

Unbrokenness Is a Fearful Thing

by K.P. Yohannan

The sermon emphasizes the dangers of unbrokenness and the necessity of humility to receive God's grace and avoid spiritual downfall.

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:9, James 4:6, James 4:10

Topics: "Brokenness", "Humility"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes that unbrokenness is a fearful state, rooted in pride and resistance to God, which leads to spiritual hardness of heart. He illustrates this through the examples of Pharaoh, King Saul, and Korah, who all faced dire consequences due to their refusal to humble themselves before God. Yohannan warns that unbrokenness not only affects the individual but also those around them, causing relational strife and spiritual stagnation. He stresses the importance of humility and the need for self-examination to avoid becoming enemies of God through pride. Ultimately, he calls for a conscious choice to embrace brokenness as a pathway to receiving God's grace and favor.

Transcript

Unbrokenness is a fearful thing. It is the spirit of Satan, whose nature is incurable 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 incredible 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 hardened 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 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 The Beauty of Christ through Brokenness 20 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 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 incapable of obeying God's highest commands. 2

You see, Scripture speaks of an inner battle 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 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 cannot 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 the culture we grew up in, some can--without 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 personal 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 unbrokenness.

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 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 elegance 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 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).

Notes:

1 James Strong, LL.D., ST.T.D., The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001).

2 Watchman Nee, Release of the Spirit (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 2000), p. 11.

3 Ibid., p. 38.

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