

(Pdf Book) Beauty of Christ Through Brokenness

by K.P. Yohannan

The sermon emphasizes the importance of brokenness and humility in the Christian life, highlighting the consequences of unbrokenness and the need for a broken heart to receive God's grace and favor.

Scripture: Psalm 34:18, Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 66:2, Matthew 5:8, John 12:24, Galatians 2:20, James 4:6

Topics: "Ebooks", "Brokenness", "Humility"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the significance of brokenness in the Christian life, illustrating that true humility and surrender to God are essential for reflecting Christ's image. He explains that God esteems the humble and contrite, and that unbrokenness leads to pride and self-centeredness, which can hinder our relationship with Him. Through personal anecdotes and biblical examples, Yohannan encourages believers to embrace their brokenness as a pathway to spiritual fullness and to allow God to work through their weaknesses. He highlights that brokenness is not a one-time event but a continuous process that leads to transformation and a deeper connection with God. Ultimately, the beauty of Christ is revealed through our willingness to be broken and to serve others selflessly.

Transcript

Introduction

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My reason for sharing on this subject, which I believe is close to the heart

of God, is for us as the Body of Christ to understand the most crucial, fundamental element in the Christian life--brokenness.

As the Body of Christ, we are called to be a people who live together, strive together, pray together, suffer together, agonize together and--if need be--die together, for the sake of proclaiming His merciful salvation to a lost and dying world.

And what kind of people must we be to fulfill that call?

The purpose of God was not to make us

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into His workers. If He needed workers, He could have produced 10 billion trillion more angels to do the job. He created man not to tend the garden and just do all kinds of work. He created man to manifest His image, in His own likeness.

How do we daily, in each situation and throughout every season of our lives, reflect Him? That is the question at hand.

One of the major works of the Lord in our lives, as we seek to do His will and manifest His image, is the work of brokenness.

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C H A P T E R O N E

Esteemed by God

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In the book of Isaiah, we see a glimpse into God's heart for the broken. In Isaiah

66:2 (NIV) God says, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."

But we have a problem.

By nature, we all are the opposite of the one whom He esteems. We are all unbroken. We are as solid as the hardest substance you can find--unbending, self-centered, self-ambitious and never wanting to give in. We are part of a world in which we are told, either directly or indirectly, "Fight for your

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rights! Be your own person! What matters is success, ability, personality, position, being important and first class in everything." This is ingrained in us.

I remember some years ago a man applied to join GFA's home staff. He was a computer expert, a brilliant man whose ability and talent would help the ministry in a significant way.

As he was getting ready to soon join us, he called our current office manager to ask a question that was very important to him. He explained how he was leaving an incredibly important position at his current job and went on to say, "My friends are asking me what my new position is going to be. I was wondering if you could tell me so that I can put it on my new business cards to let every-one know."

We were taken back by his request. Not that business cards and titles are a bad thing--they are not. It was the seeking

of great status and an honored title that jolted us.

I have never forgotten that day. As the office manager and I spoke, we both understood the answer we must give in reply. I said, "I don't think we can offer him anything. If he is willing to come and clean the toilets, be a nobody, he may come. But since

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he already is demanding a position and looking for a great title, it would be best if he stays where he is. Please tell him not to come."

This situation reminds me of something

A.W. Tozer said: "It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply."¹

You see, in the work the Lord does in our lives, salvation is just the beginning; the majority of the work remains--the work of the cross. Through the cross, God is continually trying to break us of our own hardness. In the measure in which we can be broken, in the same measure we shall experience the resurrection life and the rivers of living water that flow without hindrance.

How can we tell if we are broken or unbroken? When we have embraced the work of the cross, our lives will reflect the beauty of our Savior. But when we are still unbroken, our lives look very different.

I want to present some questions, which hopefully will shed some light on your heart so you may see what condition it is in.

Do you focus on the failures of others? Are you quick to blame people when things have gone wrong? Do you become defensive when someone criticizes you, the work you did or the things you've said? When we are

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unbroken, we tend to have a self-protective spirit, regarding our own lives as precious-- are you like this, protective of your time, your rights and your reputation?

Do you compare yourself to others and feel deserving of honor? Are you driven to be recognized and strive to do things--even spiritually--to find appreciation from others? Are you easily wounded when others are promoted and you are overlooked?

Because of unbrokenness, we can find it very difficult to share our real spiritual need with others. Do you make certain that no one finds out about your sin?

Unbrokenness can often make us blind to our own true heart condition, thinking we have no need of repentance. Do you have a hard time saying, "I was wrong.

Would you forgive me?"

Some time ago I received a telephone call from one of our leaders in India. A highly intelligent, well-educated man, whom I know quite well, was thinking about coming to work with us. The leadership

wanted to know what I thought about it.

As I spoke with them over the phone I said, "First, he would be one of the greatest assets we can have as far as his ability is concerned. You couldn't find a more gifted individual; he has incredible abilities. As a com-

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municator the man is superb."

"But second," I said, "it would be very dangerous for our movement if he came. The man is not broken. He is so self-sufficient, so sure of himself, so strong. You can be sure he will fight and win every argument with his determination to always be right.

Even if he gives us money to let him work with us, I wouldn't have him. I would not have him because what he produces would be hard, unbroken people. We want broken people. God is looking for humble people, not able people. He resides with the lowly of heart."

In fact, this is exactly what Isaiah 57:15 says: "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"

Take a moment and ask the Lord to show you areas of your life that remain unbroken. Are you willing to humble yourself and surrender these areas so that He may do His work in your heart?

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C H A P T E R T W O

What We Need

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Unbrokenness is a fearful thing. It is the spirit of Satan, whose nature is incur-

able pride that can forever resist God. God's greatest problem is not our sin (for He dealt with that on the cross), but the hardness and unbrokenness of our hearts. That is God's greatest problem, the root of all our troubles.

The Bible has its lists of unbroken people. Consider Pharaoh as one example.

Pharaoh could have been Moses. What an incredible opportunity. He could have become like Ruth of Moab or Rahab the harlot. He could have been the most incred-

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ible individual in history to join with Moses and lead the children of Israel. He could have said, "Moses, we grew up together. You left Egypt and I thought you were an idiot to give up all you had. But here I sit on this ivory throne with all the power in the world, yet I am so empty, lost and hopeless. My power and possessions are just a show. I am nothing. But Moses, I see in your eyes such authority. With stammering tongue you simply say, 'Let my people go,' and the heavens stand by you. I tremble at your words.

Moses, I give up. You be my agent of reconciliation. Let me follow you--what do you want me to do?"

Pharaoh could have done that. But he didn't. He refused to be broken. At every opportunity, with each of the plagues, his heart became harder and harder.

King Saul is another example. What incredible possibilities the man had! God chose him to be the very first king of Israel. What an honor! He began as a humble leader, but over the years, little by little, he began to harden his heart. He refused to be broken of his own ways. And in the end, it was the very thing that killed him.

In the book of Numbers, we read one of the most frightening stories in the Bible-- the story of Korah. Like the others, he hard-

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ened his heart and infected the entire Israelite camp with his arrogance. But unlike the others, no external circumstance caused him to fall. No snake came and bit him, causing his death. There was no heart attack. There was no somebody killing him or him committing suicide. No sir. God Himself ripped open the earth and swallowed him up (see Numbers 16:32).

Each of these men paid a great price because of their unbrokenness. And please notice how their unbrokenness did not just affect them, but also the people they led, loved and lived with.

The same thing happens in our lives when we refuse to humble ourselves. Not only does our resistance prolong the process and delay the good work the Lord is trying to bring about in our lives, but it also affects those around us. Oftentimes when we resist the work of God, our family and loved ones suffer. Our relationships and our jobs suffer because we become difficult people, hard to get along with and living with internal tension that soon manifests itself in our external lives.

Unbrokenness is a fearful thing. Why? It is so fearful because any one of us has the ability to harden our hearts in the same manner as Pharaoh, King Saul or Korah, and

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by this set ourselves up as enemies of God.

Humble Thyself

Scripture tells us, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6, NIV).

This is a strong verse.

You could make anybody your enemy and still somehow survive somewhere. But you don't want to make God your enemy. We do this by having a prideful heart.

The Greek word for "oppose" used in James 4:6 is *antitassomai*, a word denoting to "rage in battle against."¹ I am sure you agree--this is a bad deal! If for some reason I got angry with you, you could punch me back. But if God becomes angry with you and resists you, you would have no chance. We bring disaster upon ourselves when we walk in pride, and ultimately we cut ourselves off from His grace.

The only way to receive His grace and favor is to be broken and humble before Him. And this is something Scripture says we are responsible for. The Bible never says God will humble us. The only place where God humbled individuals is in the case of Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar or situations when He said, "Either you fall on this rock and be saved, or the rock will fall on you

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and powder you" (paraphrase, see Daniel 2:34-35).

We must humble ourselves (see James 4:10). We must choose to walk the road of brokenness. We are told to put on the garment of humility.

This brokenness is not just an outer garment. It is not just externally looking very humble and pious, like the Pharisees did. The attitude of our hearts must be humble.

But how can we understand the condition of our heart, to know whether it is humble and broken or stiff and unbending? Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Yet this passage continues with saying, "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind" (v. 10). When the Lord, in His mercy and grace, reveals to us the pride, stubbornness and unwillingness in our hearts, we must be willing to say, "Lord, that's the area You are showing me. I humble myself and I repent." But if we refuse to do that, we make God our enemy. He will oppose us. Grace can no longer be given.

A Familiar Enemy

Our refusal to bend and break and be humbled causes us to be God's enemy. Yet

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we can also have another enemy throughout this process of brokenness--ourselves. We are often our greatest enemy in seeing the work of the cross reign in our lives.

Watchman Nee said this:

Anyone who serves God will discover sooner or later that the great hindrance he has in the Lord's work is not others, but himself. He will discover that his outward man (soul) is not in harmony with his inward man (spirit). Both tend to go toward two opposite directions from each other. He will also sense the inability of his outward man to submit to the inner control. Thus he is rendered inca-

pable of obeying God's highest com-
mands.²

You see, Scripture speaks of an inner bat-
tle that takes place in all of us. It even goes as far as to call it a
war, one that rages between our inner man and our outward man. Consider what Paul wrote in Romans
7:22--"For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my
body, waging war "

(NIV, emphasis added).

There is a clear distinction between our inner man and our outward man. There is a

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battle, which can have only one winner. If our outward man can be broken and crushed, the inward man
can shine through and the beauty of Christ within seen.

Please understand. "The inward man can-
not come forth, because he is resisted and blocked by an
exhausted outward man. That is why we have repeatedly suggested that this outward man must be
broken."³

Founder of Christian and Missionary Alliance, A.B. Simpson, once wrote a hymn entitled, "Not I, but
Christ," in which he captures perfectly the need in each of our lives:

Oh to be saved from myself, dear Lord Oh to be lost in Thee;

Oh that it may be no more I, But Christ that lives in me.

Oh to be saved, not from adultery and thievery and lying and cheating and all the gross, visible sins that
are happening out there, but from myself. Oh to be lost in Thee, that it may be no more I, but Christ. That
is the brokenness I desire for myself and for all of us.

Brokenness for Today

Sometimes we may not even see how much we need to be broken. Depending on

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the culture we grew up in, some can--with-
out realizing it--have an unbroken, prideful attitude ingrained in
them. We may have been taught from birth to let no one intrude in our lives. We raise our children, and
from the day they are born they have their own rooms, their own toys, their own everything. And using
each other's things without first asking permission is not allowed.

How careful we are to protect our per-
sonal lives. We are brothers and sisters in Christ until you cross that
fine line and enter my private life. And if you are brave enough to do that, the quick reply you'll hear is,
"Hey, listen. I love you and respect you, but this is none of your business." Whether we see it or not, this is
unbroken-
ness.

This is not how it should be. In the family of God there is no veil. There are no barriers, no shields, nothing. We have been crucified with Christ, and things like age and looks and material possessions no longer matter. In the kingdom there is no pushing to get first place; there is no standing up for our rights. In the kingdom, up is down and down is up, and the servant is greatest of all.

As a leader, I am in a most dangerous place of not recognizing unbroken areas of

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my life. The Lord reminds me often to be extra sensitive to this, because, especially in the Asian culture, very few people will go to a leader, look them in the eye and say, "You are wrong. You messed up."

Because of this, I have tried to order my life so that I am surrounded by people who watch what I do and say. I have sat down with a few people and said, "If you care about me and love me, please, tell me anytime you see something wrong in my life." I am not infallible. I am capable of doing any wickedness you could possibly imagine. I am a man living in mortal flesh with every vice and temptation anyone else faces.

In fact, there have been times when I've had to stand up before the people I work with and repent and ask forgiveness because I publicly hurt one of them. I can easily slip. I can easily get the attitude, "I know who I am. I know how much I studied. I know my leadership. I know what I am doing."

One incident while on a recent visit to India reminded me of the need to be on guard and continually asking the Lord to search my heart, that I would remain broken before Him.

As I stood beside a coconut tree outside of the library at our seminary, I was absolutely spellbound by the look and ele-

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gance of the building. I thought to myself, "I wish I were young again so I could study here. Look at all these books!"

And suddenly, as I was standing there, these words came to my mind: "Look at this huge, wonderful building," as if I had made that place happen. Honestly, I had had nothing to do with the beautiful library. But if I had let my thoughts continue as they were going, I would have ended up like Nebuchadnezzar, saying, "Wow! I did something terribly wonderful and significant."

I will never forget leaning against that coconut tree, all alone, looking at the library. I said to myself out loud, "As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more" (Psalm 103:15-16).

"Lord," I said, "that is what I am. I am like the grass and the flower." And I spoke to myself, "Look, flesh. Now you understand what it's all about. You can do all these things and there will come a day when the very place where the things are done will remember you no more. Walk away from it. Don't hold anything so tight. Even in the work of the Lord, it is worthless."

I was 16 when the Lord first called me to serve Him. Now I am much older. In this

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journey, over the years I have met, lived with, taught and served so many whose lives have been destroyed by pride. They simply were not willing to give in. God did not come down and take away their lives, as happened in the Old Testament. Instead, because of their continual resistance, they were "shelved"--put aside from God's work--while less able, younger but broken people went on with God.

We miss God's greatest blessing when we harden our hearts. We become our greatest enemy when we allow our outward man to remain intact and never broken. Proverbs 29:1 (NIV) warns us, "A man who remains stiff-necked . . . will suddenly be destroyed--without remedy."

Again and again and again He reminds us, "Today, if you hear [My] voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7, NIV).

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CHAPTER THREE

How He Does It

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The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18, NIV).

It is very interesting to note how this verse says "the Lord is close." So what is the opposite? The Lord is far away. He is distant from someone who is not broken. The way to have God near to you is to be humble and broken. As long as we are stubborn and hard and unbending, He will be far from us.

But the kind of people God will never despise or walk away from are the individuals who live with a broken spirit and a contrite heart. "The sacrifices of God are a

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broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart--these, O God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

Imagine someone dying of hunger. There is food placed before him, but no matter how hard he tries, he cannot eat. The problem is that his mouth is stitched closed and his hands are tied behind his back. Even if someone tried to feed him, he could not receive the food.

In our spiritual life, the same thing can happen. No matter how much God loves us, no matter what He wants to do for us or how earnestly He seeks to bless us, He cannot do anything with a person who closes his heart in pride, refusing to bend and break. And as long as this believer lives on earth, God's

consistent work is going to be to bring him to the place of brokenness.

God never gives up on us until we are broken. Consistently He works with us.

And He uses all kinds of methods. Either He will break our outward man gradually, like one steadily chips away at a large stone, or He will break us suddenly, through some major crisis. Sometimes there is a sudden breaking, followed by gradual. For others, the Lord arranges daily trials, difficulties, difficult people, hard circumstances, physical problems and all sorts of things--you can

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write your own list--to bring us to the place of brokenness.

God works with each one of us in His way. The way He breaks you may be different from the way He breaks me. And the timing of it all is in His hands. However, we can certainly prolong the process. In some lives, God can bring an individual to the place of brokenness in six months, one year or three years. For some it is a lifelong process--10, 20, 30 years. The saddest of all is wasting such incredible, precious years because of our resistance.

My Personal Experience

The first time I can distinctly remember the experience of being broken, I was about

18. At that time I didn't understand anything about what was happening, except that it was painful and it hurt.

From the age of 16, I had been involved with a youth evangelistic movement. The Lord had gifted me to teach, but at that time I didn't realize it was a gift He had given and not something I had of myself.

After a few years with the movement, I was known and recognized for my ability to communicate and teach effectively. I was in great demand by all the area coordinators. Everybody was asking for me to come to

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their area because they wanted someone to preach and teach like I was able to do. It's not that there were no other preachers. It was a young people's movement--there were only about 300-400 of us. There is a saying, "In a country where nobody has a nose, the one with half a nose is the king." I mean, in my little world out there, I was the one with half a nose. And I felt really good about my nose! I was in such demand, and I was flying high.

It was during our 30-day conference in Ajmer, Rajasthan, that I first began to experience what it means to be broken.

At the end of the conference, each area coordinator selected the people they wanted on their teams for the upcoming season of ministry. Throughout the conference, I was walking around like a peacock with his feathers displayed. I was thinking, "My goodness, what am I going to do when the conference is over?"

Everybody is going to want me. How am I going to say 'no' to so many people? I am going to be in such demand. What am I going to do with myself?"

But when the conference came to an end, I had not been chosen to be on anyone's team. Nobody wanted me. The selections were made, and I just sat there all alone.

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One by one, I watched as the teams started to leave.

That evening, one of the senior leaders came to talk to me. He walked me out of the meeting place, through an old beat-up door with a half-broken light hanging down outside it. We walked out into the night and sat on a large stone outside the meeting place. He turned to me and said, "Brother K.P., all the teams are gone. Only five or six individuals are left. You are one of them.

Nobody wants you."

I was totally shaken by that. I didn't have anything to say. He didn't tell me this in a nice, cozy living room with us sitting on comfortable chairs. There were no stars shining in the sky; it was a dark night. We just sat on a rock outside. He didn't put his arm around my shoulders to comfort me. He simply said, "Your pride, your arrogance is the reason." Then he got up and walked away.

I sat there for a long time. My whole world had collapsed.

The next few days I said to myself over and over again, "I will never preach again. I will never teach again. I don't ever want to do ministry again. Nobody wants me. They don't understand how much I have done for them. They don't know how hard I have

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worked." For days I was like this.

Then God, in His mercy and grace, came through and told me, "What he said is true. It is your pride, your stiff neck and your unwillingness to bend."

By His grace, I had the courage to look back over the past months and years on the teams I had been a part of and realize how impossible to live with I had become-- hard-hearted, argumentative and always thinking my way was best. No matter what the leaders suggested, I took a different approach. I had a different idea of how to do it. Regardless of what the argument was, I always sought to win. And most times, I got it my way.

That was the first time I can distinctly remember knowing the need to embrace the cross. I began to understand then that my worst enemy was my own stubborn, unbroken life.

Since then, many more times I have gone through similar experiences. That one time was not the end.

Wherever we are, wherever the Lord has placed us, we need to be sensitive to not resisting brokenness in our lives, ultimately delaying the good work He is trying to fulfill in us. The only person that can delay God's promise in your life is you--by resisting His breaking.

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Jacob's life is a classic example of this resistance.

Don't Delay!

In Genesis 25:23, God gives the promise concerning Jacob and his older brother, Esau, before they were even born: "The older shall serve the younger." God's promise was there from the beginning.

But despite that fact, Jacob lived his life trying to fulfill the promise through his own scheming and clever plans. What a man he was! He was bold enough and clever enough to steal his brother's birthright and trick his father into blessing him instead of Esau.

Because of the tension now between him and his brother, Jacob fled to his uncle Laban's house for safety. While en route, he had a dream in which he saw the angels ascending and descending. God promised to make Jacob's descendants great and to bless him and bring him back to his homeland.

But still, Jacob wanted to do things his own way. He bargained with God, saying, "If you'll let me just continue in the way I am going and keep me safe and feed me, then when I come back I will build a temple for You. I will give tithes" (paraphrase, see Genesis 28:20-22).

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He still would not give up his own ways.

He still would not break.

When he finally reached his uncle Laban's house, he soon discovered he was a man twice as conniving as himself. The medicine Jacob had dished out to his brother and his father was now returned to him a hundredfold. For 14 years he labored under his uncle, still scheming and planning to increase his wealth in his own way. God was trying to use Laban to break Jacob, but still he resisted.

Sick and tired of living with Laban, Jacob decided it was time to leave. So with all his livestock, his wife and children, he ran from his uncle, planning to return home.

While on his way, he heard that Esau was coming out to meet them. Afraid of what Esau's reaction might be, Jacob, still scheming and relying on his own ways, sent his servants, livestock, wives and children ahead of himself to meet Esau. He reasoned that if they got killed, at least he would still be safe. He was still looking after his own interests. He was still unwilling to give everything to God and let Him work it out. He still would not surrender.

Finally, after 20 years of running in his own strength, in his own cleverness, in his own scheming and planning and plotting,

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all by himself and out in the desert, he met God.

Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Genesis 32:24-28).

How can anyone wrestle with God and win? It reminds me of when my son, Daniel, was a little boy. I used to wrestle with him, and he would win every match.

This seems to be how God does it with us. He lets us win, but not the way we want to win. After wrestling with God, Jacob was not the same. He became a cripple; from then on he walked with a limp. But he won that night because he admitted who he was--Jacob, meaning schemer and deceiver--

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and finally let God break him.

Once a friend of mine called from over- seas, dealing with a situation in which he was trying to work things out with his own planning and scheming, not realizing God was trying to break him.

Troubled by a situation in which he was being taken advantage of, my friend, accord- ing to the law, could rightfully press charges and bring justice to his situation.

When I heard him leaning toward this route, my response was one of shock. "I am surprised that you would even think those thoughts!" I said. "Your safety is not in any of these things. It is in the Lord. Why must you fight for your rights? The Bible says when the Levites' rights were taken away, their properties were taken away, their hous- es were taken away, and their lands were taken away, they gave it up gladly and never went after it. That is the way you should be following."

This is a modern-day example of how we can delay the Lord's work of brokenness in our lives by our own planning and schem- ing. Thank God my friend saw this to be the correct response and used this situation as an opportunity to walk in humility and let the Lord be his defender.

In each of our lives, the Lord brings us

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Labans and difficult circumstances--either financial setbacks, failures, sickness, and so on--to break us. Through these things, God is continually trying to break us--not to destroy us, but to bless us. Only after the cross comes the resurrection. Only after the cross comes glory.

Other Hindrances

The work of brokenness is a beautiful thing. It causes our lives to become the sweet fragrance before God that it was intended to be. But we can also delay the work of brokenness by not realizing that God is the One working behind the difficult scenes of our lives.

When God brings pressure from circumstances, people or whatever else, many live in total darkness, not recognizing that God is at work. We blame our circumstances, people, our past and everything around us. We are blind to the fact that God is allowing these things.

This was the case with Jonah. He was a clever individual. He ran from God, refusing to preach to the people who were killing his countrymen. Yet when the storm came that tossed him into the belly of the fish, he began to realize God's hand in his circumstances. Sitting in the belly of the fish, Jonah

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acknowledged that God was playing a major role in his situation--"For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me" (Jonah 2:3, emphasis added).

What about you and the struggles and problems you face? I think it would be good to stop blaming circumstances and people and say, "Lord, You are allowing this for a purpose." All things work together for our good so we may become like Jesus (see Romans 8:28-29). When we truly believe this we can rest, knowing that God is the One orchestrating the events of our lives. It is His plan, and we learn to bend our neck and receive His yoke.

This causes us to become less frustrated with circumstances and people and everything else. When we look up and recognize that He is behind it all, His grace and peace enter our lives.

With all the decision making in my life, I often have to pause, look up and remember God is the One working behind the scenes. I say to myself, "He is able to work all things out for good. I just need to submit to Him and His ways. I can rest."

Another way we can delay the work of brokenness in our lives is by our self-love.

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How He Does It

We may know that God is working in the difficult circumstances but still want our own way. Self-love always delays the process of brokenness.

There are many reasons why we may want our own way, even after recognizing what God may be trying to work into us. You may say, "I have been hurt before and I learned my lesson. I need to protect myself. I'm not going to open my heart to anyone."

Maybe you're like Jonah, saying, "I am not going to preach to a Nineveh. I am not going to return to a place where they beat me up and profaned Your name."

Or maybe you are more like the prodigal son's brother, saying, "I am not going to accept my Father's love and forgiveness and celebrate with that prodigal brother who is undeserving. I am not going to keep loving and praying and hurting for my church when they don't appreciate me."

You can say and do all these things. You can put yourself first and love and protect yourself. And you will remain intact and horribly unbroken.

C.S. Lewis said,

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken.

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¶The Beauty of Christ through Brokenness

If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket--safe, dark, motionless, airless--it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable The only place

outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers of love

. . . is Hell.¹

There are many other things that can also hinder us--our own pride, self-sufficiency, lack of faith and fear. We can be so consumed with what others think of us when we do humble ourselves, that we forget the good fruit that comes from being broken, fruit that far outweighs all we could fear. We could be afraid to fully abandon ourselves to God, in the fear that He will not prove true and we'll be left out on our own. But we must believe in the goodness of the Lord. God is good. He is always faithful. His plans for us and the work He does in us are always for our benefit. He is the Good Shepherd and knows best. His heart toward us is always good. We can trust Him.

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¶How He Does It

What situations in your life is God trying to use to help break you? Are you aware of the work He is doing within you and in your daily circumstances? Are you willing to let go and allow Him to have His perfect way in your life?

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Way to Fullness

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If there is one verse in the entire Bible that speaks volumes of what it means to be

filled with the Holy Spirit or to experience the fullness of the Lord and have His rivers of living water flow out of us unhindered, it is Galatians 2:20--

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

\fThe Beauty of Christ through Brokenness

It's a familiar verse to many of us. But please, take a moment to pause and think about what it is saying.

This "I," this "me" who is so important, has ". . .been crucified, it's no longer I who live . . ."

Someone once said, "There is a cross and there is a throne in all our lives. If 'I' is on the throne, then Christ is on the cross. If Christ is on the throne, then 'I' is on the cross."

The measure in which we will allow the cross to operate in our lives, to bring death to our own selfish ambitions, our ways, our rights, our reputation, our interests, in the same measure only will Christ manifest His life through us.

Jesus talked about this in John 12:24-25, "I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

Jesus' contemporary, Eusebius, records the account of a king from a small kingdom who, after hearing of the Jewish leaders' plot to kill Jesus, sent a few of his men to deliver a letter to Him inviting Him to live in their kingdom. The contents of the letter deliv-

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\fThe Way to Fullness

ered were something like, "We understand the Jews are plotting to kill You. Having learned much about You, I believe You are a good man and teacher. Please come and be part of my kingdom and rule with me. We will take care of You."

John 12:20-21 (NIV) mirrors this account: "Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came . . . with a request. 'Sir,' they said, 'we would like to see Jesus.'"

According to Eusebius, the answer Jesus gave to their request was very similar to John 12:24-25. In essence, what Jesus said was, "You want to see Me? If you really want to see Me, you must die. Only through death will you find Me."

Jesus' answer is the same today. If we want to see Him and have His beauty and love seen in us, we must die. We must be that grain of wheat that falls to the ground, broken and crushed, to see greater life produced.

But oh how you and I try so hard, even in Christian service, to preserve our own lives, even when Jesus clearly said that if we hold on to our lives we would lose them.

We will remain as we are. Fifty years we can live and study the Bible and become an expert, and still, we will not see Him.

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\fThe Beauty of Christ through Brokenness

On the pages of the Bible, you will see Jesus--the One who dwells in such light that when you gaze upon His face you change without trying. Second Corinthians 3:18 tells us, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory." That transforma- tion, that change can only take place when our hearts are pure. In one of Jesus' first ser- mons He told the crowd that had gathered, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

But what does it mean to be pure in heart?

A pure heart has no soulish life in it, no selfish ambition for itself because that "I" has been crucified. With the pure heart, there is no hindrance from Christ within coming forth because there is no contami- nation from the self-life.

Over my years of ministering, the Lord has had to rebuke me several times after speaking and teaching from His Word. I repent over those times. Even though my speech was absolutely eloquent and people were moved by the words I shared, when it was all over, very quietly the Lord would say to me, "You failed Me miserably."

"How, Lord?"

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\fThe Way to Fullness

"It was all contaminated. You spoke truth, but it was all mixed up with your soulish life. A bit of dirt makes all the water impure. People were deeply moved emo- tionally and intellectually, but no life can come out of it."

In Matthew 11:29-30, we read one of the most beautiful Scripture portions ever recorded. It is the invitation of Christ-- "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

When Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you . . ." we must realize that only a broken animal will bend its neck and take the yoke.

For example, I grew up in a place where my people are rice farmers, and we didn't have machinery then or now to plow the fields. You know how we do it? We use two buffaloes.

I remember as a small boy, looking at the fields where they would be used to plow.

Year after year, hundreds of times, I saw the same scene--the buffaloes standing there, not making a single noise. They would never run away. They just stood there. And right there in the field beside them would be a skinny, little man with hardly any clothes on and a tiny stick in his hand. The buffalo

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would bend its neck as the yoke was brought--there was no fight, no resistance, no squabble, nothing. The buffalo simply yielded its rights.

But then, if you were to look closely, you would see two or three deep scars on the rear of the buffalo. Those scars were made at the time the animal was broken, when it was trained. These buffaloes are strong-willed creatures. With their massive and strong horns, they are capable of killing a man with a single toss of the head. But now they are different. They are broken.

Every servant of God must go through a similar process. Paul speaks of bearing on his body "the marks of the Lord Jesus" (see Galatians 6:17). Christ was broken on the cross. The whiplashes on His back, the thorn piercing on His head, the nail holes in His hands and feet are His brand marks.

They speak forever of the humility He chose to walk in on this earth.

Again, we must hear the invitation of Christ--"Come, yield your rights, let go of your own will and take My yoke. It is easy. It is light. Come, learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly, and you will find rest for your soul."

What from His life are we to come and learn from?

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Consider the way Psalm 22:6 (NIV) speaks of Christ: "But I am a worm and not a man." It's talking about Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the world, what He must say about Himself. He was bruised and broken that no one should desire Him, no one should have any attraction toward Him. He was despised and forsaken. Like a sheep that is silent before the shearer, He did not open His mouth in protest to the cruelty He received from the ones He came to save. He simply submitted and chose to be broken (see Isaiah 53).

And we, too, must choose to be broken.

Philippians 2:5-8 tells us,

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Someone can be filled with the Holy Spirit, baptized in the Holy Spirit, stand on his head or whatever, yet still turn around

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and be as carnal, hard and devilish in his attitude and actions toward others.

Why? Because being gentle, soft and Christlike never comes through the gifts of the Holy Spirit or by being filled with the Holy Spirit. It comes only through the cross and our choice to embrace brokenness, just as Jesus did. Jesus said, "This is My body which is broken for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24). He chose brokenness. He chose to embrace the cross. He didn't say to Peter or John, "This is My body. Take it and break it." He didn't say, "This is My body that the Father broke into pieces for you." No. He is the One who humbled Himself and allowed Himself to be broken.

I want to offer this humble suggestion:

Do not look for some external, supernatural event to change you or the situations of your life. Let the Lord show you the corruption in your own heart and be willing to go to the cross by humbling yourself. Be willing to be broken again and again and again and again. This is the only way to have life. As long as you hold onto it, you will lose it. But once you choose to be broken, you will experience the life of Christ in all its fullness.

Oftentimes when I counsel people, I sense this is what the Lord is trying to accomplish through the situations they are

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dealing with. I listen as they tell me of the heartache, pain and frustrations they live with. But most important I listen to what is not being said with words. In the end, my response is often the same--"Brother, it's not what happened to you. It's not what the person said or this and that. It's how you responded to it. I sense tension. I sense rest- lessness. I sense you want to be vindicated. I sense the agony in you, the pain in you, like you are locked up in a prison. Your problem is not out there; the problem is here, in your own heart."

Every time you are discouraged, every time you want to give up, every time you are in conflict with someone, every time there is no peace in your heart, you are troubled and distressed, there is restlessness and all those things, you must understand--the Lord is trying to bring you to the place of broken- ness. We become frustrated and upset over our circumstances because we have yet to truly experience what it means to just give up, to become like Christ, like a worm, and totally give up our rights. The cross of Christ continues to work, but you are resisting it.

The way of peace, the way to have a striv- eless life out of which rivers of living water flow, only comes through our being broken.

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CHAPTER FIVE

The Beauty That Comes

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In the ancient town of Bethany there lived a woman, whose story we read in Mark

14:3-9. One evening she traveled to the house of Simon the leper, because she had heard that Jesus was there. She came seeking to do one thing--to pour out her costly perfume to Jesus. "A woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head" (v. 3).

Please notice that Scripture does not say she came and poured out two or three drops and then closed the flask and went home.

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She did not pour out half of the contents and then decide that was enough. No. She broke it. All the contents were poured out as the vessel was broken and the entire area was filled with fragrance.

My brothers and sisters, the Lord desires the same for us, for these earthen vessels, these jars of clay, to be thoroughly broken before Him, that Christ within may come flowing out in all His beauty, making our lives a blessing to all those around us.

Inner Transformation

When we come to the place at which we experience this brokenness, we begin to change within, in our character. The climate of our heart changes and we start to daily walk in repentance. There's no more defending ourselves and the things we've done.

There is no more shifting blame and saying, "It's my nerves, the circumstances. You don't know what I have to live with! I only reacted. It's my weakness. It's my DNA from my great-grandfather." None of these things is left. We simply say, like the prodigal son, "I have done wrong; I have sinned."

The prodigal son's response to his father was not, "Father, I never would have left this house if this creep, my older brother, didn't treat me so badly all of my life. Father, I

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The Beauty That Comes

would have been more thoughtful about not leaving if only you cared about me and had some feasts like this one once in a while in my honor. I would have been more content if you gave me some pocket money to spend on myself. It's because of you, Father!"

There were a thousand excuses he could have come up with for leaving home and squandering his father's wealth. But he didn't use them. He was broken. He was humble. And he simply said, "I have sinned" (see Luke 15:18).

Not only do we walk in repentance over our own sins, but we repent for others as well. The Bible is full of broken individuals who wept over the sins of their people.

Consider Daniel or Jeremiah, also known as the weeping prophet. Like Jesus, we are moved with compassion for those who have gone astray.

Broken by our own sin, we no longer judge our brother or our sister, but our hearts are soft enough to break for the sin in their lives. We enter in and become part of their struggle, agonizing with them and carrying their burden. Like Nehemiah, we cry out before the Lord for them (see Nehemiah 1:4-11).

When we come to the place of genuine brokenness, we also come to the end of our

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own strength. Our own strength is often one of our biggest enemies. But when we are broken, we realize we have no strength except what God supplies. Flesh has no strength to do good. Paul says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells" (Romans 7:18).

Have you ever wondered why God picks the least, the last and the nobodies to do His work? Except for Judas who betrayed Him, all the disciples of Christ were plain, ordinary, uneducated men. God didn't select the 12 disciples from among the strongest and the best.

In Scripture, we see how God often does the greatest through those who admit they have no strength of their own. Consider Moses as one example. He was once a great orator and leader, but when God broke him of his own ways out in the desert for 40 years, he came to the end of his strength and ability. Left with nothing but the strength and ability of God, Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt.

When our flesh stops trying, when it is thoroughly crushed and broken, His purposes for our lives are unhindered, and we bring true glory to His name.

First Peter 2:23 (NIV) tells us, "When they hurled their insults at [Jesus], he did not

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retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

When we are broken like Jesus, we are able to forgive people, truly forgive them, and desire no revenge. A good example of this is found in the life of Joseph. When his brothers came to him desperate in the time of famine, he had every reason to turn them away and let them die. But he didn't. He said, "My brothers, don't be afraid, the Lord sent me here for you" (see Genesis 45:5).

What an incredible heart of forgiveness! There was no revenge, no wish for evil. This can only come through a life that has been truly broken. All those years in slavery and in prison, all the hard circumstances and rough terrain of Joseph's life were used to break him, so that one day he could become a blessing to many, even to those who had hurt him most.

And there was no pride in Joseph being able to help the ones who hurt him. This is because when we are truly broken, our lives are rooted in humility. We live in the reality of Philippians 2:3 (NIV), and we "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than [o]urselves."

There is no room for boasting.

Look at Jacob's life and see how when he

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was finally broken, there was no more "I am this . . ." and "I am that . . ." Instead, in Genesis 47, we find Jacob leaning against his staff at the end of his life and simply worshipping God, in awe of who He is and what He had done.

When we have been broken of our own ways and our own life, we walk as Jesus did, in true submission. This is not just an outer compliance, but an attitude of our hearts. It is not always easy to submit, either to what the Lord is saying or to one another. This is surely an impossible thing for someone who is not broken to do. But when we see Christ and embrace brokenness as He did, we have no reason to fight for our way or consider doing things independently.

Jesus never operated independently at all. He only spoke and did what the Father gave Him (see John 14:10). He never sought His own will. He came to do only what the Father desired. In everything He was in submission to the Father. And we are to live the same way, in submission to the Lord and to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

This kind of life seeks nothing but the Father's approval. It no longer matters what people think of us or what we have accomplished. "We make it our aim . . . to be well pleasing to Him" (2 Corinthians 5:9,

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emphasis added).

All of this beauty comes because we are broken. We no longer have anything to fight for because our lives have been crucified with Christ. We no longer have anything to boast in because our outer man is crushed, our strength is done away with, our reputation insignificant. It is only Christ within us that matters now. And it is only Christ within us, in all His beauty and grace, who can be seen now. His living water is free to flow out of us and bless others.

The Fruit of Brokenness

When we live a life of brokenness, not only do we become a blessing to many, but we live victorious over the Enemy. Scripture tells us that Jesus overcame him who had power over death through His death on the cross (see Hebrews 2:14).

It was not when Christ performed miracles and walked on water and raised Lazarus from the dead and fed the five thousand that He defeated Satan. It was when He suffered. It was His brokenness and giving up His life that brought victory.

It is through our choosing brokenness that we also find victory over the Enemy-- victory over the one who creates the anger, the jealousy, the discouragement, the bitter-

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ness and strife, the fighting for our rights and all the other stuff we struggle with. We find victory through simply letting go and, like Jesus, giving up our lives.

When we live a life pleasing to Jesus and broken before Him, He is able to remake the failures in our lives. He, the Master Potter, is able to take the broken vessel and remake it into the precious one. He is the One who has promised that He would not destroy the bruised reed (see Matthew 12:20).

All of this causes us to become a blessing to others, filled with the same meekness of Christ. Through brokenness, we become just like Him--approachable, highly sensitive to others' needs, hurt and pain, and genuinely caring for them.

Just think about it. There was no one afraid to come to Jesus. Everyone from the tax collectors to the prostitutes felt welcomed and safe around Him. There was a love in Him unsurpassed by any before, because He, the Bread of Life, allowed Himself to be broken. His brokenness became our blessing.

My precious brothers and sisters, I encourage you to learn of Him who gave up everything. Jesus was so broken on the cross. There was nothing He held on to. Learn

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from His humility and brokenness. Only on that foundation will we be able to reflect His image and do what He calls us to do. I want that, and I believe you do too.

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Concluding Remarks

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There seem to be thousands of Christian bookstores today filled with "how-to"

books--"How to have a happy life," "How to have a happy marriage," "How to raise your children," "How to be financially solvent." We like quick and easy fixes. It's like putting food in the microwave and pushing the button--"pshtt"--just like that, it comes out ready. Instantaneous Christianity!

But brokenness in our lives is a process, one that we continually learn and grow in. May the Lord help us all as we go through this life. Slowly but surely we are learning.

The Beauty of Christ through Brokenness

God never gives up on us. Consistently He works with us. He never says, "I can't work with you anymore. You are hopeless." Even when we are faithless, He remains faithful. We can trust Him always, even when

we fail. He is all good, all perfect and all love to us.

Prayer

Lord, please help us to choose those opportunities to give in, to bend, to break and to walk humbly with You and with our brothers and sisters. Thank You for the example that You give us. We are learners, Lord, and we bend our necks and say, "Lord, please, let Your yoke be upon us."

Thank You for Your Word that comes to our hearts as an encouragement. You are working with us, changing us day-by-day to prepare us for eternity and to restore to us that which was lost. Your intention is to make us more like Your Son. Lord, thank You for working with us. Make us teachable like little children. Give us Your grace to stay soft and broken. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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