

Brokenness

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:6-10).

God commanded light to shine out of darkness. He commanded it, and that light has shined in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God “in the face of Jesus Christ.” God wants us to reveal the face of

Jesus Christ, so when people see us, they see the character of God.

Knowledge of God's Word brings in light (Psalm 119:130). If God has His way, we will reflect the face of Jesus Christ at work, in the home, and wherever God has called us.

In this booklet, we will see that there is only one kind of Christian God can use—the broken Christian. Whosoever believes on and receives Jesus Christ is saved and will go to heaven. But God cannot use many who are born again. Before anyone can be effective in the Kingdom of God, the treasure of God within must be released. For that to happen, He allows circumstances that will break us and let His light shine forth.

Chapter One

PLACES OF THE LORD'S
BREAKING

“So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

“And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

“And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto to his place” (Judges 7:5-7).

“And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into

the host of Israel, and said: Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

“And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

“And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do.

“When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

“So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came to the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands.

“And the three companies blew the trumpets and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

“And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and

cried, and fled" (Judges 7:15-21).

"And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote [the Philistines] there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim" (2 Samuel 5:20).

Going God's Way

Gideon originally had 32,000 in his army. The Midianites, his enemies, had 135,000. When God called, Gideon responded and brought his army with him. The Lord tested the army and immediately rejected 22,000. Then, God told Gideon to bring the remaining 10,000 down to the water.

"Those who lap from their hand after bringing the water up to their mouths so that they can look and see where the enemy is, they will be accepted," God told Gideon. "Those who kneel down and put their faces in the water will be rejected."

Only three hundred did it God's way.

Gideon now had just three hundred to fight against 135,000 Midianites. The three hundred were separated into battalions of one hundred each. In their left hands, they carried torches hidden inside of earthen pitchers. In their right

hands, the men held trumpets.

While the Midianites slept, Gideon's army advanced to the edge of the enemy's camp. At the signal, they sounded the trumpets then broke the pitchers that were in their hands, making a great noise. Confused and frightened because of the noise, the Midianites thought a huge army was coming after them. Hearing the battle cry and seeing the lights carried by each member of the battalions surrounding them, the enemy fled. Three hundred overwhelmed the 135,000.

A Broken Heart Draws God Near

God wants to teach us something in the principle and application of this story. In 2 Samuel 5:20, the place where David defeated the Philistines was called Baal-perazim, which means "the place of the Lord's breaking." One of the greatest things a Christian can consider is this: "How much have I let God break me?" The Lord is nigh unto those who have a broken heart (Psalm 34:18). He gathers together the broken, those who have a reproach because of their burden. In Isaiah 57:15, the Lord is the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity. He whose name is holy inhabits the holy place, and He also in-

habits any who have a contrite and humble spirit. These are the ones God revives.

At first, no light was shining through the pitchers carried by Gideon's men. But the torches within those pitchers were prepared with oil to fuel the fire—a type of the oil of the Holy Spirit. The earthen pitcher is a type of the Christian who is self-preserving, insecure, paranoid, and immature because God has never broken him.

There may be times when the light is very dim because of weakness, but God knows the heart. He will not quench a smoldering flax (Isaiah 42:3). Therefore, let the weak say, "I am strong!" (Joel 3:10 *b*). We are strong in the Lord.

Chapter Two
SHATTERING THE
EARTHEN VESSEL

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you,

and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:3-12).

To those who have failed and know it, God says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Then He says, “Blessed are they that mourn (because of their failures), for they shall be comforted.”

First, I am poor in spirit. This means I hate my sin—I despise it and it makes me weep. Then, I mourn, and God comforts me. This makes me meek, meaning I become humble and God-conscious. All of it causes me to hunger and thirst after righteousness. I hate my sin. Oh, God, I hate it! But now, on the inside, I am meek. Instead of remaining conscious of my self and my failure, I am hungry and thirsty after righteousness.

Do you see the progression in Matthew 5? Because of this life in us, we are merciful to others. Next is “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” God sees this process of turning from sin and failure to Him as purity and faith purified. God’s mercy and purity make us peacemakers toward others.

The real reason a person becomes pure and

meek (God-conscious instead of self-conscious) is because of what God has done in his life. His spouse, his friends, and his co-workers don't have to change. What has happened is that God started the breaking process. I pray to God that you won't have to go through the painful breaking process, but I would be shocked if most of us didn't have to be severely broken.

Troubles Trigger Revival

In a church in a small town, a number of the teenagers were in rebellion. Nothing could be done about it. Five teens began meeting seven days a week with their pastor's guidance. They prayed fervently that God would work in those teenagers' lives. Soon after the prayer meetings began, a doctor in town was backing his car out of the driveway when he ran over and killed his young child. He didn't know the child was there. That same day, two teenagers died when their car struck a pole. From those terrible tragedies, people turned to God and revival came to that church where the young people were praying.

The teen ministry grew from twenty-five to one hundred. The church went from less than eighty into the hundreds. God began to work

because people's vessels were broken. Now the light of Christ could be seen. The light was inside of them, but no one could see it until they were broken.

Light Shines from Darkness

God's light is inside of every Christian. The question is, who can see it? A lot of people do, because many Christians have let God break them. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

God breaks the vessel. And when the vessel is broken, the light shines. God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and this light He shined in our hearts to "give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

What does God use to break the vessel? He uses trouble. We are troubled on every side, yet not in distress. We are perplexed, but not in despair. We are persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:7-10). Why? So that the life of Jesus may be made manifest.

God wants our lights to shine. He says, "I

must get the light of the glorious gospel out there. It is the light of My knowledge, the light of My doctrine, the light of the Spirit, the light of love, the light of grace, the light of mercy, the light of forgiveness. They need to be seen" (Philippians 2:15-16).

For that light to be manifest through the vessel, the outer man must be broken.

Chapter Three

MADE STRONG IN WEAKNESS

A young couple graduated from one of the finest Bible colleges around. Just three years later, he was promoted into a job as principal of a school of five thousand. They were very young when the wife, a lovely lady, came down with a crippling disease that has left her in a wheelchair to this day. That happened thirty years ago.

That man became such a broken vessel. He would do everything for his wife. He would wheel her everywhere. He kissed her cheek, loved her, and was very anointed in dealing with her around all the students. Then, as the result of an accident, he injured his leg and was left with a terrible limp.

Here was this young, handsome couple, and God broke them—repeatedly. Those things did not happen because they were not good Christians. It was so God could use them more. And

likewise, every anointed pastor in the world who preaches the gospel has been broken.

I was reading about several of the top preachers in Bible-believing churches in America. One of them had two daughters who became pregnant outside of marriage. He and his wife were great parents, and it broke their hearts. But more than that, their vessels were being broken, and God allowed it.

The wife of another pastor couldn't get out of bed for six years because of an unknown disease. Their vessels were being broken. Billy Graham has been so faithful to bring the gospel message to millions. But at age sixty-seven, the physical afflictions began one after another—hospitals, doctors. He is a very broken vessel.

Don't think that these men have been broken because they are not right with God. They are beautiful Christians. Yet, one reason that God breaks people is so that we can understand Isaiah 53:5: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed."

Jesus never sinned, but oh, He was broken. He was a broken vessel.

"I am like a broken vessel," David wrote in

Psalm 31:12. "Reproach hath broken my heart," he added in Psalm 69:20. Hebrews 11:34 tells us that "out of weakness" we are made strong. "When I am weak, then am I strong," Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:10.

He Heals the Strokes of Wounds

What God wants is that we would weep with people when things are being broken in their lives. Often we can understand and identify because we have been through it. When you are already broken, and yet things continue to break you, don't think that it is God hurting you. Yes, it hurts; but God allows you to be broken so the light can shine through you.

God gathers broken vessels together (see Zephaniah 3:18-20). He binds up the broken-hearted and heals them (Isaiah 61:1; Psalm 147:3). The Lord heals "the stroke of their wound" (Isaiah 30:26, referring to severe, indescribable emotional pain). God heals it.

Gideon's three hundred defeated 135,000. "There is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6). "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him"

(2 Chronicles 16:9a).

Uzziah was a wonderful king for fifty-two years; he was Isaiah's hero. But in 2 Chronicles 26:16, it is written that when Uzziah was strong, "his heart was lifted up to his destruction." In pride, Uzziah "went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar," which only the priests were allowed to do. The priests withstood the king; Uzziah became angry, and God made him a "leper unto the day of his death" (see 2 Chronicles 26:17-21).

Broken unto Death

Have you been broken? If you haven't been, you will be. What's more, you will be surprised at the things God will use to break you—and they can happen so quickly. Thank God, we do not need to offer blood sacrifices to obtain mercy. That was taken care of once and for all at the Cross. Rather, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). To become a sacrifice means to be broken unto death. When that happens, rebellion is gone. I don't de-

mand anything from God because everything He gives me is grace and I don't deserve it. I am broken. A Christian who experiences resurrection life in Christ is alive because he has been broken unto death (see Romans 6:13; Romans 12:2).

Every broken vessel releases God's light—the light of the Word, the light of love, the light of grace, the light of mercy, the light of compassion, the light of conviction, the light of respect, and the light of honor. But when the vessel is not broken, no one can see the light. So, God chips away at the vessel to reveal the light.

I know of a wonderful missionary pastor in Austria. Behind the scenes, he lives as such a broken vessel. If he were given five hundred dollars, he would find a way to give it away, even without knowing where the next meal is coming from. He does that all the time. He lives for others.

There are so many others we could mention who live that way before God. The man or woman of God who is broken is able to comfort others because of "the sufferings wherein we have suffered" (2 Corinthians 1:3). Each one has discovered the great blessings of brokenness. God revives the broken. He quickens the broken. He uses broken vessels.

CONCLUSION

Brokenness makes the difference in a marriage. What makes a difference among pastors who preach the gospel is brokenness. The pastor who isn't broken is independent of God's heart. That kind of pastor withdraws into himself. The pastor who isn't broken doesn't have genuine tears of brokenness.

"All my cords are broken," Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 10:20. This means he didn't have any sentimental relationships. The cords of sentimental relationships must be broken. We cannot follow people. We are to follow God, though we love people and fellowship with those who are of the same mind. But, the fleshly cords must be broken.

In Jeremiah 23:9, the prophet said that his heart was broken within him. In Jeremiah 9:1, the tears were running down his cheeks like rivers. And the tears ran down Jesus' cheeks, too (John 11:33, 35, 38; Luke 19:41).

Wherever the Word of God is preached with power, the man of God was broken before he could preach it. A pastor's wife who shares her husband with the world and never complains is a woman who has been broken. When a congregation is broken, no one reacts or becomes negative or arrogant, because there is unity that only God gives when people are broken.

Many people preserve themselves in their marriages. They refuse to let God break them and to let the light shine to their partner. They try to justify their hardness, which may have been caused by old wounds. But one has to show the light—the light of forgiveness, the light of compassion. The treasure in the earthen vessel can't be hidden on the inside. The vessel has to be broken. Please allow God to keep on breaking you so His treasures can be shown forth through you. We are the vessels He uses to show forth His glorious light.