



The Fiery Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

Text
Jeremiah 19:1-13

Jeremiah is told to take a jar from the potter's house and break it in the presence of the elders and the priests of Judah as a sign of the destruction prophesied against the nation

Title
"Jar-Jar Breaks"

Introduction

Ever ask the question, "Why, Russell Stover? Why?"

I'm pretty sure it's Russell Stover who markets boxes of chocolates that don't label the individual pieces. You never know what you're biting into. The filling could be something you really like - caramel, for example. Seems I always chose the one with coconut. You may like chocolate-covered coconut but it's disgusting to me. Same with nouget; it even sounds disgusting!

When I was a kid those boxes of candy would eventually be filled with chocolates that had one small bite taken out of them as myself or one of my brothers tried to discover the filling, then put it back if we didn't like what we found. Yucch!

"Filling" is going to be our theme this morning as we work through chapter nineteen of Jeremiah. The prophet was told to take a water jar, made on the potter's wheel, to Tophet in the Valley of Hinnom and break it as a symbol of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple at the hands of the Babylonians. Before Jeremiah breaks the jar it was full and he pours out its contents.

It gives us opportunity to think about ourselves, as God's vessels or jars, and what it is we are filled with.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Must Choose Your Filling, and #2 God Will Choose Your Spilling.

#1 You Are God's Precious Jar:
You Must Choose Your Filling

(v1-2)

Another day, another drama.

Earlier in his prophetic career Jeremiah had used a linen belt to illustrate God's relationship with the nation of Judah. Then he was sent down to the potter's house to compare God's work with nations to that of a potter working with clay.

He is once again sent to act-out a dramatic illustration.

Jeremiah 19:1 Thus says the Lord: "Go and get a potter's earthen flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests.

Jeremiah 19:2 And go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the Potsherd Gate; and proclaim there the words that I will tell you,

Jeremiah was told by the Lord to purchase what the NKJV calls a "flask." It's a potter's earthenware **jar**. Scholars say it was of a particular style made to hold several ounces of water with a narrow neck for pouring out.

It strikes me that God didn't give Jeremiah the message until he went to the location with the jar. One of the things we've been learning from Jeremiah is that sometimes you need to go somewhere, to be somewhere, in order for God to give you a message. He can speak to you anywhere and at anytime. But He delights to invite you places and then reveal Himself to you there in new and exciting ways.

I think our gatherings together as the church are like that. You don't have to be at a meeting of the church in order for God to speak to you. He has, however, encouraged us to not forsake meeting together but rather do so all the more as we see we are living in the last days. He wants to speak to His church and He does it in various ways as we gather.

Something else to encourage us in Jeremiah's assignment is that the Lord really *can* give us things to say spontaneously. Don't get me wrong; I think we need to be prepared, especially when we are called upon to preach or teach God's Word. No matter our preparation we need to be open to His immediate leading. We need to believe by faith God will give us the words to say.

We're going to see, in verse seven, a play on words that tells us the jar was filled with liquid (we assume water, but that's not important). Before he breaks the jar he will pour-out its contents.

While these verses are about the specific judgment that was coming upon Judah, the imagery of a jar filled with water is applicable to believers at all times. We don't want to press it too far but we can make application to ourselves from the general imagery.

If we are jars of clay, and like this narrow-necked water jar, **we are meant to be filled.**

The question to ask, then, is this: "What am I filled with?"

There's an insightful verse in the New Testament that tells me what I am supposed to be filled with. At the very end of Ephesians 3:19 it says, "... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Right away my mind goes to thinking about what I must **do** to "be filled with all the fullness of God." That's not a bad thing to think. A little later in the Book of Ephesians you read "be filled with the Spirit" (5:18). It literally means, "go on being filled with the Spirit," and it definitely indicates a choice on our part. We are to choose those things that are consistent with obedience to God that will contribute to being spiritual and not carnal.

For example. There is a parallel passage in the Book of Colossians that indicates if I want to go on being filled with the Spirit I need to fill-up on God's Word.

The filling of God's Spirit is negatively compared to being drunk on alcohol. We're told not to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but rather to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We are to actively, daily, moment-by-moment choose thoughts and activities that contribute to being Spirit-filled and to be influenced by the indwelling Holy Spirit. We are not to quench the Spirit or resist Him or grieve Him but rather to yield to Him.

There's something else I want to say about our being filled. It's right there ahead of the words "... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." The verse reads like this:

[Ephesians 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.](#)

The Amplified Bible translates the first part of that verse as "[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]."

I think most importantly, being filled with all the fullness of God comes from a genuine realization of His love for you. You are deeply loved by God Who, while you were yet a sinner, came as God in human flesh to give His life for you.

You can do all the devotions you want; you can pray all the time; you can attend every meeting of the church. But unless you are certain of the passionate, extravagant love God has for you, your own efforts cannot guarantee you will be filled with all His fullness. You must also have an experiential knowledge of His love.

What's the first thing we question when some trouble comes our way? We question the love of God. It's certainly the first thing nonbelievers question after every tragedy.

It is precisely at the point of affliction or suffering or trial that we immediately question God's love. It's hard to understand how He loves us when something terrible has happened to us or around us.

But it is then that we can, in fact, "really come to know practically through experience for ourselves" the love of Christ. It is then He can become our refuge and strength, our shield and exceeding great reward. It is then that we learn He will never leave us or forsake us. It is then His presence is made known in power.

O how He loves you and me! All I can say is, let His love fill you that you may be filled with His fullness as His jar. Do everything your are supposed to do as a child of God remembering never to leave your first love.

#2 You Are God's Precious Jar:
He Will Choose Your Spilling

(v3-13)

Back to the sixth century! Jeremiah had a drama to act out.

Jeremiah 19:3 and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle.

Jeremiah 19:4 "Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this place with the blood of the innocents

Jeremiah 19:5 (they have also built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind),

Jeremiah was despised by these people but there was still an authority about him that compelled them to follow him to Tophet.

Among the many reasons God was going to judge them was the fact they had adopted the practice of child sacrifice. It was in that very place that children were sacrificed.

Jeremiah 19:6 therefore behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that this place shall no more be called Tophet or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.

It seems that Tophet was a particular site in that valley. Some of the language guys suggest the meaning of Tophet is *drum* and that the site was called that because drums would be beaten loudly as part of the ritual sacrifice of children - presumably to help drown out their screams.

When King Josiah discovered God's law and forced reforms upon the people he turned Tophet and the Valley of Hinnom into a garbage dump. We recognize this place in the New Testament by its Greek name, *Gehenna*. Since it was a garbage dump with fires constantly burning it became a symbol of the eternal fires of Hell.

Jeremiah was at the Potsherd Gate, so-called because the potters would use it to enter Hinnom to dump their shards of clay from broken vessels - their trash, as it were.

Jeremiah tells the people it will be renamed "the Valley of Slaughter" because multitudes would be slaughtered there when the Babylonian armies invaded.

Jeremiah 19:7 And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hands of those who seek their lives; their corpses I will give as meat for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth.

There is a pivotal play on words we miss in the English translation. The Hebrew word translated flask or jar is *baqbua*. The word in verse seven translated "make void" is *baqaq*. It literally means *to empty* or *to pour out*. The idea being conveyed by this careful use of words is that, at this point in his message, Jeremiah poured-out the contents of the jar onto the ground to symbolize Judah being poured-out.

He would break the jar, but only after this symbolic pouring-out.

Notice what it was he poured-out. He poured-out "the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem." That's an unusual filling, is it not? He revealed, as it were, the true contents of the jar of Judah as a people. While they ought to have been filled with the things of God, they were filled with their own counsel, their own wisdom, the designs, desires and devices of their own wicked hearts.

Jeremiah spilled them out. Hold onto that thought for a little later.

Jeremiah 19:8 I will make this city desolate and a hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its plagues.

Jeremiah 19:9 And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his friend in the siege and in the desperation with which their enemies and those who seek their lives shall drive them to despair." '

Siege warfare was horrific. The surrounding enemy armies cut-off all supplies. After months or years stores of supplies within the city would run out. Once your supplies were gone you were desperate. People often resorted to cannibalism - which meant eating the flesh of the deceased.

Remember God was still warning them. It was too late for the nation to be spared. Individual Jews, however, could yet repent and return to the Lord.

Jeremiah 19:10 "Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you,

This was the final movement of this dramatic illustration. Timing was everything as Jeremiah now brought home the conclusion.

Jeremiah 19:11 and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Even so I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot be made whole again; and they shall bury them in Tophet till there is no place to bury.

Jeremiah 19:12 Thus I will do to this place," says the Lord, "and to its inhabitants, and make this city like Tophet.

Jeremiah 19:13 And the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah shall be defiled like the place of Tophet, because of all the houses on whose roofs they have burned incense to all the host of heaven, and poured out drink offerings to other gods." ' ' "

The people would not turn from their idolatry, including child sacrifice at Tophet. So God would allow them to be killed at Tophet. Justice would prevail.

I'd rather not get the justice I deserve! Thank God for His mercy!

Verses fourteen and fifteen introduce a different illustration at a different location. Jeremiah will return to the Temple to tell the people they are stiff necked, which is a comparison with disobedient oxen. We'll deal with all that along with chapter twenty where his message earns him his first physical persecution.

God was going to break Judah as a nation the way Jeremiah broke the jar. They were useless as His vessel, holding only their own heart's evil counsels and desires instead of His love and grace. In Babylon they would repent and return to the Lord.

I asked you to hold a thought from verse seven. It was the fact they were poured-out. We could say *spilled*, but remembering it was done on purpose, at God's command.

Does God ever spill you? *All the time!* The apostle Paul said in Second Timothy "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure."

Of course he was talking about his impending beheading at the hands of Caesar Nero. But Paul had already poured out his life several times: he'd been beaten, stoned, left for dead, shipwrecked, and imprisoned. He'd been poured-out emotionally as well. In verse sixteen of this same chapter he said, "At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me."

His entire ministry was like a drink offering (being poured-out) to the Lord. In Philippians 2:17 Paul said, "If I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all."

Jeremiah was *not* pouring out a drink offering. I don't want to be guilty of misusing his illustration. But in a broad sense, **God pours in so that we can be poured out.**

Titus 3:6 describes God as pouring out His Spirit upon us. In Romans 5:5 we are told that God "has poured out His love into our hearts." So there **is** a pouring in by God and a pouring out as we walk with Him.

Two questions come to mind. First, Are you willing to be poured-out for God? We're definitely talking sacrifice. Since you are a vessel made by God, you were made to contain something in order to pour it out ministering to others. There is to be an outflow.

I came across the following quote. It puts what I'm saying about outflow into a modern illustration we can relate to.

There is a saying in sports that says leave it all on the field or court, meaning give the game all of yourself or every bit of your strength and effort. This is how we must treat the Lords work. Don t leave this life full of strength, substance and unused potential; rather leave it on the [spiritual] battlefield. **Pour your life out now.**

Second, If God were to spill you, what would pour out from you? We saw that the people of Judah were filled with their own ungodly wisdom, the things of the world. The pouring out revealed what they were filling-up on and it was junk.

In the documentary, *Super Size Me*, Morgan Spurlock ate only McDonalds for a month - breakfast, lunch and dinner. He gained nearly 25lbs., experienced a 13% body mass increase, his cholesterol level ballooned to 230, and he experienced mood swings, sexual dysfunction, and fat accumulation in his liver. It took Spurlock fourteen months to lose the weight gained from his experiment.

My favorite parts are when he would barf trying to eat the supersize meals.

What we take in matters even more spiritually. I'm not just talking about things like TV and movies and other entertainments. I'm talking more about the subtle ways the world and its system seek to influence our thinking, to alter our worldview to be more secular and less Christ centered.

Christians - at least those who profess to know the risen Lord - have all manner of crazy ideas about what is godly and what is not. In many cases they've lost the fear of God and you see it because they sin openly then either act like it's not really sin or that God will forgive them anyway, so what's the big deal?

Eventually our circumstances, whether blessings or buffetings, cause us to be spilled and, when we are, everyone sees what it is we've been filling-up on.

Look back at the spills in your life. Maybe you're in one right now. What is being poured-out? Is it carnal, fleshly, worldly?

Or is it godliness with contentment, trusting the Lord to keep on pouring-out His love into your heart?