

K.P. Yohannan:

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. 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 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 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 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.

The Beauty that Comes

Look at Jacob's life and see how when he 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 worshiping 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, 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 bitterness 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 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.