“The word which came to Jeremia-

ah 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 pot-
ter’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 pot-
ter? Saith the LORD, Behold, as the
clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in
mine hand...” (Jeremiah 18:1-6).

Let us go down to God’s pottery
house to see how He fashions a “vessel
of honor,” because He wants to make
all of His children “vessels unto honor,
sanctified, and meet (suitable) for the
master’s use, and prepared unto every
good work. For in the Great House of
God there are not only vessels of gold
and silver, but also of wood and earth,
and some to honor and some to dishon-
or” (2 Tim. 2:20-21).

We will examine the seven steps
the potter takes in order to make a fine,
thin-walled quality vessel, like a vase
or a fine drinking cup.

1. Choosing the Clay

In a potter’s shop there was a dark
pit. This is where the work begins to
make a vessel of honor for the master’s
house. In the pit was damp clay mixed
with local grass that was tramped
together by the potter’s naked feet. The
organic content of the grass fibers
decaying in the mud added specific
qualities to the clay, though it emitted
an awful odor. But this made for the finest earthenware. The potter searched carefully in the pit until his skilled hands finally found the precise piece of clay he desired. Then he lifted it carefully from the mass, and gently began to mold it between his palms. This is what God has done for us. Psalm 40:1 says, “He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock...”

Yes, we all had been in the darkness of the stinking pits of this world, but the Master reached down one day, and with loving care and tender skill, picked us out, for He wanted to make us something special, a vessel of honor fit for His use.

While molding the lump of clay, the potter’s hands press and pat it until he has shaped it into a round, smooth ball of earth, exactly the size suited to his needs. In the center of most pottery shops stood a massive round slab of stone. Actually, there were two stone wheels: An upper and a lower, connected by a shaft. The potter turned the lower wheel with his foot, and it kept the upper wheel turning. Then he placed the ball of clay exactly in the center of the stone, precisely where he could mold it best.

2. Placing the Clay

David said, “He set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.” We all must be placed and centered upon the rock of God, which is Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). Every life must be a life of “not my will, but Thine be done.” We are each a fragment of clay, formless, and as yet unfinished under the intimate touch of the Master’s strong and knowing hands. We must be submissive to the pressure of His hands, as He molds and shapes us into vessels of perfection, fit for a king’s house. It is God’s desire above all else to turn us out as vessels that will gleam with rare grace.

3. Rotating the Wheel

The potter had a tread-like piece of equipment which he operated with his feet. This enabled him to start and stop the wheel. He could whirl the rock very rapidly or rotate it very slowly. Beside the little stool on which he sat, the potter placed two pots of water: one on his left side and the other on his right, because the vessels were formed by constantly adding water to the clay.

4. Applying Wet Fingers

The potter never touches the clay while it is spinning very fast without first dipping his fingers in water. While he applied the skill of all his years of experience to the piece, it was always through the medium of moisture on his hands. Smoothly his fingers and skilled palms delicately pressed in upon the clay, and under this master’s touch, the clay responded, as an elegant goblet of graceful proportion took shape in his hands. But always, the work progressed through the use of water.

By the water of God’s own Word, His will and wishes are transmitted to us. It is through His Word that He makes known to us His desires in shaping our character to conform to His
own: “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:26). We are the Lord’s masterpiece. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

As the potter continued shaping and forming this vessel, he suddenly stopped the wheel. He picked a fine straw from the bench beside him, and with the utmost care, he removed a small grain of sand from the side of the vessel. His skilled fingers had felt the resistance of the grain of sand to his touch. When we resist the will of God, He stops the process of forming us in His image. He has to deal with our sand of resistance. Are there other grains of resistance in us that will mar His work? What if there are?

The potter begins to whirl the wheel again when another grain of resistance cuts a deep gash in the body of the beautiful goblet. It is then ruined beyond repair, and he crushes it down upon the wheel. He cannot form it into a beautiful goblet.

“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” (Jer. 18:4).

Why was this rare and beautiful vessel ruined in the potter’s hands? Because of resistance in the clay. Many a child of God has let resistance to God’s will stop His design to make them into fine vessels of honor for Him to display His glory through. Instead, He can only form them into common vessels, not fit for the master’s table. Saints, are you going to be a fine piece of china or a common utility bowl only used for storage?

5. Separating the Base

There comes the time when one has to be cut off—separated from the old ways of “self,” the old life, the old habits, his own will. This detachment is necessary for the newly prepared vessels to be set aside for special service. When the vessel is finished, the time has come for the potter to sever it from the base of clay. He takes a very fine hair and dips it in the water, thoroughly saturating it. While the wheel is still spinning, He uses the hair to completely sever the vessel from the base of clay.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you…Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world...” (John 15:16, 19). “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord...” (2 Cor. 6:17).

6. Curing the Vessel

After separation, the vessel must be set aside to cure and mature. Likewise, God has to cure His new vessel and puts it aside for awhile until it cures properly. This preparing of the vessel is not done in a day. It takes time, lots of time, to turn out a fine
vessel of honor. We are always anxious for things to happen right now, but God says, “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Ps. 46:10). David said, “I waited patiently upon the Lord...” (Ps. 40:1).

James admonished: “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect, and entire, wanting nothing” (Js. 1:4).

As a bit of human clay, God wants to use you to glorify Himself. God wants to bring many sons and daughters to glory by conforming us to His own glorious character. These special vessels of honor must be cured—meet for the Master’s use, prepared unto every good work, not conformed to the world, but transformed into a vessel of honor, completely detached from the world, self, and desires of the flesh.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

The Greek term for conformed is from SCHEMATIZO and means “to fashion, form, shape oneself after another.” Because it is in the passive voice it means that someone else is doing the shaping to us. We must allow the Potter to do what is needful to form us into the mold of His Son Jesus. Paul said in Romans 8:29 that God has “called us to be conformed to the image of His Son.” In this verse conformed is SUM-MORPHOS whose root meaning is “to shape material into an image.” In the N.T. it denotes an inward conformity and not an outward only.

The enemy also has a pottery shop where he fashions people into his mold which is worldly, carnal, lustful, proud, and rebellious. When Paul said: “Be not conformed to this world...,” he used the imperative which means “Stop allowing the world to put you in its mold!”

Peter charged: “...Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober.... not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance” (1 Pet. 1:14). The terms fashioning and conforming are the same word in Greek. Rather than being cast in the world’s mold, we are allowing God’s Word to transform us by the daily renewing of our minds.

7. Firing the Vessel

The final stage for the vessel was to be placed in the fire at high temperatures. It takes fiery heat to put the finished glaze upon the vessels of honor. In a corner of the shop is a hot kiln where the potter places the cured vessel and subjects it to extreme heat till it is done.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified” (1 Peter 4:12-14).

“That the trial of your faith, being
much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:7&8).

Peter certainly knew all about the furnace of fiery trials, and he assures us that there is a great work being done and a great reward for us if we patiently endure: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:” (1 Peter 5:6). God is the Potter, and He knows the right time to bring us out! If we come out too soon, we will not be perfected.

In Malachi we see how the refiner patiently waits for the fire to do its purifying work:

“And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Mal. 3:3).

The sons of Levi were the priestly tribe who were separated from the others to be those who served in the Holy place in the Tabernacle. In Christ, we are all a holy priesthood:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (2 Pet. 5:9).

The Refiner is Jesus, the Messenger of the Covenant (Mal.3:1), who sits by the refining pot. It was customary for the refiner to sit next to the fire while the refining pot was burning. He never left its side so as to keep the temperature the perfect degree until all the dross was removed from the gold or silver. If the fire was not hot enough, it became too cool, and the gold would harden with the impurities still in it. But if it became too hot, it would destroy the gold. (Gold becomes liquid at a certain temperature).

Therefore the refiner patiently sits, tending to the refining pot, so that it is kept at perfect temperature until the process is finished. The refiner knows when the pot of gold/silver is ready to be removed from the fire. The following story illustrates this:

Tending the Pot

A couple was enjoying a vacation in Europe. While shopping in an old town, they visited a quaint shop where handmade jewelry was created by an expert goldsmith. When they entered the shop, they did not see the proprietor or anyone, so they looked around at the lovely items for sale. They decided to purchase an item, but no one was there to wait on them. Finally they went through the door that led to the back of the shop. They saw an open door to the outside, and there they found the owner sitting by a refining pot on the fire. It looked like he was cooking something.

He did not acknowledge them, but was intent on tending the pot. They spoke up and told him they wanted to
pay for something, but he kept his eyes on the pot and did not even look at them. Irritated, they said, “Can you please come and take our money?”

He replied, “I can’t leave the pot right now.”

“Why not? What are you doing?”

“I am refining gold. I’m heating it to get all the impurities out of it. It has to stay in the fire at just the right temperature. If it gets too hot, the gold will be destroyed. But if the fire dies down too low, the gold will harden with all the impurities still in it. So I have to sit right here and make sure the temperature stays just right.”

The couple then asked, “How will you know when all the impurities are out, and the gold is ready to be taken out of the fire?”

He answered, “It’s ready to be taken out of the fire when I can look at it and see my reflection.”

“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 Cor 3:18). The Greek text reads “are being changed.” This transformation process continues throughout our lifetime inwardly, and will culminate when our outer man—the body, is “fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21).

Job referred to this refining process in his own life: “On the left when He doeth work...I cannot behold him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him. But He knoweth the way that I take, and when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:9-10).

Paul spoke to all N.T. believers that we are going to undergo the ultimate fire of purging when we stand before Christ: “Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Cor. 3:12-13).

“The day” refers to a specific day—the day of the judgment seat of Christ (Refs: 2 Cor. 5:10, Rev. 11:18, Matt. 12:36).

“And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Host, in that day when I make up my jewels...” (Mal. 3:17).

Then, at last, when the Lord comes, we will be fit to be vessels of honor in the Lord’s House!