

Faith for Now

Jer 18:1-6

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

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*4 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.*

5 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

6 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.

I. Introduction

1. This passage in Jeremiah shows what God can do with those who need a second chance—a reboot—a makeover.
2. Maybe you need an extreme makeover. That is no problem with God.
3. What we just read shows us that in the first go-around, you were a piece of work (v. 3) that was marred (v. 4), meaning, “something went wrong.”
4. But hear this, if the *something that went wrong* is still in the hands of the Potter, He can make it again into something He sees as good.
5. To all of us who are witnessing something going wrong, whether it is our world trying to pull through and out of a pandemic, or trying to make ends meet after losing a job, or the anxieties of quarantining at home, this all happened in the hand of the Potter who can still transform it into something good.
6. But it takes faith to reach that conclusion, and it takes faith to surrender your something-that-went-wrong into the Potter’s care.
7. So tonight, we are going to focus on a faith boost, something we are all in need of.
8. I want to speak on Faith for Now.

II. Self-examination

1. Years ago, I remember hearing a preacher speaking on faith and used the clever title, “Now Faith.” He used the passage in:
Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
2. He asked several times, “Do you have now faith?” That is a good starting place for us tonight. Let us begin by doing a self-examination of our faith.
2 Cor 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?
3. Our faith can drop to a dangerously low level, bringing us into a faith crisis.
4. And with our faith at that level, we begin to see those somethings-that-went-wrong with a view that amplifies and exaggerates their negative impact.
5. We need a level of faith that will rise to the occasion of pandemic-level, or lost job-level, or whatever-the-crisis-level, that allows us to see the crisis as one that is still in the Potter’s hands.
6. And if it is in the Potter’s hands, He can remake into something good.
7. Do you have Faith for Now?
8. You can check your car’s oil on the dip stick and know if you are a quart low so we can then top it off to the full mark. **[img: dip stick]**

9. So for us to have Faith for Now, we need to top our faith off to the full mark so we are faith-full. Jesus said there are great rewards for those people:
*Matt 25:21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and **faithful** servant : thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*
10. If you are not at the “faith-full” mark where you are experiencing the joy of the Lord, well you came to the right place—you’ve tuned into the right channel.
11. When we emphasize the truths of scripture, that will your faith to a higher place, unto the Faith for Now place.
12. Faith is like a shield that we can raise up when we are attacked and our Faith for Now protects us from the fiery darts of the devil:
Eph 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
13. **[img: Shield of Faith]** But when that shield gets hit particularly hard, we need to get a faith lift so we can go on trusting in God some more, with Faith for Now. Truly, nothing is impossible.

III. With faith, we can...

1. Before we identify three key helps to our faith, I want you to consider this question: Is anything too hard for God?
2. When our faith is strong, there is no situation that can rise against us that is impossible.
3. Look at this next situation where Jesus’ disciples faced a problem that was more than they could handle. And after their failure, they asked Jesus why.
4. And remember, it is ok to ask Jesus your “Why” questions. But the answer may catch you off guard:
Matt 17:19-21
*19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, **Why** could not we cast him out?
20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and **nothing shall be impossible** unto you.
21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*
5. If your shield of faith has taken on damage by some high-caliber hits, that shield will grow stronger through fasting and prayer.
6. That will help produce Faith for Now.
7. For when faith is strong, NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE.
8. That very phrase was spoken by an angel to a young girl who was faced with an impossible situation.
9. Mary was told that she was going to have a baby, yet in her situation, that was not possible.
10. The angel reminded her of who she was working for:
Luke 1:37 For with God nothing shall be impossible .
11. If your faith is intact, in the Faith for Now stance, you can find a way to overcome EVERY impossibility that you are facing.
12. So how is your faith tonight? Can it face an impossible task that has never been overcome in your history?

IV. Survey of faith

1. Let us take a look at three faith helps that will make a difference.
 2. Something interesting that you will discover when reading each of Paul's letters, is that he always inquired about their faith.
 3. And in reading those letters, you will also discover some things that will help your faith.
- A. Galatia—look back to your salvation experience
1. For example, the group of churches that Paul started on his first missionary journey, are known as the churches of Galatia.
 2. Shortly after returning home from that missionary journey, he began to hear disturbing reports about the faith of some of their members that drove him to write to those churches:
Gal 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:
Gal 3:2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ?
 3. The trouble was that this young and inexperienced church, had their faith hit by some high-caliber false teachers, which they partly believed.
 4. They didn't even know it was false doctrine. New believers do need to be careful seeking the counsel of trusted elders when they have questions.
 5. Paul responded by encouraging them to look back to the time when they first received the Holy Ghost because that would help restore their faith.
 6. What was helpful was recalling that tremendous spiritual experience of being filled with the Holy Ghost when their faith was strong.
 7. It was a work of the Spirit brought about by faith that had gotten them saved.
 8. And let me remind someone today, the faith that you demonstrated the day you were filled with the Spirit brought about the greatest miracle you will ever know.
 9. It was a true encounter between you and heaven that was and is undeniable. You cannot discount that God was there and very much alive on the day you got saved.
 10. So if your faith is in a low or weakened condition because of heavy assaults, just look back to your salvation experience and remember the strong reliance on and trust in God that you had back then.
 11. You had Faith for Now on that day. You were lost in sin and following a totally different lifestyle. You had different attitudes and perspectives.
 12. Worldliness was your thing.
 13. But then your faith led you to repent and God filled you with the Holy Ghost. All things were new. Including your fresh, new, strong, faith!
 14. **Look back to your salvation experience.** It was the point when God became anchored in you. Recounting that experience will rebuild your faith into Faith for Now.
- B. Thessalonica—stand fast, witness, give your testimony
1. Paul wrote to Thessalonica while in the middle of his 2nd missionary journey.
 2. He had to quickly flee that city due to persecution that threatened his life.
 3. And due to that quick departure, he didn't know if that new congregation had strong enough faith to hold on during the persecution that began so soon after they got started in their faith walk.
 4. He held off writing only as long as was necessary due to travel, and then he sat down and penned this letter after Timothy arrived back with news:

1 Thessalonians 3:5-8

*5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest **by some means the tempter have tempted you**, and our labour be in vain.*

*6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us **good tidings of your faith and charity**, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:*

*7 Therefore, brethren, **we were comforted** over you in all our affliction and distress **by your faith**:*

*8 For now we live, if ye **stand fast** in the Lord.*

5. Did you see that? Their founding pastor was under a heavy attack, but the news of the strong faith of the saints comforted him in his affliction.
6. He found that their faith was holding strong. Why? They were standing fast.
7. But not only were they standing fast in the faith, by the time he wrote his second letter to them, he had heard that their faith was growing:

*2 Thessalonians 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that **your faith groweth exceedingly**, and the **charity** of every one of you all **toward each other aboundeth**;*

8. That is what we need—a revival of faith and love shared with each other. That sounds like revival!
9. But how was it that not only did they hold on to faith, but also that their faith grew? One of the keys to growing faith is using it.
10. Like muscles used are stronger than muscles not used.
11. One of the practices they got started early, was of sharing their faith to their neighbors:

1 Thess 1:8-10

*8 For from you **sounded out the word** of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also **in every place your faith** to God-ward is **spread abroad**; so that we need not to speak any thing.*

12. Paul said that he had heard that they were spreading the faith not only in their own local region, but also in other regions.
13. Anyone who exports their faith to others builds their own faith.
14. The Thessalonians discovered that they could strengthen their faith by multiplying it.
15. When you share your faith with unbelievers, your faith is strengthened. When you give your faith away, it becomes stronger.
16. Paul had heard a good rumor about these Christians.
17. Their witness was very powerful because:
*9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and **how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God**;*
10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.
18. Do you see what was happening there? They were giving their testimony to others.
19. They found that their faith would grow if they shared their testimony among others of how they used to worship idols but now they turned to God. That demonstrates faith for the present. Faith for Now!
20. Plus they were looking expectantly for the coming of the Lord, which represented faith for the future.

21. Do you need to grow your faith? Multiply your faith by **sharing your testimony with others.**

C. If you were clay

1. We've looked at two ways to grow our faith: look back to recall your salvation experience, when your faith was at its strongest; and telling others about it.
2. Finally, if you need to increase your faith, it helps us to get a perspective of exactly where you are.
3. However, when things around us look bad, it is easy to permit thoughts of doubt to arise.
4. "This can't be of God—just look at how bad things are going!"
5. Let's return to the verses we read in the beginning about the clay on the potter's wheel.

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6 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.

6. God sent Jeremiah on a field trip to learn an important lesson to share with others. The potter was working with a lump of clay on his wheel and it did not yet look how he wanted it. It was "*marred in the hand of the potter.*"
7. Something had gone wrong.
8. And when we focus on how our life has gone wrong, that negatively affects our emotions and assaults our faith.
9. All we can see at that moment is how things are not shaping up and it can depress us, hurt our feelings, magnify what we don't understand, and weaken our faith.
10. When we are marred, we tend to feel neglected and forsaken.
*Jer 18:4 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.*
11. But the thing the Lord wanted Jeremiah to notice in verse 4 was not so much the condition of the clay—that it was marred—but the location of the marred clay—it was in the hands of the potter.
12. **[slide] We can either focus on that which is marred or the Potter's hands.**
13. We can take great comfort in knowing that although we may be a mess—a real piece of work—we **are still in God's hands**, which means God is still working on us to mold and perfect us.
14. Jeremiah watched as the potter made another vessel with the same clay. And that second vessel was exactly what he wanted.
15. I imagine if clay could talk, it would complain about the pain of the molding process because of how uncomfortable it was.
16. But that uncomfortable action is the process that makes the difference between clay that is discarded as trash and clay that is fashioned into a completed vessel made in the image the potter intended.
17. So the third thing that will help your faith is **focus on** where you are when your faith is attacked. In **the Master's hands.**

18. And that will build help your Faith for Now.
- V. Conclusion
 1. As we saw in Galatians, Faith for Now is built up and encouraged when we look back to faith that was. Remember your personal coming-to-Jesus testimony, that experience of first receiving the Holy Ghost.
 2. It was not just a feeling. It was a reality based on **your** strong faith.
 3. You had it before and God can restore you there.
 4. **Faith for Now remembers and returns to the place of strength.**
 5. And in Thessalonica, faith was growing because they were standing fast and were witnessing to the lost, sharing their testimony.
 6. If you want to grow your faith, use it, exercise it, share it.
 7. **Faith for Now is shared through prayer and testimony.**
 8. And finally, in the potter's house, we see that regardless of the marring and damage we have been shaped by, we are still in the potter's hand, where there is hope for being remade. And that hope is very high.
 9. **Faith for Now acknowledges, I may be a piece of work, but I am in God's hands, so the outcome is literally in His hands.**
 10. Don't get caught up in the departure of the last times:
1 Tim 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith , giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils
 11. The alternative is to stand firmly on your faith and not let loose of it for as Mary learned:
Luke 1:37 For with God nothing shall be impossible .