

*The*

POTTER'S  
HOUSE



*Wallace H. Heflin, Jr.*



**The  
Potter's  
House**



**The  
Potter's  
House**

**by**

**Wallace H. Heflin, Jr.**

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*The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.*

*Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.*

*And 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.*

*Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,*

*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, O house of Israel.*

*At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;*

*If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*

*And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;*

*If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.*

*Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.*

**Jeremiah 18:1-11**



# Introduction

Way back in 1970, I had the privilege of visiting a potter's house in Kota, India. That visit made such a great impact on my life that I have never been the same since. As I watched the potter at work and listened to him describe the processes through which the clay is taken — from the difficult job of digging the raw material out of the earth, to applying the finishing touches — I could see the hand of God at work.

In subsequent days, as I read God's Word describing Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house, I realized just how much we still needed to learn, just how much perfecting was still necessary in our lives. God is the Master Potter and He desires to make something beautiful of each of us.

Of course, this was not a new revelation. Now, however, I understood more about the process and also understood that it could not be quickly accomplished. A long series of processes for acquiring the clay, cleansing it, preparing it, separating it, forming it, perfecting it, firing it and beautifying it was necessary to bring forth the final product that only God could visualize.

All of this helped me to understand why sometimes we feel that nothing is happening in our spiritual lives and why we are not always experiencing the same things as others. We are probably just in different stages of the Master's work. Each of the processes He requires us to pass through is different, and yet each is necessary to the final beauty and perfection of the vessel He wants to create.

When you have finished reading this book, I want you to be able to say, "God is working on me. He has me on His wheel, and He is changing me into something beautiful."

The cry of my heart through the years has been to be the vessel that God could use, and I believe you feel the same way. We just need to identify what God is doing in us and then cooperate with Him to make the process less painful and more productive.

The words of Jeremiah from the potter's house of his day show us that God can change a nation in an "instant," and if He can change a whole nation in an instant, He can change you, and He can change me. Let us now take a little trip together — to *The Potter's House*.

Wallace H. Heflin, Jr.  
Ashland, Virginia, 1989



*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.*

Jeremiah 18:6

## Chapter One

# What Is the Potter's House?

*There I will cause thee to hear my words.*

Jeremiah 18:2

God sent Jeremiah to the potter's house to reveal to him the work of the Master Potter. He wanted to show His prophet the processes necessary for the forming of a proper vessel, so that Jeremiah, in turn, could take the message to the people of Judah.

Thank God He hasn't changed. He is still speaking to men and women today and revealing Himself to them. And, thank God, there are still those who can hear God's voice. Many do not appear to be listening, but God hasn't stopped speaking.

If we keep our spiritual ears open, the Holy Ghost will speak to us in many ways throughout the day and even when we are sleeping. David re-

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ceived counsel from the Lord "*in the night seasons*" (Psalm 16:7).

For many years, a small Christian radio station here beside the camp was broadcasting twenty-four hours a day. Still, if I did not have a radio tuned in to that particular frequency, I couldn't hear their programs — even though they were broadcasting. God can speak to you wherever you are. Just begin to recognize the ways that He speaks, and get tuned in to His frequency.

God is ready to speak to every one of us. God will speak to you while you are cooking dinner, while you are mending a fence, while you are doing your homework or while you are driving down the road.

God is speaking in dreams and visions. He is speaking through His Word. He is also speaking through tongues and interpretation and other gifts of the Spirit. But more and more, God is speaking through His prophets. The ministry of the prophet has not come to an end. It is just now launching into a new phase, and God is looking for people He can use in this ministry.

You will never be a prophet until you first let God work in you and until you can hear His voice. Jesus said, "*My sheep hear my voice*" (John 10:27). We need to hear from God and be guided by His voice. We jump into things, and then we expect the Lord to bail us out if we get in trouble. If we would hear

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His voice more, we wouldn't be landing in so much trouble and needing to be bailed out.

The world doesn't need just another prophet, another preacher. The world needs to hear from someone who is in tune with God, someone who can say, "Thus saith the Lord."

Men won't always like what they hear. Jeremiah was thrown into prison when he delivered his message. The king preferred the message of the false prophets to the truth of God. But Jeremiah didn't compromise. When the king sent servants to the dungeon to ask Jeremiah one day, "Is there any message from God?" Jeremiah answered back, "Yes, the same message I already gave you" (see Jeremiah 21). God doesn't change His mind.

It costs something to be a prophet. It costs something to be a man or woman of God. It costs something to stand for righteousness and purity and holiness. It costs something to walk this old-fashioned way. It costs something to stand for right and against wrong. If you are willing to pay that price, God is ready to speak to you and call you up higher.

### **"Arise!"**

First, God told Jeremiah to "*arise*." You will never have the full revelation of what God has for you until you arise from the position you are in. In fact,

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you cannot receive any greater revelation than you have right now until you come up higher.

We don't understand sometimes why others hear from God and get such great revelations. It's because they have moved forward in God. When God has given us all He can on one level of anointing, we must move on into a new depth in Him. He hasn't run out of revelation, but we must be enlarged if we expect to receive more.

"Is this scriptural?" someone may ask. Yes, it is. Jesus handpicked, called and anointed His disciples. They went out to work for Him. They preached, healed the sick, cast out demons and prepared the way for His entrance into all the villages. Yet in John 16:12-13, He said to them:

*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.*

There are many different levels of revelation. God speaks to us according to the depth we have reached in Him. When Jesus said to those who were following Him, "*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*" (John 6:53), they answered, "*This is an hard saying; who can hear it?*" (verse 60). The Scriptures record, "*From*



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*that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him"* (verse 66). Those disciples could not receive the greater revelation Jesus was trying to give them because of the current level of their spiritual commitment.

The writer of Hebrews stated:

*When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.*

Hebrews 5:12

"Arise," the writer was saying, "come up higher. Move into a new level. You've been in that present level long enough." Yes, it's time to move on and grow up in God. When we take a new step in God, He gives us greater truths, deeper revelations, and we are enlarged. It can only happen if we arise and move forward.

The closer we get to Heaven, the more God is revealing to us about the glories of that place. We know more about Heaven now than was known two or three hundred years ago. This is not to say that God wasn't revealing His secrets in those days. He was, but He was doing it in measure. We still see "*through a glass, darkly*" (1 Corinthians 13:12), but the closer we get to Home, the clearer our vision will become.

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A bridegroom who plans to take his bride to some other place to live will, as the time grows near, begin to tell her more and more about her new home. If he plans to move to North Carolina, for example, he begins to tell her about hush puppies, barbecue, corn bread and grits. A man who will soon return to Virginia with his bride begins to tell her about country fried chicken and Virginia ham.

The Heavenly Bridegroom is revealing to His Bride mysteries that have been hidden in ages past. The scales are being removed from our eyes so that we might see the greater things that God is anxiously waiting to show us. These are the greatest days ever for the revelation of God, but there must be an enlargement in us so that we can contain the revelations He wants to give.

Paul told the Corinthians, "*But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 2:10). RISE UP! It's moving day.

Some might say, "I'm just a homebody. I don't like to go anywhere." Well, get ready to travel. God has another home waiting for us. We're on a journey. We are pilgrims and strangers here in this earth. We won't be staying here very long, so don't get too comfortable.

The children of Israel could have chosen to stay in Egypt. After all, Egypt was all they knew. It was home to them. But God told them to be ready when the trumpet sounded.

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The custom was to blow two blasts with a ram's horn, called a shofar. The first blast was a signal to take down the goatskin tent, pack up the utensils and make all the necessary preparations for travel. The second shofar sounded marching orders.

We are sounding the first trumpet announcing that we must get ready to move. We are going home. When the last trumpet sounds, there will be no more time to get ready. We will depart in an instant — if we are ready. Make up your mind to go. Arise! Now is the time.

Half of the joy of going somewhere is the journey itself. Some folks say, "Pray for me that I might endure." I'm not just enduring. I'm enjoying the trip. True, there are some mountains to climb and some valleys to cross, but I'm enjoying it all. I enjoy crossing the mountains just as much as I do the level places. Mountains are beautiful. And I want you to enjoy the journey too.

No one is forcing me to make this journey. I am not "peculiar" just because my church has legislated it that way. I'm in this way because I want to be in this way. I'm shouting the victory and enjoying the ride — all the way home. It's time. Arise and go!

## **Cross Over**

God told Joshua to arise and cross the Jordan River. He could have chosen to stay on the other

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side because it was more familiar to him. But if he had made that decision, he never would have possessed what was his. God told him, "Go over this Jordan" (Joshua 1:2), and it's time for you to cross over too.

God took the prophet Ezekiel by the hand and led him out into the waters. He got in up to his ankles, then up to his knees and then up to his loins. God wasn't measuring the waters. He knew how deep they were. He was measuring the prophet. The Spirit of God is taking us by the hand and leading us out into deeper waters. He loves to get us out into waters so deep that we can't touch bottom. He wants us to depend on Him.

God never leaves us alone in the deep water. He has promised:

*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

Hebrews 13:5

He will always be there for us.

It all begins when we arise and get moving. Many want to arise, but that's as far as they go. It's time to get moving for God.

When God sends us somewhere for His purposes, He has promised not only to be with us, but also that wherever we put the soles of our feet we may possess the land. He has anointed our feet, and

## **What Is the Potter's House?**

wherever we go we can claim the land we tread on for Him. How can you tread on lands for God if you don't first arise and go?

## **Stop Questioning God**

Jeremiah could have questioned God, "What can You tell me at the potter's house that You can't tell me here at home?" My visit to the potter's house was an exciting experience because I had never seen a real potter at work. In modern America, we bought our cookware and tableware at department stores. We had sophisticated cookware to choose from, like Revereware with its copper-clad bottoms and the waterless and greaseless cookware by West Bend Aluminum, Wear-Ever, Club Aluminum and many other manufacturers. But a visit to the potter's house was nothing new for Jeremiah. No doubt he had been to the potter's house many times and was familiar with what was done there. Every village had a potter, and the people of that day obtained their household vessels directly from the potter.

Still, Jeremiah didn't argue with God or question His judgment. He had learned, as we all should, that God has a purpose in everything He says and does. When He says, "Go," we need to start moving. And when He says, "Stay," we should not step

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one foot outside the door. If we can learn the secret of such divine direction, of allowing God to speak to us, we will all be much better off. Jeremiah knew this secret, so he arose and went to the potter's house.

What did God want to show Jeremiah at the potter's house? He wanted Jeremiah to see how the potter was working with the clay, so that he could understand the way God was working with the house of Israel. And in the same way that a potter works with the clay, so Jesus, the Master Potter, is working with each of us every day. The more pliable we are in His hands, the more quickly and easily He can make of us a vessel of honor for His glory. But we cannot shortcut the process. We must pass through every step, just like the clay Jeremiah saw being worked that day.

## **The House of God Is the Potter's House**

The house of God, the church, is, in many ways, the Potter's House for us today. When we go to church, we're going to the Potter's House to let the Master Potter form something new of us. Many churches do not encourage or permit the molding and fashioning of the Lord. No pressure is ever applied to the clay. We are made to feel "comfortable," nothing more. But God never intended for us

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to go in the door of the church and come back out unchanged. He wants to change us into His likeness and His image.

Without change, there can be no growth in God. Anything that isn't growing and changing is probably already dead. God wants to see His people grow. Not a single day should pass without some type of spiritual change in our lives. When you go to the House of God, let Him change you too.

## **Mrs. Potter, Meet the Potter**

I was preaching about the Potter's House one night in Australia, and I began by saying, "I want to take you folks down to the Potter's House so that the Lord can speak to you."

After the service, a man came to me and said, "We attend a different church, and we weren't planning to come here tonight. About five o'clock God told us to come. When you said that you were going to speak about the Potter's House, I knew that God was going to do something for my family. You see, our name is Potter. That's my wife over there and she isn't saved. She needs to get saved and filled with the Holy Ghost."

We went over to Mrs. Potter and laid hands on her, and she got saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. When the Potter children saw what was

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happening to their mother, they began to weep. They were filled with the Holy Ghost as well. God also filled a teenage girl whom they had brought with them.

Brother Potter had, until then, held an important position in the agricultural sector in Australia, but a few months later he and his family accompanied another minister to the mission fields of South Africa. The Potter household was changed when they all came to the Potter's House.

## **Daily**

We need to hear from God daily, not only when we are in church. We should be living so that He can speak to us just as specifically wherever we are — although we know He does special things “*where two or three are gathered together*” (Matthew 18:20). If we are only willing to listen, we will come to realize that the Lord is speaking to us just as He did to Jeremiah, “*Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.*”

Now, let us examine the process of perfection the Spirit of God is performing in our lives.



**The  
Process  
of  
Perfecting  
a Vessel**



## Chapter Two

# The Digging

*He brought me up also out of an horrible pit,  
out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a  
rock, and established my goings.*

Psalm 40:2

The potter knows his clay, and he knows what he can make if he has the right materials. He goes to great lengths to acquire the clay before he can even think of forming a vessel.

I saw the place where the Indian potter found the best clay. It was the backwaters of a river. The tides came in, bringing with them much debris. As the water receded, a deposit of debris — which eventually became very deep — was left on top of the clay. The potter had to free the clay from this prison. With great effort, he dug away the trash to discover the hidden treasure beneath.

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That clay didn't look very valuable to me. It didn't look worth the effort necessary to get it out. I might have said, "It's useless, worthless." Maybe someone has said that about you. But the Master Potter doesn't see you as you are, but as what you can become with His help.

Clay doesn't seem to be very cooperative with the potter either. The best clay produces a natural suction that resists every effort to pry it loose. It resists being separated from the rest of the clay. Our God patiently digs us out of the miry clay and establishes our feet upon the Rock. Isaiah said:

*Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.*                      Isaiah 51:1

God blesses us so much that sometimes we forget where we came from and the things we used to do. When we see someone else doing those things, we're not as sympathetic toward that one as we should be. We must remember the pit from which we have been dug.

Just as there is a suction to the miry clay, the devil has his hand on sinners and tries to hold them fast and not let them go. Drunkards who are on the verge of being salvaged sometimes go on their worst

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drunk just before they yield themselves to Christ. The enemy doesn't want to let them go. It is easier for teenagers (who have been in sin just a short time) to be delivered than it is for those who have been in sin for thirty-five or forty years. Those who have been bound longer are tied with many cords. Just a gentle prayer will not bring their deliverance. We need to fast and pray for them. As we do, one by one those bondages are broken, and a great release comes.

One sister in North Carolina prayed for twelve years for her husband to get saved. She began to wonder if God would ever save him, but she continued to pray. One day, as her husband came in the door from work, he said, "I want to get saved."

"What did you say?" she asked.

"I said I want to get saved," he repeated. "If you don't help me, I'm going to call Brother Heflin and make him come down here and help me." Her husband was saved, and she felt like she had been saved all over again.

Never give up on sinners; hold firm for them until the victory comes. It will come. I am a prime example, for I ran from God for twenty-nine years. My mother fasted a hundred and eight and a half days and my father fasted a hundred and ten days, both of them drinking only a little liquid, and praying for me day and night. One by one, those chains

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that were wrapped around me were broken, and I was brought up out of that horrible pit into which I had fallen.

When I finally got saved, Dad was on the ninetyeth day of his fast. He had made up his mind not to put another morsel of solid food in his mouth until I was free. That was a big order for his stubborn and rebellious son, but he was determined that I would not go to Hell. The Word of God assures us:

*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

James 5:16

My father himself was saved through the same kind of determined and persistent prayer. Mother fell in love with him before she ever knew him and before he came to the Lord. Some members of the church had asked that his name, Wallace Heflin, be put on the prayer list because he was a sinner and needed God. As Mother prayed for him every day, she began to sense the greatness of what God wanted to do through Wallace Heflin. And she prayed until he got saved and became a preacher of righteousness.

We Christians have the only Savior who goes out searching for the lost. That was His reason for coming into the world.

## **The Digging**

*For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save  
that which was lost.* Luke 19:10

In the false religions and false cults, it is the lost who must search after the religion. Hindu worshipers in India take pilgrimages of more than a thousand miles in search of the blessings of their gods. They neglect business and family to search for the truth. An annual pilgrimage is made to a lake formed by the Pushka River. They believe that bathing only once in that holy river can wash away all their sins. Thousands of them travel, carrying a few possessions and meager food supplies on their heads. As I watched them immerse themselves in the water, I could sense their expectancy. As they departed, however, another spirit was detected. Expectancy had given place to disappointment. Thank God that our Savior is the Good Shepherd who doesn't rest when most of the sheep are safe. He goes out into the night in search of the lost ones.

Our Lord is digging for treasure hidden by rubbish. He doesn't find it sitting in church. He finds it covered with the dregs of society. No matter how deep sinners are mired, He sees their potential and has a plan and purpose for each of them. He will go to whatever depths it is necessary to go to bring up the clay.

## **The Potter's House**

If God has gone to such lengths to find and dig us out, He must know something we don't know. He sees a value in us we haven't been able to see. He has a vision we have not yet glimpsed. He sees us, not as we are, but as we can become. Because only He has that vision, only He can form us into that perfected vessel. We are still nothing without Him, but with His help we can become something beautiful.

But it doesn't happen overnight. The process is just beginning.



## Chapter Three

# The Washing

*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood ... . Revelation 1:5*

After the potter had dug the clay from the river and transported it to his house, he began the cleansing process necessary to remove all the debris from it. He would rinse it many times before he was satisfied that all the pollution brought in by the tides was gone, and the clay was pure.

The world has left a deposit on our souls, and something has to be done to us to remove it. This is not something that we can do for ourselves, but God has made provision for our cleansing. The angel Gabriel said to Joseph:

*Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

Matthew 1:21

## **The Potter's House**

This was Jesus' purpose for coming to the earth; He is in the saving business.

Every single one of us must go through this same cleansing process. Even if you have been considered a kind, sweet and tender person, you need the same cleansing as the person who has plunged to the depths of sin. We are all sinners in God's sight.

My mother was saved when she was just a young girl and never knew what it was to be part of "the world." Once she was in Colonial Beach with my father conducting a revival meeting. Colonial Beach was known as "Little Reno" because of its casinos. The city's buildings projected out into the waters of Maryland because Maryland had open drinking and gambling, while Virginia did not. Mother decided that she wanted to see how "the other half lived."

After service was over one evening, she, along with my father and sister, walked up a ramp into one of those buildings. She saw the smoke-filled rooms with the one-armed bandits along one wall. She saw the drinking, the dancing and everything else that was going on there. And, because she had lived such a sheltered life, she couldn't believe what she was seeing. Mother had never known this type of atmosphere, and she wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible.

Although Mother had never been contaminated by "the world of sin," nevertheless, she had been a

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sinner and, as a child, recognized her need of Jesus as Savior. We all need to do it.

Thank God for the shed blood of Jesus. As the Scriptures declare:

*Without [the] shedding of blood [there] is no remission.* Hebrews 9:22

Christ came to save us *from* our sins. He washes our souls in His blood, and its cleansing and purifying power removes all the stains of sin.

There is a concerted effort in some Christian circles to avoid any mention of the blood of Jesus. Teaching on the blood is thought to promote a “slaughterhouse religion.” “That’s unnecessary,” skeptics say.

Some versions of the Bible have removed references to the blood, and some songs about the blood have been removed from many modern song books. Many Christian leaders no longer believe in the efficacy of the blood of the crucified Christ and its power to redeem sinners. They, like Cain, are offering to God a bloodless sacrifice.

But we still sing the old songs, such as:

*Would you be free from your burden of sin?  
There’s power in the blood, power in the blood.*

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*Would you o'er evil a victory win?  
There's wonderful power in the blood.*

*There is power, power, wonder-working power  
In the blood of the Lamb.*

*There is power, power, wonder-working power  
In the precious blood of the Lamb.*



*There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.*



*Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean.  
Oh, be washed in the blood of the Lamb.*

*Are you washed in the blood,  
In the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb?  
Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?*



*What can wash away my sin?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
What can make me whole again?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Oh! precious is the flow*

## **The Washing**

*That makes me white as snow;  
No other fount I know,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*



*Just as I am, without one plea  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,  
O, Lamb of God, I come!*

I have always loved to hear someone sing the song that says, “*Each drop of blood bought me a million years.*” Don’t ever be ashamed of the precious blood that redeemed us.

We agree that we don’t need the bulls, the heifers, or the turtle doves of the Old Testament. Animal sacrifice cannot take away the sins of the human race, but the precious blood of the only begotten Son of the Father has never lost its power. He was willing to leave the ivory palaces of glory that our souls might be delivered from the bondages of sin and that we might be like Him.

Many churches refuse to contend for old-fashioned salvation for their new converts, and, because they are anxious to count the numbers of new believers, time is not given for the blood to do its work. Often a sinner’s prayer is repeated, and the people go out the door to light up a cigarette and go on living the way they’ve always lived.

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The blood of Jesus has no chance to do its office work in them.

Another sad thing to me is to see some believers spending their time casting demons out of each other. A demon has no right to dwell in a blood-washed believer. What they're trying to cast out are the works of the flesh, and they should have been taken care of when the person got saved. It surely would have been done if they had allowed the cleansing of the Lord to take place in their lives. These teachings tend to make the experience God has given us of no effect. We must contend for the washing of the blood of Jesus. Peter called it "*the precious blood of Christ*" (1 Peter 1:19).

Everything we get from God is a direct result of His shedding that "*precious blood.*" We're not only saved by His blood, we are also healed by His blood, and we are sanctified by His blood. He was beaten with many stripes and wounded in many parts of His body. Blood flowed from those wounds so that you and I might have life and have it more abundantly. The Master Potter washes our souls with that blood, and the miracle of cleansing takes place, preparing the clay for something useful.

This washing in the blood will even make a drunkard sober. A man came into one of my services reeking so strongly of alcohol that everyone turned to see who had come in the door. He had needed to get drunk so that he could get up his

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nerve to go to church. As the service progressed, God drew him, and he went forward for prayer. We laid hands on him, and the Spirit of God began to wash him from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. He stood there weeping his way to Jesus. Then, suddenly, I realized I could no longer smell the alcohol, even when he blew his breath directly in my face. He was amazingly sober:

As the apostle Paul wrote:

*Old things are passed away; behold, all things  
are become new.*                      2 Corinthians 5:17

Jesus had washed that man and cleaned him up. When he went home, even his old dog was aware that something had happened to him that day. Never be ashamed of the fact that we believe in the redeeming power of “*the precious blood*” of Jesus.

My mother has always believed that none of the blood of Jesus was lost, that angels were present to catch it as it came from His hands, His feet, His side and His brow. I always felt she was right. Then, during a visit to Lisbon, Portugal, we were touring one of the famous museums. As we moved from one room to another, viewing the beautiful works of art, a large and ancient oil painting of the crucifixion caught my attention. It extended from the ceiling to the floor and was dated A.D. 1535. The artist who painted it had received a revelation

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from God. Under each hand he had painted an angel catching the blood of Jesus. Another angel was catching the blood from His side, and still another was catching the blood from His feet.

On the resurrection morning, Mary, seeing Jesus alive, wanted to touch Him, but He said to her:

*Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God*

John 20:17

Jesus then ascended into Heaven and took the blood, His own “*precious blood*,” and personally delivered it to the heavenly Tabernacle. Now, when the Father looks down upon us, He no longer sees us in our unrighteousness. He looks through the veil of the blood of His Son and sees us — on the other side of that blood — pure and holy, redeemed through that great sacrifice. How wonderful the experience! And how blessed we are that Jesus loved us enough to be willing to give Himself for our redemption! Thank You, Master Potter.

The apostle Paul experienced a total transformation when he met Christ. The things he had loved he now hated. His entire life was turned upside down. The message he had hated he now risked his life to preach. If we resist the cleansing process the



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Lord wants to use on our lives and insist on holding onto things of the flesh, we will be losers.

The day I got saved, I stayed on my knees weeping for more than an hour. I was so sorry for my sins. I suddenly saw my nothingness and God's righteousness. Deliverance came as His blood was applied to my heart. When I got up from my knees, I wanted to live a life committed to God.

When we serve the devil, we do everything he wants us to do. Why not feel the same way about Jesus? Let Him have all. Give Him your heart, your soul and your energies. Give the Master Potter a chance to work and prove what He can make of your life.

This still works. You don't have to keep smoking cigarettes, drinking whiskey, doing drugs, chasing the opposite sex and all the other things you used to do. When Jesus comes in, those desires go out. You are delivered by the power of Almighty God.

Just before I got saved, I was buying four packs of cigarettes a day. I smoked three of them and kept the fourth one to be sure I didn't run out in the middle of the night. Yes, I had become concerned about my health, and like so many, I was trying to cut back. So, I had begun smoking cigars and a pipe instead. But from the moment that Jesus came into my life, I have never desired another cigarette, another cigar or another pipe. Jesus lives in me, and He doesn't smoke.

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I have heard some professing Christians trying to explain away their bad habits by saying, "I haven't gotten sanctified yet." I'm wondering if they have even gotten saved. If Jesus is living in us, we should be taking on His nature. Can you imagine Him doing some of the things professing Christians are doing?

Across our country, many preachers are now having wine with their meals and are justifying it by saying, "It's all right because Jesus turned the water into wine." The apostle Paul said:

*For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.*

Galatians 2:18

When you return to sin, you become a sinner all over again. That means you need to go back to that fountain that Zechariah saw opened "to the house of David ... for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). Allow the Master Potter to wash you and cleanse you afresh and to make of you the vessel that God would have you to be.

During "the Jesus Movement" of the sixties, my sister, Ruth, and I were in California and witnessed a large gathering of young people drawn to that movement. Many of them were on the streets of Los Angeles "witnessing." Some were barefooted; the

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women wore tank tops; the men were long-haired and wearing the typical bands around their heads. Some of them were smoking openly. Yet they spent hours out there on the street every day “representing God.” Ruth sat there that afternoon and wept. All she could say was, “Jesus, You deserve better. Jesus, You deserve better than this to represent You. Jesus, You deserve better than this to represent You.”

What was happening? Those young people had been doing the drug scene. They were promoting free love. You name it, and they were doing it. But they were also genuinely looking for an answer, and Jesus was that answer. The church people that got involved in winning them, however, were so anxious to have good numbers that they didn’t present a standard to those new believers. They should have said, “This is what God requires. If you want what I have, this is the price you must pay.” Instead, they let the Jesus people go on living their ungodly lifestyle.

I personally believe those young people would have paid the price had they known what was required of them. They would have stayed under the fountain of the blood until a cleansing and purification had taken place — if they had only known there was more.

Those young people were zealous. While most preachers were afraid to preach the Second Com-

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ing of the Lord, news magazines were carrying pictures and accounts of the Jesus People with placards raised high declaring, *"Jesus is coming soon."*

In the end, the Jesus People didn't have what was necessary to remain faithful when the storms of persecution began to blow. It wasn't long before that great movement began to dissipate. Why? Because no one had the courage to say to them, "You must stay in God's presence long enough for the washing and the purifying of the Holy Ghost to take place in your soul."

Even many Pentecostal churches no longer allow the washing of the Word to take its course. As a result, they are not seeing what God's Spirit and power can produce from miry clay.

We must do something about the many people who go to church and invite Jesus into their hearts, then go back and live the same life they were living before. They sit in churches in that same condition and wonder why God isn't using them. I don't think they are entirely to blame. As leaders of God's people, we are responsible to see that such newcomers allow the blood to do its cleansing work.

God doesn't take everything away from us, as some believe. He cleanses what we have and redirects it for His glory. Peter was just as impetuous for the Lord as he had been in his former life. If you are energized for the devil, you can be a dynamo for God.

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The moment Jesus comes in and saves us there is a definite work of sanctification that takes place. The old desires, the cravings and the longings, go. However, that isn't the end of the Spirit working us over. He will also do a progressive work in our lives — if we let Him.

If God had required of me the day I was saved what He requires of me now, I wouldn't have been able to fulfill it. I have grown in grace, and that is a daily process. Paul wrote:

*I die daily.*

1 Corinthians 15:31

Peter wrote:

*Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* 2 Peter 3:18

Let God do a continuing work in you to prepare you for the things you will face in life.

Sanctification is such an important work. Not only does the blood sanctify, but the Father sanctifies, the Son sanctifies, the Holy Ghost sanctifies and the Word sanctifies. Nothing is left to chance. No area is left untouched. No weapon or tool is left unused in God's effort to make His people into treasured vessels.

Great quantities of water are used by the potter to get his clay clean and keep it clean. The presence of

## **The Potter's House**

debris would prevent him from forming a proper vessel. All contamination must go, so let the Master Potter wash you well.

Often we act as though the washing, the cleansing, is the last step, but this is just the beginning. Some churches preach nothing else. If you attend their services, you get fifty-seven varieties of salvation served, but nothing else. This is just one step toward maturity. Salvation is just a key that unlocks the treasures of God. This is only an open door. Now, we must enter. This is only the beginning of what God has in store for us. There is certainly nothing wrong with preaching salvation, but there is so much more that needs to be preached.

Many people want to stop with the washing because nothing much is expected of them. They have fewer problems, fewer challenges. Many people have never been persecuted, and they like it that way. Many have never borne a burden, and that's just fine with them.

But just because you are washed doesn't make you a useful vessel. Don't be satisfied just to be clean. God wants to form you and perfect you and use you. Move on to other steps in the process of spiritual perfection.

## Chapter Four

# The Drying

*Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

Romans 8:21

After we are cleansed, there is a period in which the Lord leaves us for a time to dry out. We simply bask in the sun as it were, enjoying “the glorious liberty.” It is a wonderful period, and we hate for it to end. Salvation is wonderful! Everything is new and right with the world! We love everybody! If we don’t move beyond this stage, however, we will never be the majestic vessels the Lord envisions. Get ready. Problems are coming your way, and they are coming for your benefit.

We often leave new converts in this drying-out stage. We are so happy they have been cleansed that we forget they are not yet mature. They are not

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strong yet. They are not formed yet. They are not useful vessels yet. Clay that is washed is just wet clay. If something is not done with that clay, what good does it do? The process is only beginning. This is not the end.

A new believer may be forty-five years old, but he is just a babe, and all new believers are in a very vulnerable stage. We cannot leave them to fend for themselves. If an infant is abandoned at birth, it will die within a very short period of time. The spiritual life isn't any different. Spiritual infants have been born again, but they need constant care.

And not much can be expected of infants. They eat, they sleep, they love to cuddle in Mother's arms, but they don't do much else. They need time to mature, and they must be nurtured. They have all the attributes of a complete individual, but much of it is promise, not reality.

New believers testify with fervor. They have great joy and great love, but they have a lot of sorting out still to do. Their knowledge is extremely limited, and they are also limited as to how much they can accomplish. We must protect them during this time. God has ordained us to go forth and "*bring forth fruit*" and that our "*fruit should remain*" (John 15:16). We have a responsibility to see that His fruit is not lost.



## **The Drying**

God does not dig us from the miry clay and wash us just so we can be saved and, on our way to Heaven. He saves us that we might be of service. He has only our hands and our feet and our mouths to be extensions of Himself and do the work that He started when He was here. All the steps He puts us through are for the purpose of preparing us to be greater servants in His Kingdom. Some of the steps are painful, but necessary. The Potter always knows best.

As Christians, we are never really satisfied unless we are giving ourselves to God in service. Clay which has not become a useful vessel is just clay. People who have the most emotional problems are those who shut themselves in and never give of themselves. When we are giving of ourselves to others, we see that many people have greater problems than we do. The whole process that the Potter puts the clay through is not a punishment to the clay. His desire is for the clay to fulfill its potential.

Many of us are satisfied to stay in the drying-out stage. When things start to go wrong, we are almost convinced that we have lost something, that we have backslidden. We are not anxious to submit ourselves to the mixing, the molding, the firing, the adorning, etc., but God is anxious to get on with the perfecting of the vessel. He will begin just as soon

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as the clay can stand it. Everything He is about to do is for the good of the clay, and one of the most difficult steps on the road to perfection is about to begin — the beating.

## Chapter Five

# The Beating

*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Corinthians 4:17*

When the clay is completely dry, the potter places it on a table and, using a long, flat stick, begins to beat it. With great care he dug it out, and with great care he cleansed it; now, however, he beats it mercilessly. This process is not done just for the potter's enjoyment. He must remove all of the lumps from the clay, for he cannot mold clay that is filled with lumps.

In a similar way, a brick mason cannot work with lumpy mortar. Lumps will throw his work off and cause him to waste valuable time. Come to think of it, none of us like lumps. Who likes to eat lumpy mashed potatoes? Who likes to sleep in a lumpy bed? Lumpy things are not pleasant, and God has

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to get the lumps out of you and me to make us into something pleasant.

The other reason the potter beats the clay is that certain impurities are hidden deep within and only become apparent or come to the surface during the beating process. As he beats the dried clay, he finds these impurities — small pebbles, sticks and trash. As he encounters such things, he carefully lifts them out and throws them aside. Then he continues his beating.

If the potter is unconcerned about the quality of the vessels he will produce, he may shorten this step. But if he is commissioned to produce the most exquisite containers possible, the beating process will actually be lengthened. Nothing must hinder the process of perfecting the vessel.

The drying-out period seemed wonderful, and everything seemed to be going our way. We had the world on a string. House payments and car payments came in days ahead of time. We wished we had known all along how great salvation was. But when the drying-out period has ended, the “fun” begins. The enemy comes along with his trials and tribulations, some of the sticks God uses to beat the lumps out of our lives.

Just because you got saved doesn't mean you are perfect. Most of us have a long way to go. There is much in us that is not pleasing to the Potter. Jesus said:

## **The Beating**

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Matthew 5:48

When Jesus said this, He was setting a goal for us, an ideal. It may take us a long time to fully attain that goal.

His Word tells us:

*Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.*

Hebrews 6:1-3

There is nothing wrong with foundational truths, but we need to go on to other things. And we can't do that in a day. It takes time. It's all part of the process.

The Lord helps us to mature by showing us things that must be laid aside and changed. We hear Him saying things like, "I don't want you to do *that* anymore." "I don't want you to wear *that* anymore." "I don't want you to say *that* anymore." "I want you to start doing *this*."

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It hurts to see how many lumps we have, and it would be easier to be less than perfect. But if you choose to remain imperfect, you will never be the vessel God wants. You will tie the hands of God, so that He cannot use you as He intended. If the Lord is working on you, it means that He loves you. Again, His Word tells us:

*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

Hebrews 12:6

Don't resist the Lord's work. Thank Him for what He is doing to perfect you — however painful it may be.

The Master Potter is not satisfied simply to get out the lumps. He beats the clay until it becomes a fine powder, the finer the better. And the finer the powder becomes, the more easily impurities can be detected and removed. Isn't this just the way the Master Potter works with us?

The beatings we undergo don't seem pleasant to us at the time, but they do refine us and make us fit for forming into a vessel of honor. None of us like to be beaten, but the longer we resist, the longer it takes to become material God can use. The quicker we respond to the beating, the less beating it takes

## **The Beating**

to prepare us. How long do we have to be beaten? As long as lumps remain.

We always think it's the devil who's beating us, and sometimes it is — but only with the Lord's permission. The devil cannot touch us unless God foresees that what the enemy is doing will work something good in us. The Potter may occasionally permit someone else to beat the clay, but He always oversees the work to be sure it is being done correctly.

Someone in your family may be beating you; your spouse may even be beating you; but God is permitting it to happen. He is perfecting His Bride. When He finds in us the pebbles and the lumps, He must remove them ever so lovingly so that we can be perfected in Him. Then, He keeps working on us until the hardness of our spirits is removed.

Even preachers can be guilty of having a hard spirit. Some evangelists have such a hardness in their spirits that people cannot receive from them; the compassion of Christ isn't there. They want to minister to people quickly so they can go home. When we are moved with compassion and a person stands before us for prayer, often they are healed before we even touch them. God anoints a soft spirit. When there is hardness in the spirit of the minister, the persons being ministered to can sense it. They know that you don't really care about

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them, that you want to hurry and get rid of them so you can pray for someone else.

Sometimes, even when great miracles are happening in a service, we get tired and begin to rush things, and the needs of the people are not met. We can't rush God. We have to wait upon Him, and let the anointing flow. When we do, the needs are met and those same people are not back in the prayer line in the next service.

Many people who want to serve the Lord cannot do so because they have such a hard spirit. Our Lord wants us to be more like Him. He brings pressure to bear on us and sends (or permits the devil to send) trials our way to bring us into a state of spiritual tenderness.

Some of us don't want others to know there is a tender side of us. But why should we not want this? Christ was tender and compassionate. The writer of Hebrews declares:

*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

Hebrews 4:15

If Christ's compassion is to flow through us, our spirits must change. We must be able to feel the needs of others and feel the responsibility to meet those needs.



## The Beating

Some ministers who once had a powerful anointing seem to have become ineffective in meeting the needs of the people. They arrive at a service just in time to minister and leave as soon as they have finished. Others, after they have become successful, turn to answering services and unlisted telephone numbers so that no one can reach them. They thus make themselves inaccessible to the very people who need their ministry. One good friend, a well-known national evangelist, is wonderful in this regard. It never matters to him how many hours he has been praying for people or how tired he is; he always greets those who approach him as though they were long-lost relatives.

We must never get so busy and pressured that we allow ourselves to become untouchable. Don't give place to that hardness of spirit. If you do, it will hinder the compassion of Christ from flowing out of you to meet the needs of God's people. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

*I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.*  
1 Corinthians 9:27

This doesn't mean that Paul was in danger of losing his salvation. It means that God wouldn't have used him anymore.

## The Potter's House

We must always remember that wherever we go, we represent the Lord. We are vessels that contain His anointing; we are not our own. Therefore, we must let Him continue His work in us until He is satisfied that we are vessels on which He can place His stamp of approval.

My mother has often said, "Son, you have to win them to yourself before you can win them to Christ." It is true. I must be like Him.

This process is so much easier if we volunteer ourselves to be worked over. The Word of God says:

*And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*                      Matthew 21:44

The quicker we become submissive and let God break our headstrong wills, the sooner His desires will come forth. He is more anxious than we are to stop the beatings and get on with the process of perfecting a glorious vessel. He knows what He can make of us, but He cannot stop the beating until we have developed the required softness.

## Chapter Six

# The Sifting

*I will sift the house of Israel among all nations,  
like as corn is sifted in a sieve.      Amos 9:9*

*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to  
have you, that he may sift you as wheat.*

Luke 22:31

When the clay was pulverized sufficiently, the potter began to sift it through a very fine screen. Some elements, though quite small, would not pass through the screen. If they were impurities, the potter cast them aside. If, however, they were simply lumps that had not yet been worked out, they were placed back on the table for more beating.

Why didn't the potter just throw these lumps away? He knew their value. This clay was purchased with a great price. It was valuable. It was not to be tossed aside lightly. Every opportunity

## **The Potter's House**

must be given to the clay to produce. He put it back on the table and beat it some more.

We often think that we have been beaten and worked over until there could not possibly be any more lumps left in us, but when the sifting begins, more undesirable elements are detected. And when this happens, we must go back to the Potter's table for more treatment.

Some of us have been beaten the second time and the third time. The next time, our trial may come in another package with different wrapping, but it is essentially the same test we failed to pass the first time.

One sister who was injured in an accident for the second time wondered what she had failed to get out of her spirit the first time. She prayed, "God, whatever You have to do, work me over now. Don't ever let me go through this again."

Horse trainers have a variety of bits they can use, according to the nature and progress of each particular animal. When a horse is stubborn and rebellious and insists on his own will, his handler will use a bit that seems to nearly cut into the horse's mouth when he pulls on the reins. After the horse has become submissive and obedient, that harsh bit can be replaced by a much gentler one. The trained horse barely feels the presence of such a bit in his mouth, yet he responds at the slightest touch of the reins.

## **The Sifting**

That's the way God wants us to be. He doesn't enjoy being harsh with us. He has something glorious in store for us. But if we are unfit for His plan, what choice does He have? In love, He must be firm with us when firmness is required, although He would prefer gentleness.

This process is not as difficult to endure as many might think. If we can just surrender and let the Master Potter do His work, it become much easier to bear. The process becomes difficult when we are resisting, when we are not sure that we want to forsake all and to be fully separated from the world.

There are certain elements of the world that some believers might still love and not want to give up, and this is making the Potter's work hard. But when we jump in on God's side with both feet and cease to resist His workings in us, then the blessings come, and with them, unspeakable joys.

There are realms in the Spirit that we will never enter if we insist on taking the things of the flesh with us. God won't permit it. We will forever remain on the threshold of greatness if we are determined to hold on to the things of the world. They will not pass through the scrutiny of the anointing of God and into the place of authority in Him.

God is more anxious than we are to get past this beating and sifting process. He has something wonderful in mind for us. He will not prolong this process any longer than is absolutely necessary.

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This process is not an end in itself; it is just part of the larger picture. No father ever enjoys spanking his children, and we are all glad when they become mature enough that they no longer need it. God is molding us into glorious vessels. Don't ever lose sight of that fact.

Did you ever notice that God knows where the tender spots are? Just like a chiropractor probing for that sore spot, the Lord finds your "sore spot" and works on it. You cry out in pain. You would prefer that He not deal with that particular area, but He must. That's where the problem is. Let Him put you back on the table and get you ready for a glorious future as one of His chosen vessels.

"Do I have to go through all this?" you ask. No, you don't have to; you can be a wallflower if you want. You can just sit where you are if you want. As for me, I want to be a vessel of honor used by God. You'll have to make your own choice. He won't force you to do it, but this is a privilege you cannot afford to let pass.

## Chapter Seven

# The Mixing

*For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* Hebrews 4:2

After the clay was completely pulverized, I saw the potter take some straw and some water and begin mixing them with the powdery clay. The straw speaks of strength, and the water speaks of the Spirit. There are many applications of this truth.

The Godhead is made up of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. As the Word of God tells us:

*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* 1 John 5:7-8

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We are also made up of body, soul and spirit. We are a mixture of many ingredients in God. If we get too much of the Word and not enough of the Spirit, we get lopsided. We need to be balanced Christians. Don't go off on spiritual tangents. Get your feet rooted and grounded in the Word of God. Then, if anything comes along that is contrary to that Word, you will know that it is not of God. And when you do things according to the Word of God, you will find yourself in perfect order, and the blessings of the Lord will rest upon your life.

Without the straw, the clay would be weak. Without the water, it would have no unity. We need a proper balance. The potter was very careful not to put too much or too little straw and not to put too much or too little water. If the mixture was too dry, it would not knit together. The water brings unity.

On the other hand, anyone who has mixed mortar for block or brick laying knows that if you get too much water with the cement and the sand, you have soup that is impossible to work with. Too much water weakens the mix. Just the right mixture of cement, sand and water makes a strong bond for any application. If you go one step further and add stone chips to that mix, you come up with a material, concrete, that is so hard you need a jack-hammer to break it up.



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If there is too much water in the concrete, it takes too long to set up. With the correct moisture content, it sets up so fast it nearly kills us amateurs trying to finish it. The right mixture is needed. We need a proper balance of doctrine, a proper balance of experience and a proper balance in the Spirit.

When the potter was satisfied that the mixture was correct, he began to methodically knead the lump of clay. It reminded me of a woman making bread. I didn't fully understand what he was doing. I had thought it was just a matter of putting the right things together, but it was much more than that.

Long after it looked to me as though the clay was well mixed, the potter continued to work with it. As his hands carefully probed each part of the lump again and again, he was working out the air bubbles. If any air bubbles were left, he told me, the pot would explode when it was placed in the fire and would destroy not only itself, but other vessels that were with it in the oven as well.

There is a whole lot of hot air or bubbles (hypocrisy, pride, etc.) in some Christians today, and the Holy Ghost is trying to work it out. We are not alarmed by its presence because we don't understand the dangers it poses. But the Master Potter is determined to get this out of us so that the final result will not be disastrous.

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Some believers are so puffed up that they walk around with a chip on their shoulders, daring anyone to knock it off. They go to church looking for a fight. I saw a plaque on one of my trips to Australia that said, "A chip on the shoulder is a sign there's more wood a little higher up."

The Holy Ghost is bursting many of our bubbles in this last day. He is showing us that we cannot get to Heaven on our own merits. We either get there God's way, or we don't make it. We either obey the Holy Ghost, or we have no place. Paul wrote:

*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.*                      Romans 7:18

*Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*    Romans 7:24

God is working the weaknesses out of our flesh so that we can become the great vessels He has planned. It may not be a pleasant experience, but let's let Him do His work.

Pride is an ever-present danger in all of our lives. When we begin to think that we are accomplishing something great in God, we may be in trouble. Many of us have had the experience of praying for the sick, sometimes in great prayer lines. When eight or ten astounding miracles have taken place, we suddenly know that we are anointed. Even the

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devil admits it, and then he tries to get us to gloat over the fact. However, the minute we entertain the pride he is pushing our way, we might as well not pray for the rest of the line, for nothing will happen. When the devil has injected that element of pride, however small, we must either rebuke him and his filthy pride or stop praying for the sick, because God wants all the glory to be unto Him.

Satan knows how to pull you down. He got pulled down himself, and he wants to drag you down with him. That's his job. He thought he could exalt himself against God. He said:

*I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.*

Isaiah 14:13-14

But God said:

*Thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.*

Isaiah 14:15

Satan wants you to be lifted up with pride, so you must keep your flesh in subjection, as Paul did. When you think you've done something, the Lord

## The Potter's House

will say, "If you think you can do it by yourself, I'll let you try it. I will go help somebody who needs Me. You don't seem to need My help. You now think you can do everything by yourself."

We must respond, "Lord, I need You more today than I've ever needed You before." We must learn the secret of total and continued dependence on God.

One of the major works of the Spirit is to humble us and to exalt Christ instead. Even the Spirit did not come to "*speak of himself*" (John 16:13).

In some of my greatest meetings, God has done such great things that it almost seemed as if I was watching it all on television. I seemed to be only viewing what somebody else was doing. I knew I was there; I knew those were my hands; I knew that was my voice; and yet I knew it wasn't me. It was God, and I was just the vessel. I was nearly removed from the situation, because I knew that God was there working.

If the devil can get you to project yourself and make you think you are doing something, you are headed for a fall. If your hands are anointed, if your lips are anointed, if your feet are anointed, make your flesh recognize that anointing and its Source. You are only the custodian of such an anointing. It did not originate with you.

If you were to give me a thousand dollars and say, "Keep this for me," I couldn't go around say-

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ing, "Look, this is mine." It would be yours. You were only letting me keep it for you. When I walk into a meeting where I have to minister, I say, "God, if You're not here, and if You don't work, nothing will be done." I am just an instrument that He uses to do His work.

We are guardians of the Holy Ghost anointing. We are permitted to house it. When the Holy Ghost is ready for that anointing to be used, it will begin to flow like a river out of us. Still, we know that God is working, not us.

Let the Holy Ghost burst your bubble and get all the air, the pride and willfulness, out of you. Your flesh won't like it, because the flesh wants to be recognized. But do it anyway.

Some folks get upset if you don't recognize them publicly. When many are involved in a project and you try to name them publicly, even if you have the best of memories, at some point you will miss somebody. Somehow, it seems that the one you inadvertently miss is always the one with the chip on his shoulder.

Many years ago, we had only one other family to help us get the camp ready for summer activities. The boys in that family were very young, and because the whole family was short, they were very small. It took two or three of them on one end of a box springs or mattress to move it. That made double work for the rest of us.

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The other problem was that those young boys had a way of disappearing. In the end, we nearly killed ourselves, going night and day, to get everything done because we had so little help.

One day a reporter from a newspaper in Ashland came out to the camp to gather information for an article on our summer activities. He took a photo of the boys standing beside the old camp bell we had used for years to call people at meeting times, and that photo appeared in the paper with the caption, "Everybody gets camp ready!" When I saw it, I was so hurt. I wasn't even in the picture. "Everybody?" I said, "I have been running all over the camp just trying to find those others! Everybody? And my name wasn't even mentioned!" It didn't take me long to recover, but the flesh always wants to be recognized.

When you want to be seen, the anointing will subside. If you learn to hide behind the cross of Jesus, He will work for you. He said:

*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw  
all men unto me.* John 12:32

The higher we lift Jesus and the more we magnify God, the more He will work for us. That was the secret of the greatness of the ministry of the late Kathryn Kuhlman. She made you feel that Jesus

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was sitting right beside you. She made you feel that Jesus was walking with you. She magnified the name of Jesus, and you felt His presence. She knew the secret of exalting Jesus, and that made her a great preacher. When He is lifted up, He works. The ministry of Kathryn Kuhlman became extremely popular because she knew how to exalt Jesus.

I love the story of David and his three mighty captains. Those three men became great because they made David great. If they had not been willing to get behind him and push him forward, they would never have achieved greatness. As David began to gain favor with both God and man, his aides were drawn up with him.

Many Christians have to be number one, or else they won't play the game. But Jesus is Number One with us, for God has called us to work with Him. Although He is first, we always get due recognition — eventually. It may not come when or in the way you expect it, but just be faithful, and He will never fail to reward you.

Many so-called Christians talk like they have "the goods." James tells us not to be "hearers" of the Word only, but "*doers of the word*" (James 1:22). Those who are "hearers" and not "doers" are only deceiving themselves, he said. Don't tell me how many gifts of the Spirit you have received. Let me

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see them in action, and never allow pride to gain a foothold in your life — but when it does, let the Potter work it out of you.



## Chapter Eight

# The Molding

*Behold, I am according to thy wish ... : I also  
am formed out of the clay.* Job 33:6

When the potter was satisfied that he had all the bubbles worked out of the clay, he placed it as a great lump on his wheel. At that moment, although he had already expended a great amount of energy on this clay, it was still unformed and fairly useless. But I could sense that he had something wonderful in mind for it.

The potter's wheel was about thirty inches in diameter, and it had a pin sticking up in the center. That pin held the clay in place once the wheel began to spin.

Having secured the clay in its place, the potter then picked up the same stick he had used to beat the clay, and he began to turn the wheel with it. As I watched this, I could not help but imagine how

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I would feel if I were that clay. Before long, it was whirling faster and faster.

God has us on His wheel, and the circumstances through which we are being hurled are working to shape our lives. We can't imagine how hardships and trials, the circumstances of our lives, might be working in our favor. But, of course, they are.

Could Saul have realized that his search for his father's lost donkeys would bring him to the place of anointing? Probably not. He spent three days looking for those animals. He had to walk a long distance, sleep under the stars, and eat the meager provisions he had been able to carry with him. Those provisions soon ran out. Was this the way to get anointed? We probably would have said, "This can't be the right way to do it." Yet our circumstances are tools that God uses to mold and perfect us and to bring us to the place that we can receive a greater anointing and become the vessels God wants us to be.

When Saul had decided to return home without the animals — having run out of food and fearing that his father would be worried that some evil had befallen him — his servant informed him that there was a prophet living nearby. Saul went to meet Samuel, and the prophet informed him that he should not worry about his father's animals. They had been found. He invited Saul to spend the night with him, and he said to him:

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*To morrow I ... will tell thee all that is in thine heart.*  
1 Samuel 9:19

The Lord had shown Samuel that Saul was to be “*captain over [his] people Israel*” (verse 16).

In 1960, my dad went to Hagerstown, Maryland, to attend a ministers’ meeting. When he was invited to stand and give a testimony, he told of some of the miracles that God had done in his recent tent meetings. At the close of the service, a man approached him and said, “You’re just the man we need in India.”

“Did I give a wrong impression?” Dad asked. “Maybe I should clarify the facts. I don’t have a big tent, like some. Mine is fairly small. I’m not one of those big tent preachers you see on TV. Our church is small. I don’t see how I could go to India.”

“Don’t worry,” the Indian brother said, “My wife has been to America, and she knows how to cook American food. You will be all right with us.”

“I wasn’t worried about food,” Dad said, “I was just thinking that India’s a long way away.”

“It is a long way,” the man said. “But we need somebody like you in India. We need that faith message. I am praying that God will send you.”

That day God planted a seed in Dad’s spirit, and he didn’t rest until he had preached in India. He made two trips — in January of 1961, and again a

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year later. Mother and Ruth (who had been living and ministering in Hong Kong) accompanied him. Ruth stayed in India for three months, and that was the beginning of her worldwide ministry.

When Dad traveled to Hagerstown, he didn't anticipate such wonderful doors opening for him, but you never know. You might be surprised by the doors He leads you through. The answer you are looking for may be found right in the midst of your circumstances.

A sister from the Eastern Shore of Maryland was attending a major crusade in Richmond many years ago, and I was invited to give a word in one of the services. I announced that a well-known evangelist would be one of our campmeeting speakers that summer, and invited everyone to attend. This woman felt something that made her want to respond. She wanted to get some more of what she was feeling. And now, many years later, she is still coming regularly to our meetings.

You just never know where circumstances will take you, who will be there to hear you, whose heart will be touched and whose life will be changed.

The potter spun the wheel faster and faster. Those who work with clay in the Western world have motorized wheels that spin at the push of a button, but this potter had to work at it. Whenever

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the wheel slowed, he would pick up the stick again and use it to get up more speed. I asked him why he wanted it to spin so fast.

“If the wheel is spinning slowly,” he answered, “it is very difficult to form the vessel. The faster it spins, the easier my work becomes. The faster the wheel moves, the easier it is to form a vessel.”

That showed me something. You will never get perfected until you get moving. It’s easier for God to perfect you while you’re moving, while you’re doing something, while you’re teaching a Sunday school class, while you’re visiting a neighbor. It is called “on-the-job training,” and it’s the best kind. It is so much easier for God to mold us while we are moving than it is when we’re motionless.

Many people want to do something for God, but they are sitting on the bench doing absolutely nothing. “What are you waiting for?” I ask them.

“I’m waiting for God,” they always say, but God can’t mold you while you are sitting still. He does it when you get moving.

“I’ve never been to Bible school,” some insist. “I’m afraid!” These are common excuses that we hear a lot, but how can God make anything of us unless He can get us moving?

Have you ever tried to turn the steering wheel of your car when the motor was not running? Try it. On some models, it’s nearly impossible. The

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newer cars will even lock up if you try that. When you start the motor, however, you can then turn that wheel with one finger. Even when most cars didn't yet have power steering, if you would let the vehicle drift a little, then the steering wheel would begin to move freely. Just a little movement freed the steering mechanism to work so much better.

That's the way it is with our lives in God. Get busy doing something for Him, and then He can make something of you.

When you do this, you will make some mistakes. That's natural. But you will learn from every mistake. I would rather see people fail attempting to do something for God than to see them never attempting anything. Those who have never attempted anything for God (and who have succeeded at doing nothing) have no right to criticize those who are attempting to do something, even when they make some mistakes. Keep that wheel turning so that you can learn more quickly.

The movement makes some uncomfortable. God said through Jeremiah:

*If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?*                      Jeremiah 12:5

If you can't stand this present movement, what will you do when the floodwaters of revival break

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forth? Get into the move of things now so that God can do the greater thing for you in the future.

Many churches want their people to be perfect before they give them an opportunity to do anything. I have never understood how they expect people to become perfect if they never have a chance to get started.

You have to start somewhere. You can't be perfect before you stand and prophesy. You have to start. If nobody ever gives you the opportunity to preach, how can you grow and develop in this ministry? Get started.

In 1970, I took a group of twenty-four to India for ministry. Twelve of them went north to Chandigarh, and the other twelve went with me to Jaipur. Each evening, before the preaching, I gave some of the newer ones in the group five or ten minutes to say something to the crowd through an interpreter. At first, they just repeated things that they had been taught, and that didn't take long. But each evening they got more insight and took longer. After a while, they were doing so well that I wondered if I would ever get the microphone back. It was wonderful. Someone has to give the young ones among us an opportunity to start. If not, they will never grow and develop.

It is our custom to take many people with us when we travel in crusades overseas. When hun-

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dreds crowd to the altars with many needs, I look to every member of the team to be able to minister to them. Some say to me, "But, Brother Heflin, I've never done that before."

"That's okay," I tell them. "Now's a good time to start."

How does a person ever get started in a healing ministry? You have to find some sick people and lay your hands on them. There is no other way. The more you pray for the sick, the more you see God work. But you have to start.

How do you get into a prophetic ministry? You find someone who needs to hear from God, and you start prophesying to him. The more you prophesy, the greater your faith becomes. At some point, you recognize that while you have been busy doing what you could do for the Lord, He has been molding and shaping your life.

How do you learn to lead worship? You can't do it sitting in the pew. You have to do it.

Some never try because they are afraid to fail, but what greater failure could there be than to do nothing? The man who buried his talents in the ground for fear of doing something wrong with them or losing them received the greater judgment. "*I was afraid*," he said (Matthew 25:25). But the Lord didn't accept his excuses. He called him an "*unprofitable servant*" (verse 30) and commanded judgment to be served on him.



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Never be afraid to make a mistake. Don't bury your talents in fear. Bury your fears instead, and get busy doing something for God.

How do you learn to preach? You have to start preaching. You can never learn if you don't get started. They may teach the theories of it in Bible school, but that doesn't make anyone a preacher.

Dad and I once visited a Bible school together. An announcement was made, "Everyone who would like to attend the hermeneutics class, follow this brother." I was still young in the ministry, and I looked at Dad and asked, "What's hermeneutics?"

"I don't know," he answered. He had been preaching for forty years and had no idea what that word meant, but, oh, could he preach!

Books cannot teach you how to fast and pray and hear the voice of God. They cannot teach you how to go to the nations of the world by faith. To learn those things, you have to get up and get moving and be busy doing something for God. Then He will use you.

The servant of Abraham said, "*I being in the way, the LORD led me*" (Genesis 24:27). While you are busy working for God, enlargement will come to you too. You cannot grow one inch in God while you're sitting on the stool of "do nothing." When you are up and about and busy doing what God has called you to do, great things result.

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My father was a country boy who moved to Washington, D.C. He had very little formal education, but at an early age he dedicated himself to the work of the church and was faithful to that dedication. Before long, he held thirteen offices in the church. He said to the pastor, "I'm not sure if I can handle all this. Being Sunday school superintendent over nearly twelve hundred people is beyond my ability. I can't pronounce a lot of the big words they have in the Sunday school quarterly. And I'm not sure I can handle some of those other jobs."

The pastor answered, "Brother Wallace, you're here. You are faithful. You never miss a service. I know that I can depend on you. You will not let me down." He insisted that Dad was the best man for the job. As my father was busy doing those jobs, God was perfecting him and making him a great faith preacher.

Don't just sit waiting for "God's time." Don't wait until something falls from Heaven on you. Get busy. Get on God's wheel. Let Him work on you. Your life will be changed.

An anointed couple from the camp once took with them another of our young ladies when they went to minister in a Full Gospel Business Men's meeting in Chicago. In that meeting, there were many who needed to be healed, and there were also many who needed to be filled with the Spirit. This

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brother and his wife wanted to pray for those who needed to be filled with the Spirit, so he said to the people, "I want everyone who is sick to gather over on this side of the building. We have brought a sister with us who has a marvelous healing ministry. She is going to pray for you, and God is going to heal you."

The young sister who had accompanied them gulped loudly. She was not greatly experienced in the healing ministry. What should she do? She thought to herself, *If this man said I have a marvelous healing ministry, I must have a marvelous healing ministry.* She began laying hands on the sick, and they were healed.

While I was in Brisbane, Australia, many years ago, six hundred people came to a Wednesday night service just after New Year's. After the preliminaries, the pastor said to the people, "Brother Heflin has a wonderful prophetic ministry. Don't go home before getting prayed for." Then he had to slip out to a special board meeting.

Those people were very obedient to their pastor, and every one of them went forward for prayer. After I prayed and prophesied over one row, they moved back and another row moved forward expectantly. After I had prayed for a while, I noticed that my companion wasn't doing anything. He had never prophesied before. "Brother," I said to him,

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“if you don't get busy and help me, we'll be here all night.”

He timidly placed his hand on a woman's head and did some serious praying, because he didn't know how to get started. While he was praying, he began to have a vision, and he started describing his vision. While he was describing the vision, he heard the lady begin to sob. Then he had another vision and prophesied by that vision, and he continued on in this way. We left there about one in the morning, after everyone had received a word from God.

You have to start somewhere. Every time you have an opportunity, jump up and testify. That is a good way to start. Take advantage of your opportunities. That is all that God can expect of you.

When I was very young in the ministry, I had a great desire to begin traveling for God. One day a prophetic word was given over me. The Lord said, “You will go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go and wonder if you will ever stop.” And it happened. I got to the place that I wondered, “Lord, will You ever let me slow down? Will I ever be able to unpack my suitcase and stay home for a while?”

Then, one year while I was in Jerusalem, the Lord spoke to me saying, “Take your traveling shoes off.” The year that followed was one of the most difficult for me. I had grown accustomed to travel-

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ing and enjoyed it, but now the Lord wanted me to stay home for a while to strengthen the work. Go or stay at the Lord's command.

## **The Pressure of His Hands**

After the potter was satisfied with the speed of the wheel, he suddenly plunged his thumbs deep into the top of the clay and began to work it. With one hand, he began to form the inside of a vessel, and with the other, he formed the outside of the vessel. Within seconds he had formed a beautiful vessel. It was astonishing. Then, just as quickly, he made another and another. It looked so easy, and it was done so quickly! I was amazed.

When God created the world and everything in it, it was done by His word. He spoke, and it was. But then, when He made man, He used His hands to form him of the dust of the earth, and He is still shaping us by hand.

It was the pressure of the potter's hands, as he forced his thumbs downward, that made the opening in the clay and began to form the vessel. The hands of God are upon your soul to mold and perfect you, to make of you the vessel that God wants you to be. Don't blame the devil for everything. That poor fellow gets blamed for so much that he has nothing to do with. In our ignorance, we blame

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him for the pressures we undergo, when all the time we're under the pressure of the hands of God.

Learn to recognize the dealings of the Holy Ghost. He is molding and perfecting us. He is making of us vessels fit for the Master's use. You cannot be formed properly without the gentle pressure of the Potter's hands, and the more pressure He puts on you, the faster you can be formed.

The devil tempts you — trying to make you fall, but God tests you — trying to make you strong. Let's recognize the difference and yield ourselves to the workings of God, for He says:

*The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

James 1:3-4

Some pastors don't dare let God apply pressure through their sermons. They're afraid they might lose some offerings. So they preach "wonderful" sermons, but lives are not molded. "Be kind to your neighbor." "Contribute to the United Way campaign." "Give old clothes to those unfortunates who live and sleep on the streets." "Be concerned and say a prayer for those in need," etc. You could never be molded on a diet like that. Pressure is required.

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Sometimes the Holy Ghost tightens the screws on us so much that we feel that we are in a vise. He turns up the heat so much we are sure we are in a pressure cooker. Sometimes the pressure makes us feel uncomfortable, and we become irritable with those around us, thinking that they are annoying us. But, thank God, something good is happening. We are growing in Him. Our weaknesses are being converted into strengths. Don't despise the pressure, and don't take out your frustrations on someone nearby during your time under the Master's thumbs.

Sometimes God is working us over so strongly at the altar that we feel like lying down and dying. *You are killing me, Lord*, we think. But that's good! That's exactly what He wants to do. The sooner you get "killed," the sooner God can do something beautiful through you. When you get up from the altar, you will know that He has done His work in your life.

## **The Potter's Will Is Thwarted**

I asked the potter the question: "Are you ever unable to make the vessel that you had conceived in your mind?"

"No," he answered, "but at times I'm unable to perfect a vessel as I would wish. The clay has a will of its own."

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"You mean that dirty clay over there has a will of its own?" I asked incredulously.

"Yes, it has a will of its own," he said. "It resists my hands and resists the pressure I am putting on it. I can still form something with it, but I'm unable to perfect some vessels to the degree I desire."

Is it not true of your soul and mine? There are things that God wants to do with our lives that we won't let Him do. We put up a barrier and say, "God, this far and no farther. Don't touch this particular area. Leave it as it is." God may desire to do something wonderful in us, but if He is resisted by our own wills, He cannot make us into the vessels He desires. Allow your will to be brought into subjection to the will of God, so that His perfect plan for you can be accomplished.

Parts of us may be beautifully formed, while other parts remain ugly and deformed because our own self-will, our flesh, doesn't permit a perfect work to be done. Is this an indictment against God? No! It is an indictment against the vessel itself which has resisted God's dealing. If people would only stop looking at Christians and look at Christ, they would see that He never fails. It is people who fail.

Even Jesus had to bring His own will into subjection to His Father's will. He said:



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*Not my will, but thine, be done.* Luke 22:42

Jesus agonized over that decision, and you, too, must have — somewhere and at some time — that same Gethsemane experience. You must agonize before God until you become willing to sell out completely to Him. When you do, you will be ready for the Master's touch.

Jesus wouldn't come down from the cross when men taunted Him. He had made His decision. And when you make that same commitment, "*Not my will, but thine,*" you will no longer respond to God, "It's too early in the morning," "It's too late at night," "It's too far," "It's too hot," or "It's too cold." You'll be ready to comply with anything He requires of you, knowing that it is for your own benefit.

You are your own worst enemy. If you can get victory over your own flesh, you won't have difficulty conquering all your other lesser enemies. Once, while teaching in Australia, Mother said, "I see you brought your greatest enemy with you to church this morning."

I spoke up and said, "Yes, that devil follows me wherever I go."

"Son," she answered, "the devil is *not* your greatest enemy."

## **The Potter's House**

She was right. I'm my own worst enemy, and you're your own worst enemy. We each have a will that often resists God.

Once, I prophesied over a young man of great promise. God said to him, "If you want to be average, you can be average. If you want to be mediocre, you can be mediocre. But if you want to be great, I will make you great." I am sad to say that young man settled for second best. Your will, too, determines God's limits.

People come to me and say, "Brother Heflin, I don't understand why God's not doing more with me. I don't know what's standing in the way!" I usually don't believe them. Most of us know exactly what the problem is, exactly what is preventing us from moving on and doing more for God.

If we would be honest, we would all say, "I know exactly what has been the hindrance to my receiving that greater thing that God wants me to have." If we could just yield our whole wills to Him, we would see greater things done for His Kingdom.

Many times we are comfortable where we are and resist further change. We don't want to submit to the greater pressure necessary to form us into those more glorious vessels. But, thank God, He hasn't given up on us.

The measure of a man or woman of God is not intellect, ability or appearance, nor even attainment, but a

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willingness to grow into the place spiritually that he or she can handle the vision and the revelation that God desires to give. How do you measure up today?

Many churches are forced to close their doors each year. To me, the sad thing about this is that those churches were originally started because somebody heard from God, and God gave them something to do. The work started well, but then something happened along the way.

Some insist that the original vision in these cases must have been flawed. "If it was from God," they say, "it would have continued." But I cannot agree. The problem is not with God or with the vision. The problem is that we must continue to grow in God to be able to handle His ever-unfolding vision. Get your own flesh out of the way to make room for all that God desires to do. If you are unable to do that, it will all come to naught.

## **Accepting Responsibility**

Each of us has a great responsibility. We try to blame God for our failures, but it's not His fault; it's ours. When we become willing for God to do things as He wills, then He is perfectly able to do all that He has promised. He is looking for men and women upon whom He can pour His blessings and who will act responsibly.

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Many factory workers earn well, but their supervisor or foreman always earns more. He or she can do each of the jobs and has the ability to get others working. Those who are elevated to supervisory roles are there because they are willing to accept the responsibility.

It is the same in God. The more things a person is willing to learn to do in the Spirit and the more capable he becomes in God, the more valuable he will become to the Kingdom. God is looking for men and women whom He can trust, because the Kingdom of God is about to explode with growth.

Willingness is a problem in the church throughout the world. One pastor said he had a willing church. "Ten percent are willing to serve the Lord," he said, "and the other ninety percent are willing to let them do it." That is very true.

A great majority of those who become Christians never do anything for God because they are unwilling to start with small things. Don't worry! If you are faithful in the small things, God has promised to give you the larger things to do.

When I was in India on that trip in 1970, I met an ex-government official who had left his well-paying position to serve God. If you have an official position in India, you have something very important. He was within several years of retirement, and if he left his job and went to work in "the Faith

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Home," he would begin where everyone else had begun — cleaning the toilets. What a difficult decision that must have been for him, but he decided to serve God.

Most are unwilling to make that sacrifice. They want to be president of the firm before they learn how to run the elevator. Some want to stand behind the pulpit and tell everyone else how to live before they have lived it themselves. Get willing to be what God wants you to be. Just get your will in line with His will. Let him form you into the vessel He has in mind, for He knows what He is doing.

## **A Variety of Vessels**

As I watched in amazement, many different vessels began to take form. Some of them were large, and others were quite small. The Bible declares:

*In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.*

2 Timothy 2:20

So, we have no right to ask the Potter:

*Why hast thou made me thus?* Romans 9:20

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We must leave these matters to God's discretion.

The potter I visited made at least seven types of vessels, and they were of varying shapes and sizes. There were tall vessels, short vessels and in-between vessels. There were fat vessels and thin ones. They were for every conceivable use.

Some vessels just sit on a shelf holding flowers, and they are beautiful. Others are used for very different purposes, and sometimes we don't value them nearly as much.

Does any given vessel know what it is best suited for and what it should ultimately look like? Of course not, but the one doing the forming does. Some of the tiniest vessels hold the most costly commodities, for instance, expensive perfumes. Such perfume is very valuable and only comes in small bottles.

If God made you a small vessel, it is because He has something very precious to put inside of you. We don't have to worry if we're the large economy size, the medium size or even the small size. There is a special purpose for every one of us.

Are you just a water glass? That glass is valuable. What people wouldn't give sometimes for a glass of cool water!

This past Mother's Day, I went to a florist to buy some flowers for my mother. I saw a tiny vase with

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only three long-stemmed red roses in it. It was so petite, so lovely. "May I help you?" a lady asked.

"I want that one for my mother," I answered.

If they had put those three long-stemmed red roses in some large, gaudy vase, it would have detracted from the beauty of the contents. That small, petite vase was just the right vessel for just the right use. Florists know that the container is just as important as the flowers it holds.

God has made you for a special purpose. You may not be like anyone else you know, but God has a special use in mind for you.

Don't let the devil torment you with the fact that you are small and insignificant. Say to him, "I might be small, but I house precious things! The anointing of the Holy Ghost resides in and flows out of me!"

"You don't hold much," he'll say.

But you can answer, "No, and neither does a perfume bottle, but what it does hold is so powerful that just a small drop fills an entire house with fragrance. The fragrance of God's touch flows from my soul. God made me this way — on purpose."

Several years ago, when one of the elderly sisters in our congregation was very ill, God spoke that He would not take her home because she was such a prayer warrior. She was also undergoing a severe attack by the enemy. "What are you good for?" he asked her. "What are you doing for God? You're

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old. You're sickly. You have been spending so much time in the hospital. What can you do for God? You are incapable of doing any real work. All you can do is pray."

When this sister recovered enough to get back into church, someone told her what God had said about her. Her soul was set on fire to know that God had seen purpose in her life.

There are many people who cannot travel to other countries for the Lord. They cannot go up and down the street knocking on doors to witness. Are they valuable? They certainly are. God has a place for each vessel in His economy. From the same lump that produced giant vessels, God has made you and me. Hallelujah!

God has a work for every one of us to do, and what He has called you to do is just as important as that of the great vessels He has formed. We are all from the same lump and are fashioned by the same hands. Just let Him use you. Shine wherever you are. Sparkle for God. You will see that men and women around you admire the anointing and glory that is upon your soul.

Some vessels are so versatile they can be used for many things. I believe that is what God wants of us. He may use us one moment in one way, the next moment in another, totally different, way. We must be willing to be what He wants us to be at the



## **The Molding**

moment. And why should we fight against that? Variety is the spice of life. God wants to give us some new experiences, some new opportunities and some new thrills.

Just to know that "*we have this treasure in earthen vessels*" is a wonderful miracle (2 Corinthians 4:7). God's power and anointing is within us, and we are His symbols to the world.

When the prophet Jeremiah was imprisoned, his cousin visited him and asked him to buy a piece of land he owned in Benjamin. God had told Jeremiah that houses and fields and vineyards would be returned to His people and returned to useful production, and he believed what God was saying (see Jeremiah 32:15). The purchase was made, and the proper documents of purchase were drawn up. Once they were properly signed and sealed, they were placed in an earthen vessel until God would redeem His people from their enemies (see verse 14).

We are the earthen vessels that hold the evidence of God's purchase. I prefer this privilege to being a millionaire. A millionaire can lose his money in the stock market, but the glory and anointing which God has placed in our earthen vessels is the most precious thing we could ever possess. Let Him make of you what He wills.



## Chapter Nine

# The Sprinkling

*And Moses took of the anointing oil ... and sprinkled it upon Aaron ... and upon his sons.*

Leviticus 8:30

*Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.*

Hebrews 9:21

As the potter worked with the clay, he continually dipped his hands in water and sprinkled the lump. He would fashion a little, then sprinkle more water on the lump. The movement of air about the spinning clay was drying it out, he explained, and if the clay became dry, it created friction against the potter's hands and prevented him from fashioning the vessel he desired.

The constant moistening not only kept the clay pliable, but it caused the clay to glide under the

## The Potter's House

potter's touch. If the moisture content was not correct, the movement of the potter's hands and the pressure he applied would cause friction, chafing and irritation.

What a great lesson! Water is a type of the Spirit of God, and a constantly fresh anointing is essential to the fashioning process. This is the daily refilling of the Spirit. You cannot afford to get dried out even for a moment. You cannot afford to become hard.

Those who are dry in their spirits become unresponsive to the Word and to the Spirit. When this happens, we must first get the people to enter into the Spirit through praise and worship so that they can be open to God and what He wants to do in them. How often do you need to be refilled with the Spirit in this way? Doing it every day won't hurt anyone.

Many haven't even known that they can be refilled, but it's clear in the Scriptures. The disciples of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. Several days later, the book of Acts records a prayer meeting in which the place where they were assembled was shaken and "*they were all filled with the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 4:31). They had just been baptized in the Spirit a few days before, but they had come to realize that they needed to be refilled again and again and again.

## **The Sprinkling**

And so it is with us. The more we are refreshed in the Spirit, the easier it is for God to change us. If we resist these refillings, we will experience dry periods in which things will not go well for us. When the glory of God is falling on us, we'll do anything for Him. That's why He continually dips His hand in the water and refreshes us in the Holy Ghost.

There is another important reason. Without the moving of the Spirit, the preaching of the Word of God becomes hard, dogmatic and legalistic. If you just keep cutting people with the Scriptures, it gets old fast. That blade gets dull after a while and begins to bruise people. In this way, we can do great harm without realizing it. Let the Spirit move as He wills to prepare hearts for change.

We can't change ourselves. We are changed by God "*from glory to glory*" (2 Corinthians 3:18). That's why the devil doesn't want us to live in the glory, and he doesn't want glory to descend in our gatherings. He knows that if there is no glory, there will be no change. When the glory comes down, God changes us and brings us closer to His likeness and image. We are then able to take a new step in Him.

So, let the refreshing come! Let that anointing come! Don't let the enemy cause a dryness in your soul. Let the cool refreshing of the Holy Ghost come to you daily. When the anointing is upon us

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(the moistening, or sprinkling), God, the Master Potter, can further fashion us quickly and take us into new realms.

When a pipe fitter wants to cut a piece of galvanized pipe, he uses a sharp blade, but if he fails to apply some cutting oil to it, he won't get very far. Before long, so much friction builds up that the pipe begins to smoke. The blade heats up and is quickly worn out. The plumber knows that he must stop every few minutes and apply more oil.

It's the same thing in the Spirit. That's why we attend church services and shout and dance and worship God. In order to withstand the pressure that God is putting on us, we need a constantly fresh anointing. We can't afford to become dried out.

I am a Pentecostal, and I'm proud of it, but it has saddened me to see that in many Pentecostal churches, pastors are using the Word of God as a hammer with which to beat the sheep over the head. "Don't do this! Don't do that! Don't do the other thing! You can't do this! You can't do that. You had better not do this! You had better not do that!" The poor people, who sit there and constantly hear "don't" and "can't" and "you'd better not," sink lower and lower in their seats, until finally their spirits are broken. They no longer have joy, and they no longer have liberty.

## The Sprinkling

Why don't those preachers who are constantly telling us what we *can't* do start telling us what we *can* do? We can shout and dance and praise the Lord. That will prepare us to stand against all the legitimate "don'ts" of the faith and be victorious. That negative approach just brings people into bondage.

I refrain from many worldly things, not because the church says I shouldn't do them, but because I don't *want* to do them. I want to keep this anointing! I want to keep this joy! I want to keep this freedom! I want to continue feeling what I'm feeling! And I know that if I would go backward and do those worldly things, I would lose what God has given me.

If someone told you that you were going to give a large sum of money to God, you might think that person was crazy. But when you get into an anointed service where God is moving, you may be moved to give that large sum of money. And you will give it, not because someone said you had to, but because you don't want to lose the anointing you feel. You don't want to lose that sweet fellowship. You want to obey God. You want to please Him. You want to show Him your love. Nobody is forcing you to do it, but you do it because you *want* to. This is the kind of giving God requires:

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*So let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

2 Corinthians 9:7

The anointing makes everything easy, so seek a constantly fresh touch of the Spirit on your life. If it is not there, God cannot shape you as He wills.

When you are in a situation that prevents you from getting to church as much as you need to, or the church you are attending is dry, it hurts when God works to shape you. *If I don't get to a place where I can take a fresh drink and get a fresh sprinkling of the Holy Ghost on my soul*, you sometimes think, *I'm going to die!* Go where the saints are shouting the victory! Go where the anointing is flowing. Get that continual refreshing and sprinkling of the Spirit.

In India, it is a common practice to keep a drinking water vessel just outside the house. Many times a day someone pours water on the outside of that vessel to keep it moist. If the person is faithful to do it, the water inside remains cool and refreshing. If not, it gets overheated and becomes unfit for drinking.

Keep your spirit fresh. Don't let it get stagnant. Even oil will spoil if it is left unmoved for long periods of time. You have to stir it up. Take some out. Put new oil in. A lot of saints haven't had a refilling in twenty-five years. Get stirred. Get some new oil.



## **The Sprinkling**

When the potter moistened the clay, it became slick under his hands, and in no time at all a beautiful vessel was formed. God is working on every one of us, and none of us will ever be the same again. Let His hand fashion you today.



## Chapter Ten

# The Separating

*I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.*  
Hosea 11:4

When the potter had finished fashioning the vessel he was working on, he would pick up a piece of string, about eighteen to twenty-four inches long, dip it in water, wrap it around the bottom of the vessel and, with a quick movement, separate it from the rest of the lump and set it aside to dry. It happened so quickly. One moment that vessel was still part of the lump, and the next moment it was able to stand on its own.

I asked the Lord, "What does that mean to us spiritually?"

God said, "The string represents those 'cords,' those 'bands of love,' spoken of in My Word. I separate you with 'bands of love.' "

Now, I'm not talking about being separated from the presence of God. Never! Without Him we are nothing.

## **The Potter's House**

And I'm not talking about discontinuing fellowship with your brothers and sisters. You need it, and you will always need it. When you get to be a great man or woman of God, you will still need a spiritual friend to whom you can say, "I need your advice," and can know that what he or she tells you is from God. Many will offer advice and will say what they know you want to hear. But find someone who will be honest with you and tell it "like it is." If you need to be patted on the back, he will pat you on the back; and if you need to be kicked in the seat of your pants, he'll do that too. If it happens, it will do you good.

In 1976, the World Pentecostal Conference was held in London. I did everything possible to get a well-known American evangelist to accompany our group that was attending. "I'm too busy," he told me. "I can't go."

The second or third night of the conference, however, he suddenly appeared. I was very surprised to see him. "Where did you come from?" I asked him.

"I need to talk to you," he said.

When the service had finished, I took our tour group back to the hotel, and we got in a taxi and started riding through the streets of London, trying to find a restaurant that was open. When we found one, we sat together for the next two hours and talked.

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“I’m here because I need some advice,” he said. “I’m at a crossroads, and I feel that you will give me counsel according to the Word of God, without pulling any punches. I flew three thousand three hundred miles to get it.”

Did that make me think any less of my friend? No! It made me feel that he was even a greater man than I had previously thought. He didn’t want to make a mistake. He didn’t want to have regrets down the road. He was willing to go so far, at such expense, in order to find out what God wanted. Each of us needs a friend who can give us godly counsel. Such counsel will keep us from falling into many problems.

Some years back, when the shepherding and discipleship doctrine was playing havoc with the saints of God in America and many other parts of the world, I was speaking about it in a Nairobi hotel, with the founder of a large Christian business men’s movement and two well-known missionaries to Africa. “The reason it became so strong,” said one of the missionaries, “is that all of us failed to raise our voices, thinking that those who propagated these doctrines had to be right because of who they were. Because we were silent, they felt they had no one to turn to for spiritual counsel. And much harm was done to the Body of Christ as a result.”

## **The Potter's House**

We need to hear from God through our faithful brothers and sisters. Don't be a loner. Find someone who can give you direction. If not, your life will be completely ruined.

### **Standing on Your Own**

By separation from the lump I mean being able to stand on your own two feet. That certainly doesn't mean that God is finished with you; it means that you have reached a new stage. The vessel the potter was making had a certain lovely form, but was not yet of any use until it could stand alone. It was still attached to the unformed lump.

When a child is born, the umbilical cord is cut. For nine months that child has taken nourishment from its mother, and she has eaten for two. Now, the child is a separate individual, and the cord must be cut.

Two matching vessels are lovely together, but you need to make up your mind. If your husband isn't willing to go on with God, you must stand on your own. If your wife isn't willing to make a deeper commitment, you must stand on your own. If your brothers or sisters have reached a certain level in God and have no hunger to go deeper, you must stand on your own and continue on to the level that God has destined you to have.

## **The Separating**

When I got saved, that made four preachers in our family. Still, I found that I couldn't live off of Dad's experience or Mother's experience or Ruth's experience. I had to stand on my own. I had to move in for myself. I couldn't wait for a family fast day. I had to feel the drive of the Holy Spirit in my own soul, compelling me to fast and separate myself in order to come into the depth and anointing God had for me personally.

Sometimes, the devil makes you feel that God has thrown you overboard. He may have sent you to Haiti by yourself, and you are thus separated from the rest of the lump. But God hasn't cast you aside. With cords of love He separates you and makes you a unique vessel for a unique purpose. He sends you to do a particular job for the glory of God.

God may separate you to go to Bible school. He may separate you for the mission field or for some other field of service. It isn't easy to leave the rest of the lump. We love our fellow believers more than the members of our own family. But when God puts His hand on us, we must recognize the day of separation and launch out into the ministry to which He has called us.

## **Don't Be Separated Too Soon**

It is just as important to know when to get separated as it is to know when not to get separated.

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The “waits” of God and the “stops” of God are just as important as the “gos” of God. Some people try to separate a vessel that is not ready for separation. The result is that unprepared believers get off by themselves, and the devil starts shooting at them.

Some people think that they are God's gift to creation. No one can tell them anything, even their pastor. They are determined to stand alone, despite all advice to the contrary. Sometimes you just have to let those kinds of people do their own thing. They have to learn the hard way.

If you are one of those who has a desire to jump ahead of schedule, be patient. In God's time there will be an open door for you. God will have someone to listen to you. The Word of God shows:

*A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.*

Proverbs 18:16

I hadn't been saved very long when someone called me on the phone and worked me over for a solid hour. “You're tied to your mother's apron strings,” this person said. “Why don't you get away from your mother and dad, and step out and do something on your own for God. Join our organization. If you don't, you'll never have open doors for



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your ministry. When you do get souls saved, you'll have nowhere to send them!"

But I knew I wasn't ready to get out on my own. I knew it wasn't the right time yet. God had me right where He wanted me, and I held steady. The very next day I got a letter from the Philippines inviting me to come and preach. I had just been told the day before that I would never have opportunities to preach, no open doors, if I stayed with my parents' ministry. The devil wants you to be separated before you are fully formed. If you wait for God's timing, the world opens to you. If you rush ahead of Him, you stay a long time, ministering in your own little sandbox.

Then, in 1970, I traveled for nine months overseas alone. That was very difficult. If you don't believe me, try it sometime. It was difficult to leave home for such a long time, and it wasn't easy to be away from my family and the church. But God had pulled the string. He had done the separating. In His great wisdom, He sent the disciples out two by two, but each one must be able and willing to also stand alone when necessary.

Many people try to get you out on your own too soon, or they go out alone themselves before they're ready. But the strength is in the lump. People like that need to remain with the lump longer to be sustained. Don't be guilty of running ahead of God.

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We had a very tragic example of this at our camp many years ago. We took in a young man off of the streets of Richmond. He had been a wanderer. He would find a job and work two or three weeks until he had some money; then he would take off work for the next several months and live wildly. This pattern repeated itself over and over.

When this young man began to drop by the church sometimes, we invited him to come out to the camp, and he was saved. During our summer camping season that year, we let him testify in the young people's service. Surprisingly, he did a wonderful job. You wouldn't want to listen to him every day, but considering where he had come from and what God had done for him, it was a joy to listen to his testimony. Light and darkness are so far removed from one another, and he had come so far that many were moved by the amazing change that God had brought about in him. When an offering was taken for him, the people gave liberally. The offering wasn't much by today's standards, but for that time it was wonderful.

While the offering was being taken that day, everyone walked past and told the brother how much they had been blessed by his testimony, how they appreciated him. Well, that turned out to be the worst thing that could have happened to him. He was suddenly convinced that he was a full-fledged

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evangelist and soon left for Florida to preach. Of course, he wasn't strong enough to survive, and he only created problems wherever he went.

Standing to give a fifteen-minute testimony doesn't make you an evangelist. In fifteen minutes, this man had told his entire experience with God. That was all he had. Once he gave his testimony, he didn't have anything else to say. The seed, the Word of God, hadn't gotten its roots down deep enough in him. Still, he separated himself from the lump in pride, thinking that he was ready to stand on his own. He thought he could continue to "bless the socks off of people," as the old saying goes, and that the world would come "beating a path to his door." He was wrong. His message could be compared to Beech Nut baby food or Pablum. He wasn't ready to be separated.

Let the Lord do the separating in His own way and in His own time. Stay with the lump until He feels that you are properly formed and cuts you loose. You don't know the proper timing, but He does! Let Him show you His timing, and don't be too anxious to get out on your own.

People from all over the world have been blessed to live at our camp and get training and preparation for the work of God. Those who do well go out to the nations of the world, traveling for God. While they are with us, they don't have the pressures of a

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monthly house payment or car payment and daily provisions for their families and themselves. It is easier to yield yourself to God without all those pressures on you.

A salesman who doesn't "have to" sell does better than one who, because of circumstances, "has to" produce. The pressure is off of him, and he is, consequently, more relaxed and doesn't have to pressure his clients. We all resent strong sales pressure. At times, we're almost afraid to look at an item for fear of being pressured into buying it.

Many years ago, when I worked in retail sales, the first lesson we learned about selling was, "Everyone wants 'the privilege' of buying." We were taught to ask questions like: "Would you like your payment on the first or the fifteenth?" "Do you like the blue one or the red one?" "Do you want it delivered on Wednesday or Friday?" The person we were trying to sell to hadn't even said he wanted the item yet, but we were to assume that he was buying because we were giving him that privilege.

"Do you want this?" was a question we were taught never to ask. We were to assume that the person wanted it. If we started putting pressure on him, we were taught, he would start to back off. He had a car payment and a home mortgage payment, and he would think of a dozen other reasons not to buy.

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It's the same in the Spirit. If you feel too pressured, you're not at your best. So, we have felt led to relieve those who are preparing to work for God from this type of daily pressures.

Recently, I advised an enthusiastic young person not to quit his job just yet to dedicate himself to full-time service. That may surprise some, because we certainly encourage people to live by faith, but the timing is important. Many quit their jobs before they are fully prepared to serve the Lord, and thus bring severe hardships on themselves. Youthful zeal always wants to do it all *now*, but God has a perfect timing. If you quit your job before your ability to preach and minister can sustain you, you will find yourself in financial trouble. Leave your other job when your ministry can support you.

Just because you love God and can say "Hallelujah" is not a sign that you are ready to be separated from the lump. Stay on your current job. Keep praying. Keep fasting. Get yourself into the place where the Holy Ghost can move in and through you. Take advantage of every opportunity to grow spiritually. Before you know it, the separation will come; and you'll leave that job and go full-time for God!

Sometimes it has been a blessing to us to have only a limited number of our camp buildings winterized. If we had unlimited space, we might find ourselves overrun with people leaving their

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jobs and looking for a place to stay. The purpose of the camp training is for people who have a mature sense of what God is doing in them and a desire to get out and do something for God. Those who are serious about God's call are soon separated for service.

### **Don't Be Too Slow to Separate**

While it is true that we must not run ahead of God, we must also guard against minimizing what God is doing in us. It doesn't take God fifteen years to get a person ready for ministry. He does it at our own pace.

And it can happen very quickly, more quickly than you imagine. At the marriage in Cana in Galilee, when Mary told Jesus that the wine had run out — expecting Him to do something about it — He answered her:

*Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*

John 2:4

Mary didn't answer Jesus that day. But she knew what the angel Gabriel had said to her. She knew what God had spoken through Elizabeth in prophecy. She remembered the words of Simeon, when

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his eyes had fallen on the Redeemer in the Temple that day. She simply turned to the servants and said:

*Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

John 2:5

Then Mary walked away.

Jesus saw some stone water pots sitting there and said to the servants:

*Fill the waterpots with water.*

John 2:7

When they had obeyed that first command, He gave them a second:

*Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.*

John 2:8

The servants did what Jesus told them to do and witnessed a miracle, but I believe that what those servants poured out was not wine until they started to pour it. If they had allowed it to remain in the jugs, it would have remained water. It was only when they began to pour it out that the substance in their jars became wine. Start pouring out, and God will do the miracle and will meet the needs of those around you.

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Mary's faith in the word spoken to her by angels and through prophets caused the ministry of Jesus to begin before it otherwise might have. Spiritual leaders may see more in you than you can see in yourself. They have a greater vision of what God is going to do with you and, hopefully, they will encourage you. Most pastors will not purposely hold you back. They must give an account to God for their care of your soul, and most guard those under them with great care.

But some people don't want to grow up. They want to remain students all their lives. They're never ready. They always feel that they lack something else important. We call people like this "professional students." They like the atmosphere of safety and limited expectations in a study setting. They don't have to face the real world, and as long as they can get one grant after another to study, they're content. They're afraid to be separated for their life's work, and we need to help such people get started.

Paul said to Timothy:

*Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.*

2 Timothy 1:6

The gift was already in him. He had received it through the laying on of hands. He just needed to



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stir it up. When you receive the Holy Ghost, you receive the nine gifts of the Spirit. They are in you. The Holy Ghost can prophesy. He can heal the sick. He can do miracles. All of those gifts are in you. You just need to stir them up. Someone must encourage you to do it, and you must be allowed to do it.

A family came from Australia to attend our campmeeting. The husband's parents were old-fashioned Pentecostal believers, and his brother was a Pentecostal preacher. I assumed that he had preached some himself, so one day I announced that he would be the speaker in the afternoon service. His message lasted only about twenty minutes. As it turned out, he had never preached before.

Then, I felt led to call everyone to the front and challenge the brother to lay hands on them and prophesy. He had also never prophesied before, but he leaned across the pulpit and prayed for God to help him. I led him down front and placed my hand on his back, and he gave a short word over six or seven people.

I knew most of the people who were being prophesied over, and I knew that the word the brother was giving was "right on." One woman got very excited. "Brother Heflin," she said breathlessly, "did you hear what he said? Did you hear?" Then, she looked at me strangely and said, "You didn't tell him anything about me, did you?"

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“Yes!” I said jokingly. “He is staying in my house. I kept him up all night long and told him about everyone who is attending camp. And he has the best memory I have ever seen.” Of course, God had been revealing everything to him as he spoke.

Several days later I felt led to announce that the wife would be speaking in the afternoon service. She later testified, “When he made that announcement, I went to the house, threw myself across the bed and cried for two hours. If I had known how to get to the airport, I would have left this country so fast. Brother Heflin didn’t know it, but I have been the worst introvert. I couldn’t go outside my house when my neighbor was in the yard. I didn’t want to talk to anybody.”

She got up that day and spoke for forty minutes. When she finished, I called everyone to the front to be prophesied over. She was so frightened that she closed her eyes tightly and didn’t open them until she had finished prophesying over everyone. She prophesied over her own two teenaged daughters, without ever knowing that she had laid hands on them.

When it was time for the children to return to school, she took them back home, but the husband accompanied me to Mombasa, Kenya, and was the best preacher I had with me on that trip. When he returned home, he became his brother’s assistant.

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His wife became head of Women's Aglow for the entire country and went to Canada to represent the movement. She began to prophesy by vision, and many preachers later told me that they hadn't taken the camp ministry seriously until they saw the amazing changes in that couple.

Someone has to give young ones an opportunity. As we encourage others, we grow ourselves. Most of the people whom we train and send overseas (most of whom do a fantastic work for God) would not even qualify as missionaries with most organizations.

One brother whom we trained has now ministered throughout the world with great success for the past twenty years. He is very well educated, having two master's degrees, and his wife is very well educated also, but they would have been disqualified by most missionary organizations because they had four children. Most missions groups are looking for candidates who are neither too young nor too old (they consider twenty-five to thirty-five to be the optimum age), married (for stability), but with no more than two children, college graduates (preferably with graduate degrees in at least two fields), with theological training and with several years of experience. If you fall anywhere outside these qualifications, you are not considered. That eliminates many good people who want to work for God.

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Then, on top of all that, you must attend language school and take cultural training. By that time, most people have lost the vision and the anointing. I would much rather have a zealous few anointed by the Spirit. I find that such people get more done for God.

The sad truth is that most of the people who travel with us on a regular basis would be considered unqualified by these standards. Later, when they have fasted and prayed and gotten themselves into a place of anointing in God, and when others begin to see what God is doing in them, everybody wants them.

And with good reason: These people are willing to sleep on the floor or make whatever other sacrifice is necessary to do God's work. They have gone through a rigorous on-the-job training. They are ready to do whatever is required in the Kingdom. But it all happened because someone believed in them. Encourage those who seem unqualified; but at some point, you were unqualified yourself.

If we send people who are not yet able to stand on their own, we send them with someone more experienced who we know *can* stand. If immature people are sent alone, they will not know where to go or what to do. Not knowing anyone in the first country they enter, they will check into a hotel, quickly spend all their money, become discour-

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aged by persecution and the difficulty of getting open doors and will soon call home to say they are returning on the next flight. That's why we send weak ones out only with strong ones. If that one stumbles for any reason, the other is there to pick him up.

One day, as we licensed a sister who had been with us for many years, God spoke to her in prophecy and said, "You have gone with others. From now on, others will go with you; for I have caused you to grow in the Spirit. You will stand, and it will be your wisdom and your insight that bring the victory and the deliverance." Her time of separation had come.

## **The Thrusting Out**

I have counseled some people not to go overseas by themselves, because I could sense that they weren't ready, but I couldn't convince them otherwise. They were so determined to make it on their own that they wouldn't listen. In the end, those people stumbled and fell because they didn't know what to do.

When you are in a strange country where you don't know anyone, you don't know the language and you have no open doors to minister, you must know God and that He has sent you. You must

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have your feet rooted and grounded in Him. He will open doors and make a way for you if you wait for His time of separation.

On the other hand, there are ministries that want to hold you back. This may be because you have come up under them or at some point become associated with them, or it may be that they trained and prepared you, and now they want to hold on to you and not let you go. Whatever you do or say, they will try to make you feel that you cannot survive without them. They have a stranglehold on you.

We take just the opposite attitude. I want to let people go — when they are ready. And if we err, it is on the side of encouraging people to get out and work for God.

I'm not saying I want to get rid of these people. No! I need more help in the ministry. But I want to see those individuals get to the place where they can stand on their own two feet. Because we are willing to encourage them, because we say to them, "Come on, you can do it! Get out there! Come on! You can make it!" there is a greater bond of fellowship between us than before.

Now when they need me, I know it's not because I told them they needed me. It's because they have gotten out there themselves and found out how difficult it is and that we need fellowship and unity

## The Separating

of spirit to survive. The ties between us are stronger than ever — as a result of our being willing to release them.

Those of our people who travel write us and keep us posted on what is happening overseas. They are largely on their own, yet they feel the strength of this tie. They need us, and we need them. We pray for them every day, and they pray for us every day. When they need our help, in some more concrete form, they know that they can pick up the phone and call us, and we'll believe God together for an answer. Something will be done. God will make a way.

Paul and Barnabas did a wonderful work in Antioch, but the day came when God had a greater work for them to do. He spoke to the leaders in that place:

*Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.* Acts 13:2

Those men obeyed, although it would mean loss for them:

*And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*  
Acts 13:3

Thus, Paul and Barnabas were launched forth into a greater ministry.

## **The Potter's House**

Philip was a faithful deacon, but one day God spoke to him to be separated from the church at Jerusalem and sent him to bring revival to Samaria.

God doesn't thrust us out (separate us) brusquely. He does it tenderly, yet decisively. If you continue to be hardheaded and stubborn, He might do like the mother eagle does. Under the straw in the nest she puts thorns. Then, when it is time for the eaglets to soar on their own, she begins to remove the soft portions of the nest, leaving the exposed sharp points to torment the young ones. When the thorns have pricked you long enough, you may decide you want to learn to fly. You may decide it is time to get out and obey God. You will eventually get tired of sitting on those thorns and decide it's time for separation from the nest.

Oh, don't worry. When the little eaglet tries to fly for the first time and fails, the mother swoops down and catches him on her back and carries him again to the heights. Each time the eaglet does a little better, until finally his wings are strong enough and have caught the stride, and he is able to soar off by himself.

What must it look like to that tiny eaglet falling through space? It must seem that the ground is coming up very fast; but as long as he needs her, his mother is there. Be there for people who need you. Don't leave them until they can fly alone.

The Lord promises:



## **The Separating**

*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

Hebrews 13:5

*The LORD upholdeth the righteous.*

Psalms 37:17

*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath  
are the everlasting arms.*

Deuteronomy 33:27

Once the eagle learns to soar, it rises to incredible heights. When a storm cloud blocks its view of the sun, the eagle goes higher, until nothing separates it from the rays of the sun. Even when you and I are separated and learn to fly, clouds and darkness will come to overshadow us and block our view of the Son. We must go higher. Get in the presence of God. Shout and dance before Him. Let your spirit soar above the problems and cares until nothing separates you from the Sun of Righteousness. Just keep going higher.

Every vessel, great and small alike, must be separated from the lump. The potter dipped the string in water to make that separation as painless as possible, and the Lord will not do less for you. Cooperate with Him, knowing that He is doing a beautiful thing in your life.



## Chapter Eleven

# The Firing

*Beloved, think it not strange concerning THE FIERY TRIAL which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.*

1 Peter 4:12

Once the vessel is molded and is separated from the lump, the next process it must pass through is the firing, or heating. The newly formed vessel is now placed in an oven, or kiln, and baked.

The importance of this step cannot be overemphasized. If you tried to put water into a recently formed vessel, it might hold it for a while, but eventually the sides would weaken, and the vessel would begin to leak. Quality pottery is always put to the flames.

If you tried to put flowers into a recently formed vase, the weight of the flowers would push the soft walls out and permanently disfigure the vessel.

## The Potter's House

Fire hardens the vessel, so that the design will not be lost and the vessel may withstand rugged use. When it is fired, it becomes solid, firm, rigid and strong. A vessel that has not been fired yet has a limited usefulness. It is a vessel in one sense, but it is an unfulfilled vessel. It has not even begun to achieve the purpose for which it was formed.

Every one of the “*fiery trials*” we go through works something glorious in us, though none of us enjoys it. When you see a person being greatly used of God, you can know that that person has been through some fires.

A vessel that has been through the fire is so tough it can hold hot liquids. It can even hold fire. It can take the heat because it has been tempered. When you have been through the fire, the devil can throw anything against you, and it will not move you. You can survive anything. Nothing that people say or do to you will move you.

“Fiery trials” is not a popular subject. Everyone wants us to say that things are getting better and better, that everything will be fine. Optimistic messages are popular, but are they realistic? Jesus said:

*The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

Luke 16:8

## **The Firing**

Economists are not always optimistic about the future. Military leaders are not always optimistic about the future. Government leaders are not always optimistic about the future. Ecologists are not always optimistic about the future. Do they know something we don't know? Enjoy life. It is not going to get any better here on this earth. And, while you are enjoying life as we know it now, get ready for the fires to come.

So many saints are fine until the heat is turned up. Then, they become like Mount Vesuvius or Mount Saint Helens. Things begin to rumble, and an explosion is imminent. I was in the Philippines once when Taal Volcano erupted. We went out to see it. The smoke, the spewing of ash and the rumblings all presented an amazing sight.

An Israeli friend of ours is an archaeologist. "When you are looking at what is supposed to be a piece of old pottery," he told me, "say to the salesman, 'Let me put this in water.' If they say 'No,' you can be sure they have patched it, repaired it, and when placed in water, the patch will soften and fall out. If, on the other hand, they say, 'Sure! Go ahead!' you know that it has no crack and no holes and has not been repaired." He was telling me how to put a piece of seemingly ancient pottery to the test, and God has to put us through tests of fire as well.

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Hasn't the clay been through enough? It has been dug up, dried out, beaten, sifted, mixed, kneaded, shaped and separated. But that's not enough, is it? It has not yet reached the stage of finished product.

"Isn't that a lot to endure?" some might ask. Well, let me put it this way: Wouldn't it be sad to go through the entire process and still not achieve usefulness? Yet this is the point at which many Christians decide they want to get off of the Gospel wagon. They enjoy the Christian life, until the furnace heats up.

Many years ago, Mother was teaching about the things that increase our anointing — prayer, fasting, reading the Word of God and suffering trials and afflictions. We can understand and submit to the need to pray regularly, fast regularly and read the Word of God regularly, but submit to trials and afflictions regularly? None of us wants to do that. Yet James said:

*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.* James 1:2

This doesn't mean that we go around looking for problems; we just "fall into" them. This isn't something we plan. We "fall into" it unknowingly. Still, we are not overwhelmed by it. We recognize the hand of God in it and look forward to the enlargement God has promised:

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*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

1 Peter 1:7

The same year that Mother gave that teaching, I contracted typhoid fever while I was in Pakistan and nearly died. I wasn't sure if I wanted to believe Mother's doctrine or not. There is no doubt, however, that the trials and afflictions you go through make you strong. While others are stumbling, you can remain strong, because you have been through the fire. You have been tested.

If you are not yet going through the fire, get ready, for you will. I guarantee it. It is guaranteed by the Scriptures:

*Ye shall have tribulation.*                      John 16:33

*We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*                      Acts 14:22

*We glory in tribulations.*                      Romans 5:3

*Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; ...*  
Romans 12:12

## **The Potter's House**

*We told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.*

1 Thessalonians 3:4

*Your brother, and companion in tribulation ...*

Revelation 1:9

*I know thy works, and tribulation.*

Revelation 2:9

All of us must go through the fire, but just as the Lord appeared with the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, He is with us in the midst of our fiery trials. You need not be defeated when you experience trials. You can come through the fire with tremendous victory in your soul.

Don't fret over trials and hardships. Let God use them to harden you, so that you can become a useful vessel.

Don't get uncomfortable when God turns up the heat on you and makes the fire hotter. It takes a lot of heat to properly bake a fine vessel. The hotter the oven, the faster the job gets done. A superficial baking is not sufficient.

Who likes to eat half-baked bread? And God doesn't want you to be a half-baked Christian. He wants your strength to go deep. Well-baked pots can withstand a lot of rough treatment.



## **The Firing**

We have gone through a period when it has been popular to be born again. It has been popular to be Fundamentalists. It has been popular to be Spirit-filled. That day is coming to a close. Not only will it not be popular in the future to be born again and to speak in tongues, but those who are openly born again and Spirit-filled will be hated and severely persecuted. Get ready for the fires of persecution. We need to stand and say as did Job of old:

*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*

Job 13:15

This is the point in the process where some pots explode because they have hidden air bubbles. If the potter does not very carefully work out the air in the mixing stage, the vessel come to a tragic end here and destroys other vessels in the process. I have seen it happen too often.

This also happened in Bible days. When Peter went back to his fishing, he took six others with him. Any time a church has internal squabbles and someone gets mad at the pastor and storms off, others will be destroyed in the process.

Why do people blow up under pressure? Why can't they take the heat? Something is hidden in them that has not been dealt with in the formation process. They are an accident waiting to happen.

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The tragedy is that other, quite good, vessels will be destroyed by the resulting explosion.

I've seen people split a church and start another one, only to have someone come along and split that one. One pastor had a nervous breakdown and couldn't work when his church was split. Yet he had thought nothing of splitting my father's church years before. This is something that we can't afford to do it because it will always come back to haunt us. Mature sheep are never hurt by these tempests, but the little lambs are devastated and become disillusioned.

In order to convince other members to split a congregation, a person must tell many bad things about the present pastor, and innocent lambs believe anything you tell them. They eat anything that looks good. They may be easily persuaded, but the process will lead them into eventual disillusionment. When they begin to examine things from a distance, they understand better the situation they left, and they get disillusioned with the person who pulled them aside. They may become discouraged and lose faith in people. Many times people are affected to the point that they leave the church and backslide. They can't take it.

Jesus said:

*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that*

## **The Firing**

*a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

Matthew 18:6

Those are hard words, but He meant what He said. Don't be guilty of destroying many other vessels just because of your hidden flaws.

When any one of us is placed in the fire, it soon becomes apparent what we are made of. Everybody can rejoice in the midst of an anointed worship service, but can you rejoice in the midst of the fire? When Saul found himself among the prophets, he began to prophesy. Anyone can do it when everybody else is doing it.

But when you are out there all alone in the real world, and the devil comes against you, if you can still stand, if you can still have the victory, if you don't back up an inch, then that's a sign that you are getting somewhere in God. The fire is strengthening you and hardening your resolve.

God has a right to test you. He said:

*He that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

Matthew 10:22

If you can't take the fire, He has a right to know it. He warns us against too much authority in the hands of "a novice" (1 Timothy 3:6). He wants tested

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vessels. In the potter's house, I saw vessels that couldn't take the fire. They went to pieces or burst their sides, and then they were good for nothing and were thrown away. God's vessels must stand the test.

Trials come to solidify your position in God. When a trial is ended, drive a spiritual stake in the ground, and say, "I've grown that much in God. Look how far I've come. I've taken two giant steps." When the next trial comes and you weather it, mark off a few more steps and refuse to ever retreat. You are climbing a spiritual mountain into the realms of the glory of God, and the fiery trials and tests you face cause you to be elevated further into those realms.

Don't go back to what you had yesterday or last week. Start where you are now and go forward. Don't take a single step backward. We have too many people who have compromised and gone backward. "Forward!" That is our battle cry.

Thank God for the fiery trials. The promise of God is this:

*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

2 Corinthians 4:17

## **The Firing**

The tribulations, the hardships and the problems that God puts us through all have a purpose, and they cause us to be strong.

In Psalm 4, David said:

*Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.*

Psalm 4:1

Distresses enlarge us in God. A vessel that has passed through the fire is one step closer to effective service. We can have ministries just as great as anyone alive — if we are willing to go through the fires.

Don't run from the fiery trials. As God said to Paul:

*My grace is sufficient for thee.*

2 Corinthians 12:9

Paul was severely tried. He said:

*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

2 Timothy 1:12

Abraham was severely tried. Isaac innocently asked him:

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*Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?*

Genesis 22:7

Abraham boldly answered:

*God will provide.*

Genesis 22:8

And God will provide for you as well. Stand firm and face the fires of adversity, being assured that something beautiful is being developed in your life. You are becoming a truly useful vessel for God's purposes.

## Chapter Twelve

# The Painting

*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18*

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 2 Corinthians 4:7*

Once a vessel had successfully passed through these stages of development, the potter then painted it, giving it a distinctive character.

For many years, when I preached the message of the Potter's House, I purposely left this part out. There were two reasons. First, I wasn't sure I understood exactly what God was showing me through the painting, and, secondly, I was so against the painting that was overtaking our godly

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women that I didn't want them to misinterpret what I was saying as an excuse to justify their vanity. I still believe, to this day, that God beautifies us with salvation, and we don't need a lot of outside help. So I always finished my message with the fire and let it go at that.

The truth is, however, that a fired vessel, although attractive in a rustic sense, has not yet reached its true beauty. It may be useful in its simplicity, as in so many of the poorer countries, but God is not making just any old pot. He is fashioning vessels fit to enter the portals of glory.

We were taken to a factory in China where they made gorgeous vessels known as lacquerware. There they showed us the process, from beginning to end.

In making lacquerware, weeks are spent in the preparation of a single vessel. Some vessels actually take nearly three months to complete. We noticed with what care each step was carried out — each step important, each one adding to the finished product. I watched one man who worked with a fine sandpaper, hand polishing a beautiful vase. What care he took to ensure that the vessel was perfect. I was amazed. Some of those vessels were so elegant that they sold for thousands of dollars, and rightly so.

At the very last position in the factory that day, I saw a man carefully painting the most beautiful



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Chinese scenes on the outside of a lacquerware vase. It was clear then that the painting is what gives the vessel its character. As I stood there transfixed, watching him, I got the revelation of what God is doing in us. He is putting the finishing touches on us. He is beautifying us to prepare us for His presence. He is doing that by stamping in us His character, His nature, His own image!

We also visited a porcelain factory in China, and I was happy because I love Chinese porcelain. In one corner of the factory, I saw all shapes and sizes of white porcelain vessels. I called to Mother and asked, "Which of these would you like to have?"

She said, "I don't like any of them."

I knew exactly what she meant. I didn't like them either. They had no character, no personality. Later, however, they took us to the salesroom, and there we saw the same size and type vessels, but this time they were finished. Each vessel had the proper character and image on it, and they were so beautiful that I wanted to buy them all.

Oh, friend, God is stamping His character in us. The enemy of our souls is trying to get us to conform more to the image of the world, but Jesus wants us to become more and more like Him, to take on His image and likeness. We are His ambassadors, His representatives, so we need His seal and image upon us.

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When the Holy Ghost descended on the Day of Pentecost, it was not only to give us the nine gifts of the Spirit, but to stamp in us the character and the image of Jesus. He said:

*Every one that is perfect shall be as his master.*

Luke 6:40

This is to cause us to do the works that He did. He said we could do them:

*The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

John 14:12

The fruits of the Spirit are a manifestation of the nature of Jesus, and thank God we are hearing more about them these days. They are so much more important than the gifts of the Spirit.

The gifts of the Spirit began to function on the Day of Pentecost when believers had been filled with the Spirit and had spoken in other tongues. These gifts may come quickly, but it takes some time for love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance to grow upon the tree. Nevertheless, it is the fruit that shows forth the character of the tree.

If you want to have power with God, or if God begins to use you in a gift, and you want that gift to

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be deepened and enlarged, the way to accomplish it is to permit the fruit of the Spirit to be manifested in your life. When you allow the anointing of the Lord to bring joy and peace into your soul, and you begin to love, then we will be convinced of your gifts.

Until then, don't speak to us of the power in your life, if you can't get along with your brothers and sisters. Don't tell us that you have great power with God, when you still can't sit with those of other races, or cannot embrace them and show them God's love. You will never grow in God unless and until you forget races and colors and personalities and sexes. You will only stand in power when the character of Jesus, the Lover of our souls, shines out of you.

You can go into any mansion and recognize immediately a piece of pottery from China. It is distinctive. Once, we stopped in Vienna, Austria, on our way home from Israel. We were taken to the Aulsbad Castle, which belonged to a former head of state. As we walked through those stately rooms, it was so easy to spot each item that had been imported from China. They are so distinctive. They have Chinese written all over them. Oh, that we would be as clearly stamped as belonging to our Lord.

Moses went up to the mountain, where he met face-to-face with God. When he came back down,

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the image of God was so clearly stamped on his face that he had to wear a veil over it. What did Moses look like? He looked like God's glory. His fellow Israelites could not stand to look at Moses' face because he had the glory of God upon him. He looked like God.

You and I were meant to look just like Him, too, and to have His glory and His anointing radiating from our countenances. Jesus said:

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*      Matthew 5:16

Several times, we have had the opportunity to visit Tibet, sixteen thousand feet in elevation. On one occasion, several other groups of foreigners were there at the same time. One group of ten were from Australia, ten were from Germany, ten were from Austria and ten of us were from the United States. We all looked pretty much the same. Yet when four hundred and fifty Tibetan Buddhist monks passed by us, they didn't stop before any of the other thirty and request prayer. They stopped in front of our ten, bowed their heads and requested (through motions) that we lay hands on them and bless them. They could sense something different about us, even though not one of us could speak their language.

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When we walk down the street of our cities, people should know from the way we walk that we are different. They should be able to look upon our countenances and see Jesus. They should be able to listen to our conversation and know that we belong to Him. We should never be seen in a discouraged state. We should never be seen by others to be depressed. We should never be seen angry and upset emotionally. We are to look and act like Jesus and to have His character stamped and engraved within our souls.

This being true, why then do most Christians seem to be going the other way, trying to be as much like the world as they can get by with and still hope to get into Heaven? For so many, there is absolutely no way to identify them as believers. They are, in every sense, equal to sinners. The only difference in them is they say they believe in Jesus. Can people who live like this be good representatives of the King of kings and Lord of lords?

There was a time when America was honest and moral. The American tradition was the Christian tradition. But as the world around us gets worse and worse, we must turn further from its nature to Christ's. It is time that we stopped looking like the world and acting like the world and being like the world. Stop resisting the work of the Master Painter, who is trying to paint a beautiful image on you.

## **The Potter's House**

On my way to North Carolina once to dedicate a church, I had some other brothers with me in the car — among them a preacher from New York. We had a little time to kill and decided to stop at a flea market. We walked around and looked at the various exhibits. One of the vendors said to that brother, “C’mon, preacher, buy somethin’ from me.” That brother had not said that he was a preacher. He didn’t have a placard around his neck declaring, “I’m a preacher.” He didn’t introduce himself or give his calling card. Although he had done nothing to show that he was a preacher, however, that vendor saw something in him that made him know he was different from others. He said, “C’mon, preacher. Preachers have plenty of money. C’mon and buy somethin’ from me.”

Wherever we go, people must be able to recognize that we have been with Jesus. Spirit-filled believers often recognize each other at a glance in crowded shopping malls and other public places, and this is as it should be.

The first-century religious leaders were amazed that the early believers were so much like Jesus. They could tell that they had been with Him (see Acts 4:13). They talked like Jesus. They acted like Him. They had the same nature He had. Their response to life’s hardships was the same as His. They couldn’t hide. They were obviously followers of Jesus.

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Peter, before the Day of Pentecost, denied three times that he was Jesus' follower, but it didn't work. He couldn't fool anyone, for he was stamped with the image of Jesus. We are not our own. We are in this world as the Lord's representatives. The most evident thing about us must be His image and glory.

Chinese lacquerware is so beautiful that it draws your attention from a great distance. The Master's touch should be just as notable in us, for it is "*Christ in us*" that is the hope of glory. Let Him stamp His image on you today.

We used to sing the old chorus that ended with the words "Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart." If Christ's image is in you, you can never be the same, and those around you can never be the same. Some people will say we are "old fogies." Some will cry, "Legalism." Others will be sure that this is "unnecessary in this century," but don't listen to them.

Several arguments have been used by Satan to get godly women to look and act like the world. "Even an old barn looks better when it's painted," said a famous preacher some time back. "The reason for the homosexual movement in the United States is that women refuse to make themselves lovely," he declared. But revival brings with it a desire to be like Jesus. We call it "holiness," and that's another

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term that is not well received these days. A return to holiness is a return to Christlikeness. Those vessels that refuse to bear Christ's image will simply be unfit for His use. We are talking about royal vessels here, vessels fit for the King.

God may put some well-known preachers on a shelf and raise up some nobodies to replace them, some nobodies who are willing to bear Christ's image. Women, stop dressing to attract men and start dressing to please God. Don't spend so much time in front of the mirror. Spend that time in something more worthwhile. You are beautiful to Jesus.

Men, stop dressing to attract women and start dressing to please God. Don't look like you were poured into your clothes. It's time that we started to represent the King of kings and Lord of lords. When we do, the anointing of God will be present and souls will be saved. The devil's kingdom will be shaken because we are like Jesus, gloriously painted by His hand.



# **Special Treatment**



## Chapter Thirteen

# Marred Vessels

*And 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.* Jeremiah 18:4

As the potter found vessels with serious flaws in them, he set them aside. Some had tiny holes in them. On some, the wall was too thin. Others had somehow lost their shape. The potter was not discarding these. On the contrary, he would spend much more time and effort on these than on the others. They would have to go through the process again. As he encountered the flawed vessels, he laid them aside.

I have good news for anyone who feels “laid aside.” God isn’t finished with you yet. He hasn’t lost the vision of what you can be. He will work you over again — if you will let Him.

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When the original lump of clay was finally depleted, the potter turned his attention to the marred vessels. One by one, he placed them back onto the table and worked them all together into a central mass. Each one lost its individual identity again for a time. He had to knead the clay all over again, moisten it just right, put it back on the wheel and start the molding process over. When the vessels were formed, they had to be separated again.

Was it worth it? Yes! With their holes and twisted shapes, the marred vessels had been useless, but once the potter had remade them, they could be glorious.

This was double work for the potter, but he was determined to make something useful of the clay. He saw its value. Even a marred vessel can be refashioned.

It is important to note that those marred vessels had not yet gone through the fire and been hardened. They were still soft, so they could be remolded. The further along a vessel is in the process of formation, the more difficult it is to restore it, if it is damaged. Some, as we have seen, blow up and are destroyed. The softer the vessel is, the easier it is to work with.

Soft vessels can be restored. As long as your spirit is soft and tender toward God, there's still hope that God can bring out of you that which He desires. When you become cold and calloused and

## **Marred Vessels**

hardened toward the things of God, then He cannot do the work. The restoration depends on the softness or hardness of the material, not on the potter's ability. The Word of God shows us:

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

Hebrews 6:4-6

When you willfully turn away from God, you tie His hands. He hasn't lost the vision of what you can become, but He cannot violate your sovereign will. We all know people who have turned their backs on God and are willfully running in the other direction. Willfully! God lets them be miserable, but they still run. At some point, a hardness comes into their spirits. God can still save them, for He can save anyone, but that hardness of spirit prevents Him from doing His work.

When I saw those vessels that had destroyed themselves in the heat of the fire, I asked the potter if he could do anything with them. "No!" he an-

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swered. "It is impossible to use that material again after it has become so hardened. They can only be thrown away."

When there is still a desire for God, it doesn't matter what mistake a person has made or how far he or she has fallen. Jesus is always there to pick up the pieces of our lives. If a person will sincerely say, "Jesus, I'm sorry; forgive me," He will pick that person up again and start molding something beautiful out of that life of failure.

If you are that marred vessel, God is ready to put you back on the table. You'll have to be kneaded again and moistened again. You'll have to feel the pressure of His hands working on you again. You'll have to be separated again. But if you are willing, He is too. As long as you are tender toward Him, there is hope. God even goes to the trash heap and picks up vessels that no one else sees hope for. He is a wonderful Savior and Restorer. "I can use that vessel," He says. "That's not worthless, as you imagined."

When I got desperate to be saved, I attended morning prayer meetings for three days. I attended the afternoon meetings. I attended the night meetings. For three days, I tried to give my heart to God, but I couldn't feel a thing. I began to think that I had lost my final opportunity. For God has said:

## **Marred Vessels**

*My spirit shall not always strive with man.*

Genesis 6:3

“You have played around with God too long,” I said to myself. “Perhaps God will not hear your prayer.” But God had not pronounced defeat over my life. That morning, a brother asked me to kneel and pray with him. I was kneeling in a hotel ballroom at a Full Gospel Business Men’s meeting in Seattle, Washington, and what joy flooded my soul, for I felt the presence of God. The floodgates of my soul were opened, and all the hardness began to go. Tears of sorrow and repentance came forth, as I cried out for God to have mercy on me. He can do it — when we are still pliable in His hands.

God wants us all to have a greater vision for broken vessels. Each of us has probably been marred in some sense, but God didn’t just lay us aside and give up on us. He didn’t abandon His plan for our lives. Where would we be if God had no concern for marred vessels? With that in mind, let us each have that same vision.

Many people have been damaged by the enemy, many are discouraged and many have had their testimonies destroyed. So, what should we do about it? Paul instructs us:

*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the*

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*spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* Galatians 6:1

"Restore," he said. Someone has to see the value in a destroyed vessel and begin the process of restoring it.

"Well, I think there's no hope for this one," some people say. Oh, yes! There is hope! What baby ever learned to walk without falling down a few times? Do we just leave them there when they fall? No! They're learning, so we pick them up, and we give them another chance. "Come on, you can do it," we say. And they can and do.

God is in the restoration business, and this is a time of restoration. In the days ahead, we will see many vessels that had been temporarily set aside now being wonderfully restored. Your backslidden loved ones will come back to God. Wandering sheep will once again be led into the fold. Many who have grown cold and indifferent and forgotten God will be restored to their first love.

Don't give up on those who have failed, and don't let the devil make you feel that you've done all that you can do and that there's no hope. He's a liar! There is hope! There is a Restorer. His name is Jesus. And we are His agents of restoration.

God didn't throw Adam and Eve away when they sinned. He didn't discard them on some trash



## **Marred Vessels**

heap. It was from Adam and Eve that there came the godly line of Seth. God wasn't finished with his parents. He brought something good out of their lives.

David transgressed and displeased God, but he repented and remained soft before the Lord. And, marvel of marvels, from David's transgression God brought forth Solomon, a great leader of His people. God didn't discard David, and He won't discard you either.

Jonah was a marred vessel, and God didn't discard him. And we could go right down the line throughout the Bible. God takes marred vessels and rebuilds and refashions them into something beautiful. If it doesn't happen, it's because men haven't given Him the chance. He can do it and He wants to do it. Stop standing in His way and saying this case is hopeless. Give God the opportunity to show what He can do. After all, He is the Master.

Restoration takes time, and it's a slow process. Backsliders can't expect to jump back into the same level of anointing they left. They have to go through the process all over again, and it's more difficult to attain the same level the second time. Why is that? Well, the Potter must take care that the same flaws are not recurring, that the weaknesses are being properly addressed.

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Some become concerned that they are not attaining the same heights in God the second time around. Be patient! God is not finished with you yet. Move on through the processes, allowing each, in order, to change you.

The important thing is that you are being restored. Rejoice in that fact and look forward to what you will be tomorrow.

## Chapter Fourteen

# Handmade Vessels

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Ephesians 2:10

We're all handmade vessels. No two of us are exactly alike, just as no two snowflakes are alike, no two fingerprints are alike, and no two voices are alike. The voice, we are now told, is even more distinctive than the fingerprints or the handwriting. And now we also have the DNA print — a distinctive genetic trait built into each individual. A recent notorious case was won by the prosecution here in Richmond by presenting DNA experts who testified of a unique trait in each cell of an individual that cannot be duplicated.

No two of us are alike. Not even identical twins are identical. There is something about one that distinguishes him or her from the other.

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The world's population has exceeded six billion, more than have ever existed before on the face of the earth. Yet even comparing the billions who have lived and died and the six-plus billion still living, no two have ever been made alike. God has taken two eyes, two ears, a nose and a mouth and made us each a unique face. How could any scientist ever doubt the existence of God?

Maybe you get upset because you're not like somebody else. But don't try to copy someone else. Minister the way God made *you*. Prophecy the way God leads *you*. Pray for the sick the way God leads *you*. He said:

*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.*

1 Corinthians 12:4-5

We're all different. We didn't come off an assembly line. We don't have "Made in Hong Kong" stamped on us. Sometimes we're guilty of trying to change a person's exuberant nature. Let the Holy Ghost redirect that energy. He has made each of us unique. We are handmade vessels, and something handmade is so much more valuable than anything mass produced!

## **Handmade Vessels**

A hospital gave us ninety-five hundred yards of carpet, and that was a wonderful blessing, but it was factory-made carpet. I wouldn't trade a one-of-a-kind handmade Tibetan carpet for a carload of factory-made carpet for.

I hadn't been saved very long when a brother came to our camp who had a beautiful gift of the word of knowledge. I watched him, as he stood and called out individuals all over the congregation and told them what they were thinking, what they were praying. The response was so wonderful. I was very impressed. I said, "Lord, I want a gift just like that. That's the kind of ministry I want."

I was surprised when the Lord said, "It's not for you. I have something else for you."

God has a purpose in mind for you for which you are ideally suited. It is perfect for your personality, for your nature and for your disposition. God knows in what capacity you can bring the most glory and honor to the cause of Jesus Christ. This may seem peculiar to some, but that's the way God works. If you find the purpose for which God made you, your life will be totally changed, and you will become a blessing to thousands of others.

One of the elderly sisters in our church, before she died in her eighties, had a very special ministry. She knew the birthdays of everyone in the

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church. Every year, on each one's birthday, she sent a card with a dollar or two inside. What a ministry! She never forgot. She was too old to travel around the world, so God gave her this very different ministry that blessed everyone in the church. And He has a special ministry just for you too.

Isaiah, speaking of the work of the Potter, said:

*Shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?*

Isaiah 29:16

God knows what He is doing, so trust Him.

I bought two small handmade bowls in Ecuador for five cents each. They were as valuable to me as souvenirs costing hundreds of dollars. The potter tried to make them alike, but I could easily distinguish between the two. There were some definite differences. Each was unique, for they were handmade. We have the Potter's handprints indelibly stamped on us. He made each of us, and He formed us for some special purpose.

You can never be exactly like me, and I can never be exactly like you. God intended it that way. You are a handmade vessel. You are more valuable than

## Handmade Vessels

the assembly-line variety. They may look pretty, but the skilled eye knows the difference. They could never compare with handmade vessels.

Many people have tried to be just like the great evangelists, to copy everything about Oral Roberts, Kathryn Kuhlman, A.A. Allen or T.L. Osborn. During the height of Oral Roberts' popularity, Dad knew a man who so much wanted to be like Brother Roberts that he copied his mannerisms. He learned all of Oral Roberts' sermons and preached them just like Oral did. In a tent meeting in Georgia one night, the man got so caught up in his imitation of Oral Roberts that, when he gave the invitation, he said, "If you come forward, Brother Oral will pray for you."

Why should we copy other people — no matter how great they are? Paul said:

*For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. 2 Corinthians 10:12*

Christ is our standard. We're to compare ourselves to Him. Let the Lord use your individuality! He made you unique for a purpose.

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Elisha wasn't satisfied to imitate Elijah, as great as that prophet had been. Elisha wanted a double portion. He wanted to be twice the preacher. He wanted to do twice the miracles. He wanted to travel twice as far. He wanted to minister to twice as many people, with twice the power and anointing. And he got his desire, because he was pliable in God's hands.

Soon after I was saved, I said to Mother one day, "I don't want any of my sales ability to get involved in my preaching and ministry."

She laughed and said, "How can you separate the two? That's you."

She was right. God wants to use you. He has made you an individual vessel for His glory and for His honor. If you can stop fighting your individuality and surrender it to God, He will polish it up, remove the bumps and the bruises and the warts and the moles, and use what you have. You have been handcrafted by the Master.

We can't see the beginning from the end, as God sees. We don't know His entire plan; He has just shown us a little. We must trust Him because He loves us very much and has paid a great price for us. He knows what we can become. He knows tomorrow. He knows next week. He knows next month and next year. He understands the entire process. He knows how far we have already come



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and what remains to be done in us. Trust Him! He is still the Master Potter!

How long does it take the Lord to do His work in us? He said He could change nations in an “*instant*” (Jeremiah 18:7 and 9). If He can change nations in an instant, how much faster can He change us. Let Him change you today. Say to Him, “Lord, here I am. Do Your work quickly in me.” And the greater your desire to be used, the more quickly He will be able to complete His work in you. I have seen the Lord take young men and women, work them over and, within a few short months and years, form beautiful vessels of them.

The further we move along in the development process, the more God expects of us. Our fellow believers are also in various stages of development. They may be from the same church, they may have attended the same seminary, and they may have sat under the same teachers. Yet we are all in different stages of development. We need to recognize where others are and help them, rather than criticize them. God is able to change them quickly too.

Let me pray for you today:

*O God,*

*In the name of Jesus, I pray that You will move upon our lives. Make us vessels unto honor. I*

## **The Potter's House**

*pray that You will so move upon us that we will be pliable in Your hands, that we will not resist You, but that we will say, "Yes, Lord," to that which You would have us to do and that which You would have us to be. Help us to recognize that we are not our own. We have been dug out of the horrible pit. We are Your love slaves.*

*Let Your hand be extended upon our lives. We want to allow You to make of us that which You desire. Let Your Spirit and power hover over us, even now. Fashion us in the way You see best. Give us the gifts and the ministries that You want us to have.*

*Right now we allow You to work. Some of us are going through a sifting. Some of us are on Your table and are being beaten. Help us to respond quickly, and then move mightily upon us, O God.*

*Thank You for Your Word, and thank You for speaking to us from Your Word. Thank You for working in us. There is so much more that You desire to do in us. Make us willing, Lord.*

*Amen!*

*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.*

**Jeremiah 18:6**

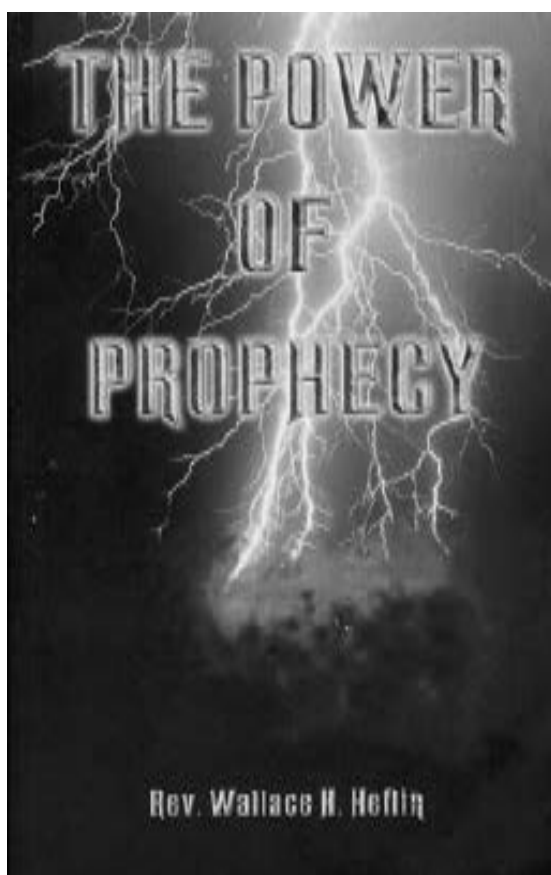
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# The POTTER'S HOUSE

*God is the Master Potter.*

**He desires to make something beautiful of each of us.**

However, a long process—involving acquiring the clay, cleansing it, preparing it, separating it, forming it, perfecting it, firing it and beautifying it—is necessary to bring forth the final product that only He can visualize.

What stage of the process are you in?

- Digging?
- Washing?
- Drying?
- Sprinkling?
- Sifting
- Mixing?
- Molding?
- Separating?
- Firing?
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**Wallace H. Heflin, Jr.** was the son of Pentecostal pioneers and became one of the most dynamic evangelists of our time. Great signs and wonders followed his ministry in more than seventy countries. For many years he pastored the Calvary Pentecostal Tabernacle in Richmond, Virginia, and was Director of Calvary Pentecostal Campground in nearby Ashland, where he trained and led groups of men and women to the nations. At his passing, he was widely revered as a prophet to the nations.



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