

A Lump of Clay (*Letter from Elbert to Daniel Nathaniel*)

What is the experience that a little lump of clay must go through to become a noble vessel? Even a cup for the King's table? How through many seemingly mundane and routine processes — being squeezed, smashed, rolled, and thrown down on the table as a wet glob of clay — then put on a wheel of some kind and there only to be shaped and formed and then taken off again ... more water thrown on you and then put back on the wheel again .. and it turns and turns, spins and spins, and how it hurts to be on that wheel, with fingers and palms pressing up against you, doing something you do not understand. Then after a long, long time, you are taken off again, looked at up and down, and then set on a shelf. You sit there waiting for other lumps to go through some kind of crazy spinning and forming and shaping process, and you don't know why! Then, after what seems to be YEARS on that shelf, you see those hands coming at you and taking you off the shelf. A door opens to some little room, and you are set in there. And when you go in, you think that you'll just be in there for awhile, and it's not too bad in there. But then it starts getting hotter and hotter, and then it gets hard to breathe. You tighten up all over and hope you'll soon be taken out, but it gets even hotter. You scream for help and no one seems to hear you. After so, so long a time, the door finally opens up and those hands take you out. The cool air feels so good and you are put back on the same shelf again. You sit there and you even like the comfort of the shelf for awhile. But after awhile you start feeling neglected there and start wondering what you are there for anyway. All of a sudden, you are again lifted off the shelf and those hands begin to smear something all over you. You can't imagine what it is, and it is cold, and you feel so uncomfortable. Then the door to that little familiar room opens once again and you are put on that same rack and the heat is turned up all the way and you think you will never get out again. You think you are there for good — "This is it!" It goes on and on. You give up hope ... Then suddenly the door opens, and those hands take you out. He looks at you and puts you on that same old shelf again. You stay there on that shelf until you get chilly and wish he had never taken you out of the oven. You complain and then you see those hands coming for you again...NO! not the oven gain! He smears you with another coat of that cold stuff and puts you back in the FURNACE. This time for good, you think. The heat goes up this time even hotter than before. You can't stand it. I'll never get out of here! Someone help me! This is it! What did I do to deserve this kind of treatment!" And on and on goes the bellows, blowing on the hot coals. The heat gets more intense. "When will it ever end! NO, NO! This can't be right. What is going on?" Then all of a sudden, when you thought you would be there for eternity, the door opens again. You see those now-familiar hands reaching for you. You begin to somehow like those hands. You don't really know why, but you do. He takes you out and sets you on the shelf. You cool off and it feels so good. Somehow you feel better this time. You begin to believe that those hands are your friends. When he takes you again, you wonder what for, but your attitude is different now. You believe he is FOR you and not against you. He puts you on another shelf someplace else. You sit there and everyone comes by and looks at you and marvels and then the King Himself comes in, and in the midst of all the marveling, the King reaches out for you. You notice HIS HANDS, they look so familiar. When all the other times you saw those hands and fear had gripped you about where or what he would do with you next, back when you were nothing but a lump and a glob — but it is not like that anymore. There is no fear now. And the King takes you home with him and places you on his very own table and even right at the very place of his right hand. Somehow you look back and remember all the strife which seemed so bound up in your attitude, but now you are the kind of vessel that could be used by the King Himself — a noble vessel, a vessel for the King! Then you realize that you have been MADE into this vessel through much hardship, but you have been MADE FIT-as one especially designed for the King, made and selected by Him for His highest honor.

Through all the bewilderment, all the torture, all the confusion and the doubt as to whether He even knew what He was doing, to your final amazement, you realize He knew what He was doing all the time. And you, the fit and noble vessel that you NOW are, have such a love for Him, that it is even hard to realize you could love so much, because you have been made and fashioned by His very own hands — putting you through this process of becoming a dwelling place for Him throughout eternity — forever and forever. You are now fully made into His own likeness and hardness to endure forever for the Master's service and fully equipped for any good work.

All along, the Holy Spirit's hands were shaping and molding you, making you fit for the King...