

Our Being Emptied

by John Follette

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being emptied, surrendered, and refined by God, like wine, to become a vessel for His purposes.

Scripture: Isaiah 64:8, Jeremiah 48:11, 2 Corinthians 11:23, Philippians 3:13, Philippians 4:11

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Brokenness"

Description

John Follette preaches on the process of being 'emptied' like Moab in Jeremiah 48:11, using Paul as an example. Despite Paul's immediate surrender to God, he went through trials that broke and melted his natural spirit, leading to a broken, mellow spirit that poured out his life with heavenly joy. Paul's experiences, as described in 2 Corinthians 11:23-29, reflect the journey of being emptied from vessel to vessel. He learned to be content in all circumstances, not by becoming indifferent, but by becoming independent of his surroundings and making them serve him for spiritual growth.

Transcript

"Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." Jeremiah 48:11

Let us consider Paul as an illustration of this process of our being "emptied." In his conversion, God accomplished a feat that takes years to gain in the lives of many Christians. Paul immediately surrendered his will, "Lord, what will you have me do?" Even though Paul did this, there remained in him a strong, natural (self-life) spirit.

We find Paul being poured and emptied, again and again. This was not to cause him to yield his will, but he was emptied from vessel to vessel because he had yielded his will. In all the trying experiences that he went through, his natural spirit was giving way breaking and melting until at the close of his life, we find in Paul a broken, mellow spirit, which led him to pour out his life, and that with a heavenly

joy.

Consider his testimony:

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool), I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep.

"In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren.

"In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are outside, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches." II Corinthians 11:23-29

Is not this a very real picture of what it means for us to be emptied, from vessel to vessel? Consider Philippians 4:11:

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content."

This word "content" is often considered to mean that Paul became indifferent to his surroundings and contented himself as best he could. But the correct meaning is quite different. It is, "in whatsoever state I am, therein I have become independent of it."

How very different this is from Paul just becoming indifferent to his surroundings. He did not allow the trial to overcome him, but he became its master, and independent from it. Thus, he made it to serve him. Whenever any part of the trial rose up to torment or fret him, he melted and ran into that very part, and then silenced it. He became independent of whatever the "vessel" was exposed to, because he recognized that the "wine" that was within, was of far more value than any earthen receptacle. Therefore, he was able to make it serve to collect the dregs and sediment of his old life. We should consider how we might more gracefully be poured; how we might break and become the desired wine.

First, we are to consider that the Lord is the maker of the vessels. He does the pouring, and we are His wine. For us to see this will clear up many difficulties. He may use people, or even the enemy as instruments to form the trials - but only to accomplish His purpose in perfecting us, as our being "wine refined," leaving behind the "dregs" of our old creation and self-life.

"Behind my back I fling,
Like an unvalued thing,
My former self and ways,
And reaching forward far,
I seek the things that are
Beyond time's lagging days."

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