

The Value of a Broken Vessel

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

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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Grace Publications is a ministry of
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

The people of Israel used vessels made of various materials. Wooden vessels did not have to be broken, neither did the brass vessels. But earthen vessels had to be broken when they became defiled by the juices from offerings of sacrifice. Earthen vessels quickly absorb what touches them, causing a permanent spot, profaning them, and requiring that they be rejected. If a dead animal fell into an earthen vessel it had to be broken. If anyone with an unclean discharge even touched an earthen vessel, the vessel had to be broken (see Leviticus 11:33-34; 15:12).

The reason for many of the problems Christians face is that many don't realize that they have a vessel that needs to be broken. A characteristic of earthen vessels is that they always take on the character of what is inside of them. There are Christians whose typical reactions are no different from the world in stressful situations. They have never been broken, so they

manifest what is on the inside. Idealistic people who always want things to go their way are easily offended. They have never been broken.

Brokenness, as we will see in this booklet, is vital for men and women to experience. When a woman marries a man who isn't broken she may try to change him, but it can't happen. If he won't let God break him, how can she? But by letting God have His way in our lives, resurrection life will pour out, revealing the treasure in our earthen vessels.

Chapter One

BROKEN FOR OTHERS

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

Think of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He said, “I do nothing of myself” in John 8:28. “I am not come of myself,” Jesus said in John 7:28. “I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30). Jesus, the Perfect Man, refused to do anything apart from God the Father.

“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (John 14:10).

According to Isaiah 53:5, Jesus was “wounded for our transgressions, he was *bruised* for our

iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we were healed.” In the Septuagint, the word “bruised” is translated *malakizo*, meaning that He was broken like an earthen vessel, smashed into pieces. Abused by the ones He loved and created, the Son of Man bore tremendous suffering—all by the permission of His Father. He had no place to lay His head, no place He could call “home.” Led by the Holy Spirit to fast for forty days in the wilderness, Jesus went face to face with Satan. Through it all, He was broken for our sake.

The Mind of Christ

The Bible tells us to “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Uppermost in Jesus Christ’s mind was brokenness.

The Psalmist wrote, “Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (Psalm 69:20). He said, “I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel” (Psalm 31:12). *Brokenness*. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

We have to be broken because the earthen vessel will conform to whatever is inside of us—the old sin nature, wounds, damaged emotions, bruises, fear, criticism, pride, or self-effacement. We need to be broken.

People reveal that they are not broken by their reactions in stressful situations, when they “think” that no one sees. They may make a fair show in the flesh when people are around (Galatians 6:12), but what is inside of them is coloring the character of their earthen vessels.

Trials and Persecutions

A great preacher was married to a woman who became extremely jealous of his success as a minister. She hired a maid to lie and say she had an affair with the preacher and became pregnant. This trial went on for a year and people believed it, but the preacher said nothing.

People who loved him, knew his character, and believed he was innocent asked, “Why do you think God is allowing this?”

“To break me. Simply to break me,” was his answer.

He would never defend himself or say the story wasn’t true. But one year later, the maid came forward and confessed that the preacher’s

wife had paid her to lie. This man of God didn't glory in vindication. He didn't say yes or no; he simply said, "God sent this to break me."

Chapter Two
LIGHT SHINES OUT OF
DARKNESS

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

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

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

“For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you” (2 Corinthians 4:6-12).

Picture Gideon's army of just three hundred men going against the Midianites in Judges 7:20. The trumpets were in their right hands. In their left hands they held earthen pitchers with lamps inside. At the appointed time, they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers. They stood still around the camp of the enemies, which far outnumbered them, and watched them run away. Gideon's soldiers just stood still, but the pitchers were broken and the light came through.

God cannot use us if He cannot break us. But when God breaks us (and it is not just sentimentality), He will also revive us. When God revives us, He revives according to the Word of Life. "Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according to thy Word" (Psalm 119:154). "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

A Vessel Prepared for Others

Amy Carmichael, a missionary to India, had an accident that left her bedridden for the rest of her life. Month after month went by with no

change in her condition. She said, "Lord, I was serving you. Just tell me why this happened."

He told her, "It is for others that I am breaking you. You were already a broken vessel, but now I am breaking you for others." Her intense devotion to the Lord and her identification with Calvary's love were expressed in poems, letters, and journal entries that still inspire Christians today.

Ralph Montanas and his wife, Bea, once stayed at my home. He was a great evangelist from Brooklyn, New York, but he was going blind. He did everything he could, seeking help everywhere possible in an attempt to get back his eyesight. As his sight faded, he would just keep looking at his wife and his three beautiful children. Every day, he would gaze at the sunrise as he treasured those last looks.

After his sight was gone, this man began an amazing ministry to blind people around the world. That ministry is still doing a great work today. When I asked him about this trial God had allowed, he said, "I believe it happened because I wasn't broken. I had a great gift from God, but I wasn't broken."

Job complained that God multiplied his wounds without cause (Job 9:17), but that wasn't

the case. In his third trial, Job failed six times. Don't misunderstand what the first two chapters of Job's story say. He had an opportunity to glorify God in the midst of the angelic contest, and ultimately, Job did. But the truth is that Job was proud. God proved to him that something was wrong deep in his heart. Job needed to be broken.

Letting the Living Water Flow

Genesis 7:11 speaks of the "fountains of the great deep broken up." We have to keep digging and digging in order to find the fountain that is just below the surface. Below the fountain is a spring. But the spring cannot well up into a fountain unless the earth above it is broken up. God strengthens the fountains of the deep (Proverbs 8:28), and we are filled with the Word of God as we internalize more and more doctrine. "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9).

To the woman at the well, Jesus said, "The water that I shall give will be a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (see John 4:14). Also, in John 7:38-39, Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But

this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy [Spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).”

Purpose to honor others. Submit to their portions and let the life of Jesus Christ flow through you and out of you. And if your heart is broken, God heals the brokenhearted (Psalm 147:3). Be a broken vessel. Be broken as a husband, a wife, a friend. Be a broken servant, a broken soul winner, a broken prayer warrior. Let the Cross of Calvary do its effective work in your heart. Nothing works like Calvary.

Chapter Three

LIFE BLOSSOMS OUT OF DEATH

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto to the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man’s name upon his rod.

“And thou shalt write Aaron’s name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers.

“And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

“And it shall come to pass, that the man’s rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

“And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a

rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, even twelve rods: and the rod of Aaron was among their rods.

“And Moses laid up the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.

“And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds” (Numbers 17:1-8).

“And the LORD said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood” (Numbers 18:1).

Aaron's name was on a stick, just as the names from the other tribes of Israel. Twelve dead sticks were placed in the tabernacle of witness, and it was Aaron's rod that budded, blossomed, and yielded fruit. The almond branch, from a tree which is among the first tree to bud, while it is still winter, speaks of a brand-new beginning—of life coming out of death. The small dead stick was a picture of that which has been through death. It lay before God all night long, and in the morning came this new begin-

ning. Aaron's rod had blossomed with Resurrection life.

"The iniquity of the sanctuary" referred to in Numbers 18:1 speaks of serving God without having His life. We can give God our gifts, our talents, our time, even our administrative ability. We can give God all of these things. But we commit the iniquity of the sanctuary when we serve God without His life. Any time we do something for God without going through the Cross, the result is death.

In Aaron's rod, life was brought forth from death. It budded, it blossomed, it brought forth fruit—the fruit of resurrection power. That is what ministry is all about. To minister is to enter God's presence as a dead stick. Whatever ministry you are entering into—as a husband, father, friend, or pastor—enter in as a dead stick. That stick was before God all night, not just for ten minutes. In the morning, the rod with Aaron's name on it bore beautiful buds, blossoms, and almonds.

Resurrection Power Brings Victory

"Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? And I said, I see a branch or shoot of an almond tree [the em-

blem of alertness and activity, blossoming in late winter]. Then said the Lord to me, You have seen well, for I am alert and active, watching over My word to perform it” (Jeremiah 1:11-12, Amplified translation).

The almond rod performed its duties through God’s eternal life. Representing the power of God, the almond rod quickly defeated Israel’s enemies, who never anticipated the strength of her defense.

“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early” (Psalm 46:5). Resurrection power quickly defeats our enemies. It overcomes the bondage of getting offended, and the bondage of sin. It overcomes the competition syndrome and the habits of the old sin nature. Just as the almond tree—the first tree to blossom—reveals a new beginning by budding in late winter, so does resurrection life reveal our new beginnings by swiftly defeating the things that come against us.

When we become dead before God and offer our ministry to Him, we must offer a ministry of life. The time is short (1 Corinthians 7:29). We cannot play games with the old sin nature that rules our flesh. I pray that God would help us to

see that we need to have a ministry of resurrection life.

Precious Trials That Glorify God

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7).

God brings us into trials to begin the breaking process. Though that isn’t always the reason for the trials we go through, it can be. He can allow difficulties into our lives. He may allow sickness to break us. But when the trials come, Jesus Christ is our example. He made Himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:7). He did not do a single thing apart from His utter dependence upon God the Father. Following His example, we can walk in His steps through the power of the Holy Spirit and the living Word of God.

As we are being broken and we begin to see resurrection life flow out of us, we begin to touch life. We begin to touch power. We begin to touch grace, and mercy, and love that is unconditional. We begin to touch forgiveness. We begin to touch meekness, gentleness, faithfulness, and temperance. In John 7:38, resurrection

life flows like a river through our belly, which speaks of having healthy emotions.

When the Holy Spirit's life flows through our emotions, the flow is a most wonderful, precious, sacred manifestation. We who are alive are delivered unto death, causing that life to flow out. Death works in us through circumstances, situations, and details of life. Then, the flow of His life goes toward those who know nothing about life.

We don't need to have the mind of an intellectual to be able to think with God. Though some may be very gifted, the only gift that remains is love that comes with eternal life. We only need to see the Lord Jesus Christ glorified, exalted, and magnified in our bodies, whether by life or by death (Philippians 1:20).

The greatest need for born-again Christians today is brokenness. Not by mere self-effacement, but by the Cross of Jesus Christ. We need to have eyes that are fixed upon Jesus, focused to live by every word of God, using rebound when we fail. We need to let grace and peace be multiplied through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). By these things we can know the preciousness of our lives—the value of being a broken vessel.

CONCLUSION

When a believer is broken, he reveals a life that knows his Master, knows his Redeemer, and knows his Lord through His loving grace. The apostle Paul wrote, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10). Oh, that I may know Him! There is no other reason to live.

Humble, broken people don’t live in sin. They don’t split up families or plan to hurt others. Broken people share the life and nature of God. Humble people are not fornicators. They have repented from sin and rebound when they fail. Humble, broken people do not live in stress and fear. They live in the Word of God that is quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.

No one wants to live in an earthen vessel that has taken on the character of Adam and his genetic inheritance. We don’t need to live in the

effects of our past as damaged goods. That is why the vessel must be broken, so the Holy Spirit can quicken our mortal bodies with the very same power that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead (Romans 8:11).

Pray that God will break us. But remember, if we pray to be broken, God will do what He pleases so that we will have lives that please Him. When the prophet Jeremiah prayed, “O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing” (Jeremiah 10:24), he was saying, “Lord, break me—but don’t hurt me.” Later on he said, “Mine heart within me is broken” (Jeremiah 23:9). God broke him within, and a great treasure was released.

Allow God to break you. In quietness, think of Jesus’ name and be very sensitive to His presence. As broken vessels, be very kind and tenderhearted toward others, forgiving them as God for Christ’s sake forgave us. Let resurrection life blossom in us to bring us forth as tenderhearted servants who have found life out of death.

Father, give us Your life today. Watch over us, and may we respond toward You in faithfulness through positive volition. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.