisfied with your little blessing that you forgot the Lord during the final exam and didn't pray very seriously. In other words, you were open to the Lord during midterm exam, but during final exam, you closed to the Lord and your grades dropped. The cause of this failure is self-complacency. God unlimitedly supplies the Spirit and you will be blessed infinitely, so no matter what happened you need to be open all the time.

Before your Christian life began, The Lord sanctified you before you were formed in the womb. It is for you to be a prophet who speak the word of God. To speak the word of God, you must be an open listener. You should not use your youth as an excuse to reject His commission. **Jeremiah 1:5** Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; And before you came forth from the womb, I sanctified you. I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations. **6** Then I said, Alas, Lord Jehovah! Indeed, I do not know how to speak, For I am a youth. **7** But Jehovah said to me, Do not say, I am a youth; For everywhere I send you, you shall go; And everything I command you, you shall speak. **8** Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you, declares Jehovah. Furthermore, you should not rely on people to seek blessings from them. In order to continually receive His blessing, you should train yourself to continually rely on God and be you're your entire being to Him every day for your whole life.

Prayer: "Oh Lord Jesus, I learn from my youth to recognize the sovereignty of God who is the Creator and to make Him God in all things. I was created as a vessel to contain God. I call upon the name of Lord and desire to be filled with the Lord. Oh, Lord, make me an open vessel. Don't let me fall into self-complacency, but always keep me open to You and make me a prophet who speak the word of God, even in my youth. Amen!"

CP2: Not trusting self-effort, but bear responsibility properly by seeing God's mercy

Eph. 2:1 And you, though dead in your offenses and sins. **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us. **OL1:** "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy"... So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy"—Rom. 9:15a, 16. **OL2:** If we know God's mercy, we will neither trust in our effort nor be disappointed by our failures; the hope for our wretched condition is in God's mercy. **OL3:** Romans 9 reveals the principle that everything depends on God's mercy. There must be at least one time when we see God's mercy and definitely touch His mercy.

Often, because of our pitiful condition, we need to receive mercy before we can find grace. We come to the throne of grace like beggars, in somewhat the same condition as was the prodigal son when he came to his father. A beggar, like the prodigal, needs mercy. When we come to the throne of grace, we may have the sense that we are pitiful and say, "Father, I am not worthy of anything." But the Father may say, "You are unworthy, but I am merciful. My mercy reaches you and qualifies you to receive my favor. My mercy brings Me to you that I may clothe you with the best robe." God's mercy is always available to us.

Through many years of experience I have become strongly and deeply convinced that everything that happens to us is of God's mercy. All is a matter of God's mercy. The more we see this, the more we shall spontaneously bear our responsibility before the Lord. However, even the bearing of responsibility is of God's mercy. Why is it that some believers are willing to bear their responsibility and that others are not? The answer lies in God's mercy.

Regarding His recovery, God has mercy on whom He will have mercy. We are not in the Lord's recovery because we are more intelligent than others or because we seek the Lord more than others do. Our being here is altogether due to the mercy of God. If you consider how the Lord brought you into the church life in the Lord's recovery, you will worship Him for His mercy. Concerning the gospel, the ministry of life, and the church life, God has had mercy on us. How we must praise Him for His sovereign mercy, and worship Him for His mercy!

Application to business person/graduate student
Lam. 3:22 It is Jehovah's lovingkindness that we are not consumed, for His compassions do not fail;

Your working or researching here right now is because of God's mercy. Do not be proud and say that what you are now is by your hard work. **1Cor. 15:10** But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me did not turn out to be in vain, but, on the contrary, I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me. If you say "I am what I am by my hard work", it is clearly different from what Paul

testified. Paul had labored more than anybody but he said it was God's grace and not him. Please recognize that if the Lord limits His mercy toward you even a little bit, there won't be what you are now. For example, you might pass a difficult exam. Or you might get promoted at your company. You might have worked hard for that, but without God's mercy, there wouldn't be your favorite questions on the exam, or your boss might have given promotion to someone else and not you. If without rain from heaven, no matter how hard the farmer works, all the labor would be in vain. In the same way, however good you tried, if without God's grace and mercy, every labor would be in vain. Moreover, it is also Lord's mercy that you could labor.

Stanza 2 and 3 of hymn 296 says;

2. 'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies! Who can explore His strange design? In vain the firstborn seraph tries to sound the depths of love Divine! 'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore, let angel minds inquire no more.

3. He left His Father's throne above, so free, so infinite His grace; Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race: 'Tis mercy all, immense and free; For, O my God, it found out me.

Therefore, what you are now is totally by the mercy of God. Thank and praise for God's mercy.

Brother's testimony: "When I joined brother Lee's fulltime training in Taipei, in the beginning, I thought that I could join the training because my consecration was good. But within less than one month, I wanted to go back to Japan because I couldn't speak Chinese. I was a team leader but since I couldn't handle Chinese, when the team members asked me, I even didn't understand what they were asking about and I felt miserable every day. I was often complaining to the Lord saying "I was bit useful in Japan but no use in Taiwan." And I was trying to ask permission to quit team leader. But before asking, I thought I would better to fellowship with the Lord first and started complaining to the Lord. Strangely, as I complained, the Lord enlightened me and I touched the Lord's love and mercy and tear came up. And I realized that my consecration and my joining to the training were all by God's mercy. And I confess my sin of being proud and of unbelief. In this way, I was filled with the Holy Spirit and preached the gospel and many got saved. By God's mercy, I could complete two-year full time training in Taiwan. I thank and praise God's mercy from bottom of my heart. Amen!"

Prayer: "Oh Lord Jesus, my present research, job and family are all due to God's mercy. It is not that I was good that I was saved and remain in the church life. Everything is by God's mercy. The more I see God's mercy, the more I would humble myself before the Lord and bear my responsibility as a business person and responsibility in the church life and family life. Praise the Lord for God's mercy. Amen!"

CPE: By personal and intimate fellowship with the Lord, turn your heart to the Lord, take away the ideas, and looks at the glorious Lord.

Rom. 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory. **2 Cor. 3:16** But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. **18** But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit. **OL1:** "Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help" (Heb. 4:16).

OL2: We were created to be vessels of mercy unto honor to contain Christ as the God of honor so that we may honor God and men. Vessels unto honor are those who honor God by living and walking by the Spirit and those who honor men by ministering the Spirit to them.

OL3: We have this treasure, Christ as the God of glory, dwelling within us, the earthen vessels; "this treasure" indwelling us is "the face of Jesus Christ", the presence of Christ, "the person of Christ". **OL4:** When we turn our heart to the Lord, we are beholding the Lord Spirit as the presence of Christ in our spirit, and we are "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory..." (2 Cor. 3:18). To reflect the glory of the Lord is to enable others to see Him through us.

If we look back upon our past, we shall worship the Lord. We shall realize that our steps have been not of ourselves, but of Him. Before we were born, He selected us and predestinated us and arranged everything related to us, including the time and place of our birth. Moreover, He appointed all our days and all the places where we are to beEverything that happens to us is a matter of divine mercy.

In the whole universe there is nothing so precious as to behold the face of Jesus. This is something of personal experience and enjoyment. The more we live in His presence, the more sense we will have of the preciousness of Jesus. This is just the enjoyment of His indwelling. ...If we would all learn to forsake our old person, taking Him as our person by looking at the index of His face while enjoying His presence, we would have a sweet sense of the preciousness of the indwelling Jesus. This would make us so shining, a shining which is the reflecting of His glory. I can assure you that if you ever have this kind of experience, others will see how shining you are. It is not that you are merely happy, but you are shining. Something from within shines out, and that is the reflection of Jesus. This was Paul's experience of the indwelling Christ.

Application to the serving ones

As a minister of the new covenant, based on the revelation of 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, you should have an intimate fellowship with the Lord. This fellowship will be explained in three categories.

First, open your heart and have an intimate, private,

personal, and affectionate fellowship with the Lord. At first, you may come to the Lord and fellowship on your own theme. For example, (1) "Lord, I don't know why such a boss is above me, but I open to you. I don't think I've learned much about what I need to learn in this environment. Lord, please help me!" (2) "I'm worried about my spouse. Why can't my spouse be saved sooner? Please save my spouse as soon as possible!" (3) "I still don't know how to have an intimate relationship with you. Lord, please have mercy on me!" (4) "Lord, I have been called to the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I feel that my fellowship with the Lord is so superficial that I haven't been blessed very much. Lord, save me from the lukewarm situation!" etc. You should come to the Lord as you are, open to the Lord and fellowship with Him honestly. Never pretend to fellowship religiously and spiritually. Simply fellowship with the Lord as you are.

Second, confess your sin as soon as you are enlightened by the Lord in your fellowship with the Lord. When you confess your sin, you are filled with the spirit. At this time, your heart will gradually turn to the Lord and the veil of your concept will be taken away, and you will be able to look at the glory of the Lord. For example, when serving, you should not choose a partner or a new one according to your fixed concept. With your heart turned to the Lord and the concept taken away, the Spirit can anoint and bless your service.

Third, when the veil of concept is taken away, the Spirit speaks the word of God to you. And you will know the will of God. Jeremiah and Daniel prayed as soon as they understood the will. This prayer is the prayer of the incense altar, and the prayer of carrying out God's economy. You must reach the prayer of the incense altar with the intimate fellowship with the Lord.

Bro. Ed chose hymn 784 in the first message of this year's Memorial Day conference, "A TIMELY WORD CONCERNING THE WORLD SITUATION AND THE LORD'S RECOVERY." That is because the basic requirement to understand the Lord's move behind the world situation of Coronavirus and serve is the intimate fellowship with Him.

1 Pray to fellowship with Jesus, In the spirit seek His face; Ask and listen in His presence, Waiting in the secret place. (C)

Pray to fellowship with Jesus, In the spirit seek His face; Ask and listen in His presence, Waiting in the secret place.

2 Pray to fellowship with Jesus, Fully opened from within, With thy face unveiled, beholding, Single, pure, and genuine.

4 Pray to fellowship with Jesus, Speaking nothing in pretense; Ask according to the spirit, Praying by the inner sense.

5 Pray to fellowship with Jesus, List'ning earnestly to Him; Be impressed with His intentions, Yielding to Him from within.

Prayer: "Oh Lord Jesus, I open my heart and want to have an intimate fellowship with the Lord so that I can be filled with the Lord as a vessel to contain God. Always learn to be honest with the Lord. As soon as I confess sins enlightened in the fellowship with the Lord, I will be filled with the Spirit. Let me turn my heart to the Lord, remove my concept which is the veil, look at the glory of the Lord, and let my service be anointed. Let me open to the speaking of the Spirit and pray for the will. Amen!"