

In the Hands of the Potter

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[0 : 0 0] it's great to see young boys out tonight and i'm going to tell you a story and i hope you'll forgive me if i've told it here before i didn't look up what i was the stories i've told before but this is about a school teacher who was an atheist he didn't believe you know what an atheist is it's a person who says there's no god he can only say there's no god well this school teacher was wanting to teach his children there's no god so he got them to write up on the blackboard he gave them a piece of chalks now right up he called out a little girl and he says right out on the blackboard god is nowhere write that out on the blackboard so the little girl was shaking she got she got the chalk and she went out she wasn't very good at spelling and actually do you know what she actually wrote she wrote god is n o and then she made a wee space before the next letter where w h e r e that's what she was meant to do but she made a mistake where she put the space and she wrote god is n o w space h e r e so what she wrote was god is now here and you know this it went straight to the teacher's heart it went straight to the teacher's heart and if my story's correct he became a christian he was converted through his own wickedness you could say and the young girl's simplicity who couldn't spell properly instead of writing nowhere she wrote now here you remember that god is everywhere all of the time okay good to see you out right let's turn to the passage which we read the chapter we read in isaiah chapter 64 and as god would help me i like to concentrate on verses 6 to 8 isaiah 64 verses 6 to 8 we have all become like one who is unclean and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment we all fade like a leaf and our iniquities like the wind take us away there is no one who calls upon your name who rouses himself to take hold of you for you have hidden your face from us and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities but now oh lord you are our father we are the clay and you are our potter we are all the work of your hand i don't know if you've ever thought about it but prophecy is actually a very difficult thing to define what exactly is prophecy prophecy if a doctor takes a biopsy of us and he gets a result from the lab

can he say to you i'm going to make a prophecy you've got cancer and you won't live long is that prophecy he's got the result of the biopsy in front of him or change the illustration i'm in a helicopter and i look out of the helicopter down upon the m8 and i see a car traveling up the wrong side of the road on the m8 and i phone one of my friends and say i'm going to make a prediction there's going to be an accident in the next five minutes is that prophecy how do you define prophecy exactly if you're like me you'll think that the most important aspect of prophecy is the predictive element predicting what's going to happen but in the bible that is not strictly the most important part element of a prophecy the most important element of a prophecy is the teaching aspect prophecy is actually teaching in the present to prepare you for the future god knows the future because god has planned the future and he says because i know what's going to happen in the future you behave now like this so that's the biblical concept of prophecy teaching in the present to prepare you for the future isaiah was a prophet and what he's doing here is teaching the people of god how they should live in view of what's going to happen in the future isaiah explains that god has a great future ahead of israel but there's a long wait in between and israel cannot get the blessings that god has prepared for them because of the way they've behaved and you see chapter 64 is really a continuation right back to chapter 59 verse 1 where god says behold the lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save or his ear dull that it cannot hear but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your god god is saying i have a great future for you but you can't have it now until you repent until you say you're sorry until you change your mind until you come back to me that has to be done first before you'll get these blessings that i have prepared for you god in other words has said to his people israel look you've behaved abominably but all can be forgiven all can be forgiven just confess your sins and return to me but you see

israel were so far away from god for so long they had forgotten how to pray they had forgotten how to confess their sins and to seek god's help and god's blessing so this is what isaiah is teaching his people here in the verses i've read he in verses six and seven there's a prayer of confession isaiah is giving them an example here of the proper prayer that would be so suitable for for israel at this time and if they could pray that sincerely god would hear them and god would give the blessings that he had prepared for them do i need to say here i don't need to say to you here do i the same applies to us god is a great future ahead of us if if we repent and turn to him so as god would help me i'd like to look first of all at the prayer of confession in verses six and seven and then in verse eight the prayer for help five aspects five clauses or five things i'd like to look at in the prayer of confession in verses six and seven we have all become well what is it we have all become like one who is unclean that's the first part of the prayer we've all become like one who is unclean god made man upright but we became sinful he made us upright but we became sinful we perverted that which was right and now we've become unclean we've become a corrupt lump of sin and notice it might become clearer in some other versions we are all as an unclean thing and you see the problem is this we have to confess to god not simply what we have done but we have to confess to god what we are why do we bad things i probably told you this story before the children will tell you the clock the minister that tried to sort his clock and he couldn't sort it till eventually after six or seven attempts he stuck up a notice under the clock saying don't blame my hands the problems inside why were the hands of the clock pointing to the wrong time because there was something wrong inside why do our hands do what's wrong why do our feet take us to places where we shouldn't go because there's something wrong inside we need a new inside and this is what jesus taught nicodemus when he said nicodemus except a

man is born again from above in the inside he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven we must be changed inside it's our inside that's wrong our behavior outside is because our inside is all wrong so we have to learn to confess to God our sinfulness and our sinnership what we are not just what we've done and we have to confess to him we do wrong because we are wrong inside we have all become like one who's unclean and it's our fault we can't point the finger at God he made man upright but we have sought out many inventions that's the first part of the confession the second part of the prayer confession which we have to learn to pray meaning it ourselves is our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment now just think of that our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment not our sins our righteousnesses are like polluted garments that's serious what that's serious what are sins like if what we consider righteous good deeds are in

God's sight like an unclean polluted garment see God is holy God is perfect absolutely perfect and it requires of you and me absolute perfection and that's why the best that we can do is not good enough because it's not absolutely perfect and to please an absolutely perfect God our deeds our actions our thoughts our demeanors have to be absolutely perfect and our righteous deeds are polluted before him if you take our account with God like a balance sheet it took me a long time to discover this Christ's death atoned for all our debt you've got a balance sheet and you're in debt

[14 : 59] Christ's death paid for all the debt but you see that only brings us up to the all square level it's not enough to be all square with God our account with God has to be in the credit balance and that's why we try to be good and do good works but our Bible's telling us tonight your good works your righteous deeds are like polluted garments isn't it serious we're adding more debt by our own righteousness by doing good works which aren't up to his standard we're increasing the debt now that is where Christ's life comes into play Christ's death atoned for our sins bringing us up to the all square level but if you confess your sins to

Christ Christ will not only forgive you your sins but he will also give to you his absolutely perfect righteousness as yours so that you're in the credit balance with God his death atoned for our debt his life produces righteousness transferable righteousness you see before Christ left heaven he was absolutely perfect he had perfect righteousness but that perfect righteousness of Christ was as it were non-transferable he couldn't give it to us but the righteousness the perfect righteousness what Christ worked out on earth was specifically wrought for transferring to human to human beings who trust them our own righteous deeds are polluted garments but if we believe in

Jesus he gives us his absolutely perfect righteousness for nothing as well as pain for our sins number three third request in the prayer of confession we're all like an unclean thing our righteousness are filthy rags the thing gets worse we all fade like a leaf the message there is the longer we go on the worse we become young people often think it will be easier to become a Christian when I get older my dear young friend it will be more difficult you're far more set in your ways as you get older far more difficult we fade like a leaf our condition is one of deterioration instead of getting better we actually get worse before God the nature of sin is to deepen and to spread throughout the whole life that's the nature of sin it worsens rather than improves with age where all is an unclean thing our very righteousness without good things are filthy rags and added to that we're fading like a leaf we're deteriorating we're getting worse we're getting more and more incapable and there's a fourth thing our iniquities like the wind have taken us away in other words we've isolated ourselves from the only source of help we've cut ourselves off from the only one that can help us we've turned our back on

God we've gone our own way and we're going further and further and further away that's you and me by nature that's the default position of the human race as we are by nature our inequities have removed us from the source of help can it get any worse I'm sorry it can number five number five in the prayer of confession you see everything we've said is alarming to put it mildly that all can be forgiven if you just call on God God but what's the fifth thing verse seven there is no one who calls upon your name isn't that sad all can be forgiven if you just turn if you just say sorry to

God all can be forgiven but alas silence silence not a prayer to heaven not a prayer to God that's the default position of sinners what a great sin unbelief is God says look that's the serious position but all can be forgiven just confess just repent just depend on Christ just call on my name just call on my name whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved but there is no one who calls upon your name what an indictment isn't it time to change the subject isn't it time to rush on to the remedy the prayer for help in verse 8 but now oh

[22 : 22] Lord you are our father we are the clay and you are potter we are the work of your hands that's it in short but there's an awful lot there and I want to break it down into three categories or aspects or something the prayer for help has three elements in it first the acknowledgement of self inflicted ruin and utter helplessness when you turn to God for mercy acknowledge your self inflicted ruin spiritually and your utter helplessness to change yourself that's the first stage the first element second element here is and it's very important not only has there to be acknowledgement of our utter helplessness of our self inflicted ruin but there needs to be a genuine desire for cleansing and remoulding into righteousness you see it's not just negative it's not just a complaint we can all complain and we can all complain amazingly of ourselves there has to be in this complaint a genuine desire to be cleansed from your sin and a genuine desire for righteousness you must want to be right with

God you must want righteousness in the beatitudes the saviour said blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteous do you long to be righteous Jesus says you're blessed if you long to be righteous Jesus says you're blessed and there's a third element in this short prayer it's the fact of the sovereignty of God you can hear him we are the clay you are the potter we can't change ourselves only you can Lord you're sovereign and you're under no obligation to change us God is under no obligation he was under no obligation to send his son to Calvary to pay the price of other people's sins but he did it he did it the potter the potter of course is God and he's sovereign he can do what he wants the question is what does he want to do what does the potter what does

God want to do about the situation that you and I are in by nature our bible tells us in several places in several ways what God wants to do yes he's sovereign yes he's under no obligation to save us except that he said he wants no one to perish he has said he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked it's the sovereign will of someone who hates who hates the death of the wicked but because he's holy he has to it's the sovereign will of a God who says he wants all to come to a knowledge of the truth the potter delights in mercy the potter delights in mercy isn't that wonderful isn't that great isn't that hopeful and the potter sent his son to pay the cost of redemption that's the potter that's under no obligation so what does the potter want to do he sent his son so there would be atonement for sin it's not rocket science to guess what he wants to do very next chapter verse 2 isn't it no what verse is it verse 265 verse 2

I spread out my hands all day long to a rebellious people he all day long he stretched out his hands to a rebellious people now I read in Jeremiah chapter 18 for a specific reason we read there about the potter and it took me a long long time to realize what's very clearly spelled out there I always thought wrongly of course I always thought when the potter made something and it was clay and it was wrong I always thought he threw it away put it in the bin is that what we read is that what we read in Jeremiah 18 what did it say there the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand and what did he do he reworked it into another vessel not wonderful he didn't put it in the dustbin he didn't cast it off he reworked it into another vessel and you see what followed it then the word of the Lord came to me and said oh house of Israel can I not do with you as this potter has done eh can God tonight not do with you what he did with that spoiled piece of clay can he not remake you my friend is that not what God does in the gospel is I know what

God did with Jacob what kind of guy was Jacob you know find the word that's used of him the authorised version said supplanter and for years as a kid I had no clue what that meant do you know what it means Jacob you're a twister you're a twister but God remade him God remade Jacob and God can remake you tonight Simon Peter weak watery wimp of a man but what did Christ make of him he made of him a strong stable rock I suppose some of you know I can't verify the truth of it but it's according to secular history that Peter was crucified upside down he was to be crucified and he said to those that were crucifying him

[30 : 51] I am not worthy to die the same way my saviour died crucify me upside down down and according to secular history which there's no reason to question that's what happened they crucified him upside down the weak watery wimp of a man before Christ changed him before Christ transformed him before Christ reworked the clay and he can do the same for you tonight here did the same for Saul of Tarsus he did the same for Mary Magdalene what do you think of when you think of Mary Magdalene I used to think of a lovely sweet gentle girl soft pleasing smiling lovely little girl I used to think of but that's not what our Bible says she had seven devils seven devils but the

Savior the Savior reworked the clay remolded the clay made her a new person in Christ the woman of Samaria slept around Christ remolded her Christ transformed her into a new vessel and he can do the same tonight with you here that's what the potter wants that's what the potter wants do you want do you want it would you like it he calls out to you everyone that believes that Jesus is the Christ is born again of God it's the same original word first

John chapter five first John the gospel the epistle of John chapter five verse one everyone that believes that Jesus is the Christ is born again of God the original word translated born is the same word that Christ used when he said to Nicodemus you must be born again that's the gospel that's the gospel and it's the same tonight what does God want God wants new creatures in Christ he wants to remake rework the clay are you clay Christ is the potter and he can and he wants to remake the clay please call out to him please say create in me a new heart oh God he's never turned any away he's never rejected anyone call out to him he has gone on oath to save all who call on his name call on his name may

God the Holy Spirit make his word effectual to every one of us let's pray our father in heaven please take the things of Christ and make them ours tonight remake us rework the clay transform us we pray thee keep us in your love keep us in your fear wash all our sins away for we pray in Christ's name and for Christ's sake amen we'll conclude our service of worship by singing four verses from psalm 51 again and the scottish psalter in your blue praise book it's page 281 psalm 51 at verse 9 psalm 51 verse 9 all mine iniquities blot out thy face hide from my sin create a clean heart lord renew a right spirit me within cast me not from thy sight nor take thy holy spirit away restore me thy salvation joy with thy free spirit me stay then will

I teach thy ways and to those that transgressors be and those that sinners are shall then be turned unto thee oh god of my salvation god me from blood guiltiness set free then shall my tongue a loud sing of thy righteousness psalm 51 verses 9 to 14 oh mine iniquities blot out thy face I from my sin create a clean heart Lord renew arise spit me within cast me not from thy sight nor take thy holy spit away restore me thy salvation joy with thy free spirit me stay then will

[37 : 37] I teach thy ways unto those that transgressors be thee and those that sinners are shall then be turned unto thee O God of my salvation God be from the guilt of the guilt set free then shall light on the sin of thy righteousness the grace of the

Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more amen