

# Into the All Sufficiency of Christ #3 - Brokenness

by Ed Miller

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of brokenness in order to experience and manifest the all-sufficiency of Christ in our lives.*

**Duration:** 52:42

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 2 Corinthians 4:4-6, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Corinthians 5:21

**Topics:** "Brokenness", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of breaking the clay vessel in order to release Christ and manifest His life. He states four simple principles to understand this concept. The speaker highlights the contrast between the treasure of Christ and the fragility and worthlessness of the clay pot. He then delves into the book of Corinthians, specifically chapters 4 and 5, discussing the ministry of believers and the veiling of the gospel to those who are perishing. The sermon concludes by exploring the next step in Paul's experience and the need to be emptied and filled with the sufficiency of Christ.

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## Transcript

I guess I'm not very sensitive to really knowing when to move, and I took it by the silence that we're finished. If there's anybody else that wants to sing or say something or share scripture, I don't want to cut in on anything. I just, okay, we're ready.

Okay. Well, it makes me nervous. There is a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable.

And I will never tire of saying that because our natural hearts take for granted the one thing that's indispensable over and over again. And we need to be constantly reminded, as David said in Psalm 119, that we're strangers on the earth, we're pilgrims on the earth. We don't know the way to go.

We need the Lord. And only God can take this book and show Himself. And I know, I can sense it's your heart.

You want to see Him. I want to see Him. Let's bow again.

Let's ask the Lord to guide us. Our Father, we do thank You so much again for Your Word. Lord, we know that You have not promised to bless the Word that goes out of the mouth of Your human instrument.

But You promised to bless the Word that goes forth out of Your mouth. And so we would ask You to speak. We pray that there might be that double conversation going on and that behind the scenes You might be teaching our hearts and revealing Christ to us.

We wait for You and we thank You. In Jesus Maxwell's name. Amen.

2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 5 says, We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as Your bondservants for Jesus' sake. In a sense, that verse is the ultimate in Christian living. When the Lord Jesus is reigning as undisputed Lord of our lives, when our lives are being poured out in bond service for His world, then that's what we desire and that's what God desires to work in us.

We won't take a lot of time to review just these thoughts. The Apostle Paul had such a passion, had such a desire, and God created in him a bondservant's heart. And I suggested that the Apostle Paul becomes God's illustration of such a heart.

And the process by which God created that in Paul is exactly the process by which God does that for us. 2 Corinthians is the book where Paul puts his heart on paper. By the Holy Spirit, Paul just poured out his inner man and he laid out the process by which God created that in him.

If we're to know such a life, then we need to see this process. Now, we've been looking at these things. I'm giving three principles, but really, when we're all done, you'll see that actually four principles.

They're all one. They all blend together. We just analyze them, cut them apart for the sake of discussion.

But then when we're all done, we've got to put them back in the Bible where they belong and keep it as one whole. But for the sake of discussion, number one, if Paul is going to know Christ as Lord and himself a bondservant, then God must take Paul beyond Paul, over the line, over the threshold, and into the all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus. And what's true of the model is true of all those that would follow the model.

Now, there are many ways we say the same thing. It depends on where you're from and what group you're with and your background and all. Some people would call that total surrender.

Some would call it the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Some would call it death to self, cold crucifixion. It doesn't really matter what you call it if you understand it, what God is saying.

He said that God along the way must take us beyond our limits, beyond ourselves, where we don't trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. That was the first principle. And I'd suggest again, I'd remind you again, that this is not a goal.

This is a starting point. Satan loves to take byproducts and turn them into goals and take starting points and turn them into goals. You know, if you put your eyes on a byproduct, you miss the byproduct and the goal.

We miss everything that way. If we're wrong in the one thing essential, we abort everywhere. We're wrong everywhere.

And so this is the starting point. And then this morning we looked at the second stage or principle. When the Apostle Paul stepped over that line, in a sense he entered a brand new realm, which we've called the all-sufficiency of Christ.

On the other side of Paul, he saw the Lord. He saw that God was adequate and God was enough and Christ was all-sufficient. And as he stood over that line, he knew he would never need another thing.

Jesus Christ was everything. He saw Christ as his victory. He saw Christ as his testimony.

He saw the glory of Christ as the purpose of all Bible study. His heart, his eyes, his mouth was open wide in amazement as he just beheld the Lord Jesus Christ. And finally everything began to fit together in the mind, in the life of this great saint.

Now this evening I'd like to take you into what I think is the next step in Paul's experience. Yes, I must be emptied. Yes, I must be full of the all-sufficiency of Christ.

Then what? What follows that? What comes next? Now before I come right out and state the principle, we're going to be looking at chapters 4 and 5, or at least segments from those two chapters. Now let me suggest a transition that the apostle gives from step number 2 in the process to step number 3. He doesn't jump right into step number 3. He gives you a little transition. It's almost as if the apostle couldn't find words to describe the glory of being on the other side of the line and seeing himself in Christ Jesus.

That just took his breath away. Just to see himself in Christ and all that was his in that union, in that relationship. And so he seems to ransack creation, hunting for some illustration to describe that experience.

I wonder if you can remember back when you first began. Of course, we're all beginners. We're all just starting to know God and starting to see God.

But the first time when that truth was dawned on your heart, that you are in Christ Jesus. What a revelation that was. Anyway, he takes chapter 4, verse 6. Let me read the first six verses.

Therefore, since we have this ministry as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. We renounce the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants, your born servants, for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, light shall shine out of darkness, is the one who hath shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. I'll ask you to look again at verse 6, because I think that's his illustration.

God, who said, light shall shine out of darkness, is the one who hath shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. I think the apostle is saying something like this. When I crossed the line, when God pressed me, pushed me, crowded me, engineered my circumstances, when God set me over that line, on the other side of myself, and I saw myself in Christ, that experience, that revelation, what I saw, was the same kind of thing that happened when God created light in this universe.

The same kind of thing. Try to visualize, if you would, Genesis 1-2. I don't know if you've ever tried to make mental images of some of these Bible verses.

It's interesting. I'd like to see some of them on canvas. How would you paint this? The earth was formless and void.

Darkness was over the surface of the deep. It would be an interesting painting, I think. It's hard to get an image of that.

No light, no form, emptiness, vanity, profound darkness over the face of the deep. And then all of a sudden, let there be light. What happened to the emptiness and the vanity and the profound darkness? It just dissolved.

It was just gone. Well, Paul's trying to describe an experience in his life. And he says, that's it.

That's what happened to me. The same God who said, let there be light, shone in my heart to give me the light of the knowledge of God, the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. And Paul said, I experienced that creative light.

Same thing that happened when God created the universe. Because before I crossed that line, my life was without form and void and empty. And darkness, profound darkness, was on the face of the deep.

I crossed the line and suddenly I heard in my soul, let there be light. And Paul said, there was light. And the veil was taken away and I saw the light of the knowledge of God and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

It's a powerful illustration. And he uses that to lead in to this next step. Let me suggest what I think might have been going through the mind of the apostle Paul as he stood there in the sea of God's all-sufficiency, basking in the glory of the Lord.

He said, I got a new Bible that day. And every place I looked, I saw the glory of God. I saw Christ.

It's wonderful. I come as a sinner to the book and God says, let there be light. And all of a sudden I see a Savior perfectly adapted to my need.

Perfect Savior. I come as a legalist and I look in the book and all of a sudden God says, let there be light. And Christ comes out of that page as the end of the law to everyone that believes.

He says, I come to this book as a weary pilgrim and I'm looking and all of a sudden Christ comes out as rest. And I see Him as my rest. And every time I have a need, I come to the book.

God reveals Christ. Again and again and again. Paul almost raises this question.

Is that what it's all about? Just standing there seeing Jesus. More light. Seeing Jesus.

More light. Seeing Jesus. More light.

Being emptied. Being full. It's almost like Paul says, what's the point of all this light and all this revelation and all this illumination in my heart? How does my fellow man fit into all of this? Shouldn't I be concerned about my brother? Shouldn't I be concerned about my sister? Shouldn't I be concerned about my neighbor? The stranger? The prisoner? The orphan? The widow? My enemy? Isn't there some place in there that says something about that? What about verse 3 and 4? Our gospel is veiled.

It's veiled to those who are perishing. In whose case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. What about the lost? The perishing? The unbelieving? The blind? Those who are deluded by the God of this age.

What about soul winning? What about missions? What about ministry? Christian service. Paul is about to learn the next step. You must be emptied.

You must be full. But now comes the question, let there be light, let there be light. I get light, I get light.

I think I need to be a transmitter as well as a receiver. All is light coming in. It would be nice, I think, if God would, once we're saved, put a nimbus around us.

You know what a nimbus is? The artists used to use that. It's that little round circle of light around the head. So you'd recognize the saints, recognize deity.

Wouldn't that be neat if God put a nimbus, a radius around our head? Make things a lot easier. You know, say, oh look, here comes a Christian. You could tell by his nimbus.

And all the unsaved would know who the Christian is. And you could tell how you're doing in Christ just with a light meter. Just check your nimbus.

Is it glowing? Is it growing? Of course, if you were a backslider, your nimbus would tell on you. There'd be no hypocrites if you had a nimbus. Is that what Jesus meant when he said in Matthew 5, verse 14, You're the light of the world, and let your light so shine before men? Brothers, since there is no nimbus, how is the light going to be manifested? This Christ that we're taking in and taking in, seeing more revelation, illumination, quickening, revelation.

The manifestation of Christ. Light in the soul is one thing. Releasing that light is another thing.

And now, Paul must learn how God has planned to release the light from within. For the sake of logical connection, let me show you the illustration Paul chooses from chapter 4. And then, just to make it real simple, I'll just state it in four simple principles. And then pray we get beyond the principles and have life and see the Lord.

Notice how verse 6 and 7 are contrasted, please. God, who said light shall shine out of darkness, is the one who shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But, but, the next verse starts with a but.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels. Wonderful light, wonderful treasure, wonderful Christ, but, unfortunately, but we have this, the Greek says, in a clay pot. Earthen vessel.

Not some glass vessel or metal or brass, but a cheap, unattractive, fragile, worthless clay pot. Chapters 3, chapters 4, chapters 5 of this book are full of contrasts. Light is contrasted with darkness.

Life is contrasted with death. That which is seen is contrasted with that which is not seen. The present is contrasted with the future.

Light affliction is contrasted with an eternal weight of glory. And now in verses 6 and 7, the precious treasure is held over against the clay pot. Marvelous light we have, wonderful Christ in us, but we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

Now, I can't prove this, but I go along with the majority of commentators who believe the Apostle Paul, in this text, is referring to an Old Testament story. And I'm talking about Judges chapter 6 through 8. The story of Gideon. Gideon's 300.

I can't prove that was in his mind, but I think it was. Whether it was or wasn't, it's in my mind. So let me just tell you the story.

I'm sure you're familiar with it, but I'll just tell you in its basic simplicity, and then we'll come back to this. Gideon was selected by God to lead an army against the Midianites. And God, the Holy Spirit, is careful to tell us the odds.

It started off with 135,000 enemy against 32,000 in the army of the Lord. Now, here you have a corporate illustration. As you go through your study of God's Word, remember that everything that's true of the body is true of the individual.

And everything that's true of the individual can be applied also to the body. So you better know in your life God's going to take you personally over your limit. He will do it.

But He'll also take the body over the threshold as a group. Well, Gideon's army was 32,000 against 135,000. That's four to one odds.

And to paraphrase it, God said, Now I know you're going to trust yourself with those odds, so I'm going to reduce the odds so that you'll not trust in yourself but in God who raises the dead. And so God told Gideon just to announce to the people, Anybody chicken-hearted, go home. Anybody afraid.

And so 22,000 soldiers went home. That changed the odds to 13 1/2 to one. And God says, No, because you're so full of self-trust.

If you got a victory with the odds 13 1/2 to one, you'd say, Look at the great victory we have. And so God said, I'm going to have to press you again beyond your limits so that you'll know it's from the Lord. And so the word went out to Gideon to test those who were real soldiers.

And he said, The test will be this. You take them down to the river, and you watch the ones that lay down their weapons, because they're not real soldiers. If they reach into the water with both hands and lap up water like a dog, then they're not real soldiers.

If they hold on to their weapon and they drink with one hand, keep those. And so he told them what to do, and they did it. Out of the 10,000, you know the story, 9,700 dropped their weapons, leaving 300 men and a new set of odds, 450 to one.

God says, Okay, now, with these odds, 450 to one, you know you're outnumbered. You know you're outflanked. You know you're out everything.

You're outskilled. And now I know if you have a victory, you're going to know it's because of God who raises the dead. And then in Judges 7, verses 15 to 25, the Holy Spirit records this strange but very instructive story.

He told Gideon to take those 300 men and equip them with torches, trumpets, and a clay pot. Same word, pitchers. And each of those 300 soldiers was to take a trumpet in his right hand, a burning torch in his left hand, over which was the clay pot so you couldn't see the flame.

It'd still be light enough under it to keep it going. I suppose it rested on their arm or something like that. Then the 300 soldiers were to surround the Midianites, and on every hill all around the camp of the Midianites was to be a soldier.

And then at the given signal, when someone yelled, the sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon, they were to take the trumpet, smash the pitcher, blast the trumpet, and leave the rest to the Lord. Well, they did that. You realize what went through the mind of the Midianites.

It was night. It was dark. And all of a sudden, everywhere they looked, they saw a torch and they heard a trumpet sounding, and they thought they were surrounded, not by 300 men, but by 300 regiments of men.

And confusion took over. And according to the Bible, men, women, children, horses, camels, everybody was running every which way, and everyone thought their neighbor was an Israelite, and they all started killing each other. And so these men walked down into a battle already won.

Tremendous story. All to say this, and I think Paul had it in mind in our next principle, and you already know what it is. In order for Christ to be released, in order for Christ to be manifest, the vessel, the clay pot, had to be broken.

This, my brothers, is the principle toward which we've been moving. It's got to be emptied, and certainly it's got to be filled with Christ, the all-sufficiency of Christ. But now, in order to manifest Christ, in order to release Christ, in order that Christ might come out, that precious treasure that's in the clay pot, the pot must be broken.

2 Corinthians, please, chapter 4, verse 10. Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

If some of you sighed with relief when you passed over the line, and said, finally, it's all over, no more pressure now, no more troubles, no more trials, God pushed me to the limit, God pushed me over the limit, now I'm over the line, I'm safe. God is very serious, brothers, about the making of bondservants. He's very serious about that.

He's very serious about having Christ released. The vessel must be broken. Alright, now having said that, let me back off and come back again and give you four simple principles.

I'm going to be going over some of the same ground. Just to make it clear, let me just state these principles. Number one, the clay vessel must be broken in order to release Christ.

In order to manifest the life of Christ. If the light within is going to be exposed, the vessel has got to be broken. I read of a wonderful story of some old clay jars with some precious treasure inside.

Perhaps you've heard of the story. I'm referring to the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls, as you may know or not know, were discovered in 1947.

Some of the oldest manuscripts ever found were in those scrolls. Included was 17 sheets of the book of Isaiah in leather, all sewed together, 24 feet in length. It's the book of Isaiah.

There was also portions of Habakkuk and Daniel and so on. According to the story, these treasures were found because of some little shepherd boy. Boys will be boys.

And this little Bedouin shepherd boy was playing near Qumran in the northwest of Jordan there. And he was throwing stones. And he threw a stone into a cave and he heard the shattering of an old clay pot.

And he went up into the cave to investigate and that's when they found those great eight vessels. We have this treasure in earthen vessels. We're also clay vessels and I'll tell you, we contain a treasure infinitely more valuable than those clay pots that held those Dead Sea Scrolls.

We're talking about the Lord Jesus. As in Gideon's day, the pots had to be broken. As Mary had to break that alabaster vial of costly perfume to minister to the heart of Christ.

As the Lord Jesus had to break the loaves in order to minister to the hungry multitude. As the grain of wheat must die and be broken before its latent life can be released. As our Lord Jesus himself had to be broken on the cross before we could drink of the wells of salvation.

As those vessels containing the Dead Sea Scrolls had to be broken before that treasure could be found. So brothers, there's no shortcut to this if you're serious about being a servant. You've got to be broken.

I've got to be broken. Our true life is not measured by how much spiritual wine we take in, but by how much of it is poured out in the ministry, in the service of our fellow man. Second principle, God uses everyday life to break the vessel.

Very often when people hear this, I need to be broken. First temptation is to run to legalism and to say, I knew it was too easy to be true. Can't just see Jesus.

Now there's got to be brokenness. This clay vessel has to be broken. So now let's go about and mortify our flesh.

Let's deny ourselves and suppress our sin. Let's willingly pour ourselves out. Let's start inviting everybody to dinner.

Let's start a visitation program. Let's begin to look again like walking track racks and ramrod the gospel down everyone's throat. Let's weave Jesus into every conversation.

We've got to be broken. Let's go out and do these things. Well, if Christ is going to shine through the vessel, it isn't because we're going to enter into some kind of self-renunciation or asceticism.

Paul didn't say break the vessel. Paul says the vessel must be broken. There's a difference.

We're not the ones that break it. In fact, it's quite passive. Listen as Paul describes the stones that broke his clay pot.

Verse 8, chapter 4. We're afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed, but not despairing, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed, always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in the body. He was talking about the everyday troubles that he was going through on his missionary journeys and so on. His troubles, his afflictions, his trials, his tests, his harassments, his confusions, his oppositions.

God has never told us to do more than look to Jesus. But what he does say is when you do that in reality, then God will engineer your life so that the vessel will be broken. It only takes a moment's meditation to prove that.

Just think of when Christ is seen by others. Is it when the seas are glass and the weather's fair and there's no troubles and Christians are just going along and everything's going fine? Is that when Christ shines through? Just think about it. It's when you're cast down and when you're afflicted and when you're wounded and when you're broken.

And then they're looking and they're observing. And they see somehow you're supported during that time. They'd have to run to a building or a bridge in order to cope.

They can't cope. And they watch you. And they see your joy and mine and the comfort that you're receiving.

They see the fact that you're supported. That when these things come into your life, you're still praising God. You're still rejoicing.

You're still worshiping. They see when you're opposed, somehow you're not bitter. You don't carry animosity.

In a vindictive heart, you don't try to get even. You don't grumble. You know, we've gotten a million, million miles away, I think, from these great principles.

If what I've been hearing among the brothers is true, If God is speaking to His people around the world about this whole idea of being poured out for others, then if revival comes, one of the great signs of that revival is going to be a broken people before God. It's going to be a child-likeness before God. We hear all kinds of words like scholarship and degrees.

We don't hear too much about brokenness and weakness and helplessness and dependence. Instead, we hear words like blessed and healthy and prosperity and prosperous, wealthy and secure. You know, our seminaries and our churches are so full of talented men and women and gifted men and women and eloquent men and women and zealous men and women and even dedicated men and women.

Where are the broken? Where are the broken men and women? It seems like somehow we resist brokenness. And I'll tell you, brothers, and you know, your heart knows, if we resist brokenness, we are resisting the only way Christ is released through us. He's released through brokenness.

Hold that principle and let me share this third one. Not only the vessel must be broken in order to release Christ, not only God uses everyday life and all the situations of life in order to break that vessel, but everything that comes into my life designed to break the vessel are designed for my good. They're employed in my service.

They're working for me. They're working for you. If you would go through chapters 4 and 5, you would notice the great emphasis on faith in those two chapters.

I won't take time to prove that to you. But the Holy Spirit, and through the Apostle Paul, just begins to talk about faith. It's almost like he jumped into the topic.

And it's almost as if Paul is saying, you need to be broken. Now you need to see that by faith. Otherwise, you'll never believe that this is working for you.

The Apostle saw it by faith. Look at verse 17, please, of chapter 4. Momentary light affliction is producing for us. Take those three words.

Producing for us. He's talking about all the afflictions that come into his life, and he says they're producing for us. In fact, what he does in that verse, he takes every problem he ever faced.

And if you read the rest of the Corinthians, you have the catalog of that. At least some of it. And he adds them all together, and he calls them light affliction.

Producing for us. The exact opposite of Genesis 42, 36, when Jacob says, all these things are against me. He hadn't understood it at that point.

Momentary light affliction producing for us. I'll tell you this, brothers, we're called to this. And it's going to help when God begins to break us or continues to break us, as the case might be, it's going to help to know by faith that that's working for us.

That that's producing for us. I think one of the greatest mysteries on earth is a woman's attitude toward childbearing. Those labor pains, we wouldn't have six children if it were reversed.

They say a man, if he has kidney stones, comes close or something like that. I never had kidney stones. I never gave birth to a baby.

I don't know. Personally, I think a beach thing. But there's nothing to compare to this woman giving labor.

And my question is, why do they do it more than once? My wife did it five times. We have six children, but we snuck twins in there. She did it five times.

Well, God tells us why. Because their labor pains are producing for them. They understand that.

John 16, 21, whenever a woman's in travail, she has sorrow. But when she gives birth to the child, she remembers that anguish no more for joy that this child is born into the world. And the apostle recognized that everything that came into his life was a labor pain.

And he understood it was producing for him. And when he put his eyes on what it was producing, it was not only worth it, he desired it. And he said, this light affliction, this little bit that we're going through, breaking us, is producing because he saw the Christ that was being released from his life and the tremendous fruit that it was bringing forth.

And he said, oh, because of that baby, it's worth it. It's worth it. For Paul, the breaking of the clay jar was producing for him an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

I love that expression in verse 17, far beyond all comparison. I'm not against hymn writers. Hymn writers have a license, and they can give shallow things.

If you find a shallow song, don't be afraid to sing it. Sometimes we get so spiritual, we just say, I'm not singing that anymore. It's got a verse in there that contradicts this.

Sing it anyway. There's a shallow part of all of us. There's deeper parts of all of us.

And some of the songs have this idea in there that when we see the Lord, compared to what we're going through now, it's just going to look like nothing. Well, the apostle didn't say that. What the apostle said was, I would love to tell you what's coming compared to this.

But he said, I can't do that because what's coming is not worthy to be compared to this. Beyond all comparison. The comparison is so tremendous, it's contrast, not comparison.

And he said, if you would know what you are called upon to do, to experience through breaking, if you could understand what's coming from that, you would never resist it again. You would long for that because that's the path. I'm taking over the line.

I'm filled with Christ. Now, in order to release Christ, I must allow all of these things to come in and to break me. In order that Christ might be released.

And everything that comes into my life is employed in my service. It's working for me. It's producing for me.

It's producing for you. That's why God's given us the faith sense to know that. We need to understand brokenness works for us.

You know, sometimes when we're going through it, we just say, well, everything's against us. But we need to understand these things. It's hard when you're going through it to say, this bankruptcy is working for me.

Isn't it tremendous? Oh, I love this failure. How it's working for me. Our brothers give you some theological honey.

I call that which is very sweet and a little sticky theological honey. You couldn't say these things everywhere. But you guys are as radical as I am, so I'll say it here.

Is it true that my sin is working for me? That divorce is working for me? Brothers, you pull out the stops and believe that with all your heart. These things that are designed to break you, every forward step in helplessness, in emptiness, in brokenness, in weakness, is a forward step in the knowledge of God and in the knowledge of his book. God has called us.

He's going to release Christ. But there's got to be brokenness, and we need to know as it comes that that is producing for us. Far beyond all comparison.

An exceeding weight of glory. All right, one more thing and we'll be finished. God uses the everyday trials of life to break us.

All of those everyday trials are working for us. Here's the last principle. When I'm on the other side of the line, and God begins the breaking process, there is the temptation to be brokenness-centered rather than Christ-centered.

Sometimes it makes us glorify suffering. Sometimes it makes us dread it. Some people just glorify suffering and they just say, oh boy, I just love suffering.

Some people are just obnoxious. And they get themselves into trouble with their mouth or their strange behavior, and then they just write it off as suffering for Jesus' sake. And really, if they had acted normal, they wouldn't have had to go through some of that.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, the apostle takes a marvelous illustration. He talks about the glorious future. But he's not all of a sudden jumping into now a word about the intermediate state or a word about heaven.

He's not doing that. The apostle is taking a future truth and applying the present principle. Every future truth has a present principle.

And every future truth is designed to show us a present Christ and that we can enjoy in foretaste. Now, heaven in the bud. And so he talks about the time when we're literally going to die and literally going to be in the presence of the Lord.

And he compares this dropping off the old tent to that which breaks the clay jar. And he says, nakedness, dropping off this old tent, is not what we're after. We're not looking to nakedness, but in order that we might be clothed.

Paul describes life in chapter 5, 1 to 10, in these words. Well, this is a parable. He says there's two ways to live.

You can live at home in the body and absent from the Lord. Or absent from the body and present with the Lord. Now, you say, that's a future truth.

When we die, we're absent from the body, present with the Lord. That's true, but there's a present principle. Paul describes life on the level of earth, sight, physical life, as living in the body.

And he says, if I live on the level of earth, in the body, by sight, then I'm absent from the Lord. But if I live present with the Lord, I'm absent from the body. The apostle began to explain how he was able to face all of these troubles that came in.

And it was simple. He was never home. If I went to my neighbor's house and I threw a stone through his window, and he didn't come running out and grab me by the throat, I would say, my neighbor's not home.

If I saw my neighbor standing in the window, and I picked up a rock and threw it through his window, and he just looked at me, and so I ran over to his flower garden and I began to step on his flowers, and he just watched me. So I broke the limbs off his fruit tree, and he just looked. So I dug up his lawn, and he did nothing.

So I set his house on fire, and he still did nothing. I'd say, he's not home. Right? Well, that's what they did to Paul.

They broke his windows, and they stepped on his flowers, and they broke his limbs, and they dug up his lawn, and they set his house on fire, and he wasn't home. He was never home. He wasn't surrounded with the brokenness because he was living in the presence of the Lord.

He was absent from the body and present with the Lord. Brothers, don't you fear brokenness. It's going to come.

It's got to come if Christ is going to be released. Don't you be afraid of that. You just live in the presence of the Lord.

You just live in the secret place with God. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, if you talked to them later about a fire, they wouldn't know what you're talking about. I remember strolling with the fourth man in the furnace.

I don't remember a fire. To those who are going through it, they don't know anything about it because they're living in an unbroken relationship with God. To those who are observing, like Nebuchadnezzar, they have a testimony.

Christ is released. They see him. That's the release of Christ.

Brothers, we need to step over the line. And oh, yes, we need to be filled with Christ. Oh, we do.

But he needs to be released as well. We need to be broken. And now Paul says, Now I can know Christ.

Now I can be a servant. Not yet, Paul. You need to come back tomorrow morning.

There's one other step, brothers, that we need to see. And oh, may God grace us as we look at this. Let's pray together.

Our Father, we know it's a great thing to ask of Thee, but Thou art a great God. And so we ask You to work in our lives that we'd never be at home, that we'd always be in the presence of the Lord, so that when we're broken, they might see Him. Do it, we pray, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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