

**Grace Bible Church**  
**The Tree of Life**  
**A Weekly Review**  
**Week ending 03/06/11**

**Learning the mystery behind the Potter, the Clay, the Lump and the Vessel. Part 2.**

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Gen 3:1-13)

We have noted that the serpent played a role in Eve eating the fruit and Eve played a role in Adam eating the fruit but ultimately, they each made the choice. They didn't have to give in. They were perfect. They had all the power necessary to resist temptation. They were given incentive to stay away. Spiritual death, or to be cut off or separated from God, should have been a good incentive to stay away from something. Besides, they had access to everything else. They just had to stay away from one tree. Adam and the woman had a choice-obey God or disobey God, and they chose to disobey Him. Don't play the blame game with God. We can see from their blaming that in essence they were blaming God for what happened.

Adam was saying in effect, don't blame me; you're the one who put this woman here. If You hadn't done that, I wouldn't be in this mess right now. The woman said in verse 13, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." You can almost picture the woman saying, don't blame me; if you hadn't allowed this nasty serpent to be here, I wouldn't be in this mess right now. And, although it doesn't report them doing this, you can almost see Adam and the woman blaming God for their sin because, after all, He was the One who put the tree there in the first place.

***Don't blame us. If you hadn't put that stupid tree right in the middle of the garden like that, we wouldn't be in this mess.*** They have valid arguments before God right? Remove the tree, no problems. Remove the serpent, no problems. Remove the woman, no problems. However; remove the choice, there's no free will. Remove the free will, there's no glorification of God in the Angelic Conflict, and then SATAN WINS!

**Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. (Jam 1:13-16)**

So, it's not God's fault, or others fault, or even Satan's fault. Rather it's our evil desire that allows us to be dragged away and enticed. It's our fault, we are to blame. So when we act, or fail to act according to God's will and it doesn't work out, it's God's fault. The reality, however, is we're to blame if we don't seek God's direction or accept God's timing. Often times we're quick to blame God when things go wrong and slow to thank him when things go right.

Man's irresponsibility and depravity is never more dramatically portrayed than when he seeks to blame God for his own thoughts, his own decisions, and his own actions. No one can say to God, Why have you made me this way?

because mankind has his own free will. Man is a free agent, he has self-determination. Mankind, under the influence of Satanic thinking, is always trying to conform God to his human thinking rather than accepting God in terms of divine revelation. Man is always trying to bend God to his own thinking and then saying, "This is God's will." To blaspheme and malign the perfect wisdom and justice of God is the irrational act of a desperate person. Irrational because of after having made hundreds of free will decisions, culminating in judgment, and fallen under the principle of the law of responsibility...they still blame God. God is blamed and maligned for thus shifting the responsibility from their erroneous decisions and blaming it on the sovereignty of God.

So the entire verse says, **Rom 9:21, Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for dishonorable use.**

Paul is saying that if God wants to make a vessel of honor and a vessel of dishonor from the same lump of clay, doesn't He have the right to do so? The answer is yes. But that is not the real issue in this passage, the real issue is the issue of the free will of man responding to what is right before God. For the clay does not refer to man as a vessel but in reality, the clay refers to the soul of man, referring to his volition, freewill, and self-determination. The potter refers to God who has, not the right but the divine authority, which mankind's volition, freewill, and self-determination, can respond to or reject.

Therefore, we have the following:

**Rom 9:20, On the contrary, who are you** [the free will of man as the clay and therefore a part of man's soul which functions under the OSN or NN] **O man** [the entire soul of man], **who answers back to God?** [the Potter as the divine authority] **The thing** [man's free will] **molded** [the free will's response to divine authority] **will not say to the molder** [the divine authority of God], **"Why did you [the authority of God] make me [free will of man] like this," will it?**

Then in **Rom 9:21, Or does not the potter** [God as the sovereign One] **have a right** [divine authority] **over the clay** [the free will of man] **to make from the same lump** [the entire soul of man] **one vessel** [man's entire being - body-soul- and for the believer - HS] **for honorable use, and another** [man's entire being] **for dishonorable use?**

God has the authority but that isn't the real issue. The real issue is: Does mankind recognize God's authority and make decisions compatible with that divine authority? That is the issue.

The lump of clay is the human volition and human self-determination of the individual. The issue, then, becomes obvious. The justice of God imputes eternal and divine righteousness to positive volition in the lump while imputing condemnation and punishment to the negative volition in the lump. Therefore in this context a vessel of honor is the Jew who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, while the vessel of dishonor is the Jew who has rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and has done so from his own free will.

Therefore the justice of God can only condemn the one who has rejected. The issue is not what we do; the issue is what Christ has done on the Cross. Therefore believing in the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the issue. The lump, again, is the free will of mankind to believe in Christ or to reject Christ. Man is free to go either way. Therefore the honor is possessing the righteousness of God and eternal life, while dishonor is possessing or depending on one's own self-righteousness and function in human life. God is free to bless the vessel of honor possessing God's righteousness, and likewise God is free to judge the vessel of dishonor possessing human self-righteousness.

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Notice that in grace, God makes all of this impersonal. In His mercy and His grace, He makes it impersonal so that

we would not fall under the slavery and bondage of that great culprit called guilt. So, He makes it objective rather than subjective. The thing [man's free will] molded [the free will's response to divine authority] will not say to the molder [the divine authority of God], "Why did you [the authority of God] make me [the free will of man] like this," will it? This is objective rather than subjective. This is the same way the Lord teaches us from the Old Testament.

**For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play." Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1Co 10:1-11)**

**For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Rom 15:4)**

Let's make sure we have all of this.

**Rom 9:20-21, On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? You [Free will] O man [entire being] back to God? [Potter as the divine authority]. The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? The thing [man's free will] will not say to the molder [the divine authority of God], "Why did you [the authority of God] make me [the free will of man] like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, the Potter [God] have a right over the clay [the free will of man] to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use? to make from the same lump [the entire soul of man] one vessel [man] for honorable use [man's entire being], and another [man's entire being] for dishonorable use?**

Let's begin with the Potter's wheel. The wheel is the plan of God for the human race and it runs upon the axle of imputed righteousness of God.

**O Lord, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will give thanks to Thy name; For Thou hast worked wonders, Plans {formed} long ago, with perfect faithfulness. (Isa 25:1)**

**"Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; {I am} God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned {it, surely} I will do it." (Isa 46:8-11)**

This means that nothing in the plan of God runs on human righteousness or human ability or human works. In other words, no believer is ever commanded to reinvent the wheel. The wheel is God's plan or God's decree which has existed from eternity past. God's plan keeps rolling no matter what. The wheel must turn on an axle and the axle is based upon the justice and the righteousness of God. And, because of the angelic conflict, God has designed His plan so that the wheel of the Christian life must turn or spin on the axle of the individual's choice.

It's important to note what the wheel represents and how it is used in the Bible. For example, Jer 18:3 uses the analogy of the wheel as a type that represents the workings of God wherein He molds and shapes either a person or a nation into the kind of vessel He desires.

**The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I**

shall announce My words to you.” Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make. Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter {does}?” declares the Lord. “Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy {it;} if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant {it;} if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.” (Jer 18:1-10)

Here, the wheel represents the training He gives, and sometimes the whipping necessary in order that He may obtain the result He wishes to have. In Eze 1:15 wheels always represent progress, motion, purpose, accomplishment.

**Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for {each of} the four of them. The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship {was} like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship {being} as if one wheel were within another. Whenever they moved, they moved in any of their four directions, without turning as they moved. As for their rims they were lofty and awesome, and the rims of all four of them were full of eyes round about. (Eze 1:15-17)**

In this Scripture the wheels represent the power of God in action. The rims of these wheels reach unto Heaven to inform us that the purposes and works of GOD are higher than ours, too high for our comprehension. The eyes on the wheels represent the omniscience of the Spirit of God, who knows full well what He is doing, and understands all the purposes of GOD.

When it comes to His wheels, you must decide which axle you will use – the one that God has provided, which is +R; or invent your own which is some form of self-righteousness. If you choose self-righteousness you reinvent the wheel, you dictate to God the course of action. So much then for the perfect plan of God which excludes the ability of man, the personality of man, the morality of man, the works of man, the ideas of man, the schemes of man.

Therefore in perfect righteousness the justice of God provided man with a free will, so that man is a free agent in determining his own destiny. And he must take the responsibility for his own decisions. Therefore man cannot blame the mistakes and errors of his own decisions on perfect and incorruptible God.