

## Poured from Vessel to Vessel

by David Orton

<http://lifemessenger.org/poured-vessel-vessel/>

*... And he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel ...*

Jeremiah 48:11

The call to go on with God is a call to be poured from vessel to vessel.

Our willingness to embrace change, to be poured from one vessel to another, is integral to spiritual development. Our transformation into the image of Christ comes through a history of inner abandonment to the high call of God—to move continually on with him. And like wine poured from vessel to vessel we become the fragrance of Christ to others.

*Secure & self-satisfied*

Moab had, from his youth, been undisturbed by misfortune. The nation had never been overrun or gone into captivity, and so remained very secure and self-satisfied:

We have heard of the pride of Moab – he is very proud – of his haughtiness, his pride, his arrogance and his self-exaltation.

Jeremiah 48:29 NASB

It seems to me this is the state of the contemporary church, particularly in the West. We have continued to enjoy post-war prosperity and the fruit of technological advance. This has aided us in our development of church growth methodology, in perfecting better and even more effective ways of doing church.

But we are mistaken to think that we have escaped Moab's condition. All of us who have been nurtured in the lap of Western materialism have taken on, in whatever measure, their condition. Refusing to be poured from vessel to vessel we have – as our text explains – retained our flavour, and therefore our aroma has not changed. We have not given off the flavour or aroma of Christ.

*The metaphor of wine-making*

The metaphor of being poured from vessel to vessel is taken from the ancient process of wine-making. Wine would be left for a period in a vessel to rest on its lees, the impurities slowly settling to the bottom. And then at the discretion of the wine-maker the wine would be poured off to another vessel, the process occurring repeatedly until the wine was purified. This process continued for forty days, the biblical number of testing and God's dealings.

This is why so much of contemporary church life has no aroma of Christ to the world. We may engage in promotional and attractional tactics to draw people to our church event but if we are 'on the nose' spiritually we will only succeed in building another church monument to human ingenuity. It may have loads of energy and human hype but it will have less and less of the true fragrance of Christ about it.

*Spiritual ground-hog day*

We have settled on our lees and refused to learn the ways of God. Like the movie *Ground-Hog Day* we have become stuck, consigned to endlessly repeat an identical day until we learn the lesson. God cannot graduate us and move us onto the next grade until we pass the test. Like Israel we have been examined and found wanting:

It will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good or evil!'

## Zephaniah 1:12 NASB

He is searching us with lamps, showing that this examination is thorough. No corner or crevice of our hearts and lives, nor individual, church or movement will be exempt. We are not being examined on our knowledge or ministry effectiveness, but on the purity of our spirit. The phrase “*stagnant in spirit*” is rendered more literally as “*settling on their lees*”. They had not been poured from vessel to vessel, refusing to change; and so, developed a spirit that said, “*The Lord will not do good or evil*”. In other words, he is not living and active in the circumstances of my life. Many of us are *sentimental believers* but *practical atheists*. We are not current with God. Because we have not been poured from vessel to vessel we say the right things about God, but in the day-to-day reality of our lives we do not have faith to believe that he is actively involved. Consequently, it is over to us to get the job done; and so, we unwittingly build lives, ministries, and careers independently of God.

Therefore, being poured from vessel to vessel is designed by God to dislodge us from our independence, from any sense of self-satisfaction and pride, thus rescuing us from becoming spiritually moribund.

But practically what does it mean to be poured from vessel to vessel? It means that we will be re-located, re-postured, re-aligned, and re-settled by God.

*Re-located*

For the process of refining to occur several things had to happen. As I have explained, after a period of resting on its lees the wine was poured off to another vessel followed by another period of resting.

God uses seasons of both settling and change to advance us spiritually. The only problem is that, on the whole, we prefer the settling seasons to those of change! We are inclined to settle around a truth, an experience, a place, or a people; and so, God comes to us calling us on in him. Nevertheless, those of us who are impatient to move on in God must learn the timing of God and wait until he initiates the next phase of our journey.

Even so, when that time comes it is not often convenient. The high call of God in Christ Jesus usually comes when we are most satisfied with our lot. It requires a re-location, often geographically, but always spiritually. We have filled the space God created for us in the present phase and it is time to move on into another space, into another aspect of his nature and our relationship with him—and into the full realisation of our life assignment.

*Re-aligned*

Being poured into another vessel re-aligns us both internally and externally.

Internally we are re-aligned more deeply with him. We find ourselves relinquishing our will and way for his.

Externally we are re-aligned in our relationships and assignments. God moves us away from old alliances into new and sovereignly orchestrated ones. We find ourselves with a new set of friends. As much as we may wish it differently, the old set of friends has less in common with our new phase and loses interest. Sometimes, this re-alignment can occur through betrayal as it did with Joseph as he was poured into the next vessel; and therefore, prison – and through this – his destiny as a ruler and deliverer.

*Re-postured*

Being poured from one vessel to another requires a re-posturing of our heart. We were previously perhaps in a round vessel, but now we find ourselves in a square one, but we say: “*I may now be in a square vessel, but boy, am I going to stay round!*” I recall as a kid we relocated from the country to the city. My parents may have got the boy out of the country, but they were not going to get the country out of the boy. As a nine year old I recall vividly vowing *I would never be a ‘city-slicker’!*

We may experience circumstantial change, relocation or misfortune, but do we learn the lessons that God has in the trials? Often we stoically take a grip on ourselves to endure, but never break. As Saul discovered, God is not interested in our sacrifice, but in our obedience. Rather, the sacrifice in which God is interested is a broken and a contrite heart (see 1 Sam 15:22; Ps 51:17). And so, like *Ground-Hog Day* we are consigned to a repetition of similar circumstances until we are

internally re-postured; until we surrender our self-effort, our strength to endure the trial.

**Re-settled**

As I mentioned earlier we must learn to settle for as long as the Lord assigns the season.

One thing I am finally learning in the forty years I have walked with God is that he is GOD! We do not determine anything. Our times are in his hands (Ps 31:15). He is completely sovereign in assigning the seasons and circumstances of our lives. As the prisoner of the Lord I cannot – as much as I might try – change those times and seasons. God has a timetable and he is sticking to it! It's then over to me to trust him—to resolve that his ways are perfect and just.

**The call to maturity**

As the Hebrew believers were being called to go on to maturity they were also being poured into a new vessel—the new covenant (see Heb 6:1-3).

This is the whole design of God in life: *“For it is God who is at work within us both to will and do according to His own good pleasure”* (Phi 2:13). And so, all the circumstances of life are allowed by God, the bitter and the sweet, to bring us to maturity—to an inner yieldedness to his wisdom and ways.

There will be a people at the climax of the ages who have been poured from vessel to vessel; and who, therefore, exude the supernatural fragrance of Christ.

As the Lord declared through the prophet—there will be a banquet for the nations of refined and aged wine:

The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, And refined, aged wine.

Isa 25:6 NASB

Will you yield to him and be that banquet?

Print-friendly pdf: [Poured from Vessel to Vessel](#)

---

Copyright © 2025 Lifemessenger Inc.

[www.lifemessenger.org](http://www.lifemessenger.org)

Facilitating biblical teaching & thinking for church & culture

REPRINT AGREEMENT: Duplication and re-transmission of this writing is permitted provided that complete source and website information is included