

The Beauty of Brokenness

by Al Whittinghill

Brokenness is a necessary and valuable process that leads to a deeper relationship with God and a greater understanding of God's power and presence.

Duration: 1:10:41

Scripture: Psalm 34:18, Isaiah 41:17, Matthew 5:3-6, Matthew 11:28

Topics: "Brokenness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages listeners to find beauty in brokenness. He explains that in human society, broken things are often seen as worthless and set aside. However, the speaker argues that when we allow ourselves to be broken, the life of God can flow through us and bring forth fruit. The speaker references 2 Corinthians 4:7, which talks about having a treasure in earthen vessels. The sermon also mentions biblical figures like Moses and Elijah who experienced brokenness before being used by God. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the importance of being honest before God and finding hope in His acceptance.

Transcript

Well, after this morning's messages and after the searching of this afternoon by the Holy Spirit on many hearts, perhaps some of you are now in turmoil. You've come and tonight you're having a good time visiting, but down deep there's turmoil and there's something going on that's bothering you. And maybe you could say, well, what does God expect from me? Maybe you're saying, how can I possibly do all those things? I failed every answer.

Maybe you're pretty much of a basket case. Well, don't be discouraged. Moses was a basket case and God used him.

We see our failure on every side. On every side we can see our failure. We look this area, there's failure.

That area, there's failure. Feel like you've been a basketball in the devil's basketball court. Just bruised, beat all around.

Well, David said, my sin is ever before me. Maybe your sin is before you and it's hurting you. How can I be holy enough for God? How can God ever accept me? Is there really any hope for me? Everything seems to be kind of coming apart and you don't know what to do.

Well, tonight's message is meant to encourage you. After that you have suffered a little. So, I want to pray with you again as we just look again in the Word of God.

Father, now take your Word as we look and speak to our hearts. And may the Holy Spirit have freedom to do the good pleasure of our Father. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Tonight I want to share on the beauty of brokenness. The beauty of brokenness.

You know, in human society, in the regular human realm, when something is broken, it is declining in value. It's worthless. It's set aside.

We throw it in the attic or put it out in the trash. It's useless. But, you see, in God's economy, it's just the opposite.

That, in fact, it is only the unbroken thing that's useless. And until something is broken, it is very little bit usable and of low value. So, broken things are very precious to our Heavenly Father.

And our usefulness to Him is in direct proportion to our willingness to be broken or our brokenness. You could write it down this way. If I resist brokenness, then if there's a little bit of brokenness, there'll be a little bit of being used.

Little brokenness equals little usefulness. And if you look back through history, in church history, you'll find the channel that God always uses in revival is the channel of a broken heart. Very precious to Him.

And often, when God gets ready to send the showers of blessing, the first mercy drops are tears of brokenness in the church of God. So, until we're broken, we cannot effectively really be used by God in power or be channels of blessing. If you look at 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, and again, we'll look at some things pertaining to brokenness tonight.

Talking about what brokenness is and then the characteristics of brokenness or how it acts, the process of brokenness, different things such as that. 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 35. The word to a materialistic, sensual, physically oriented society at Corinth is this.

Because the foolishness of God, 1 Corinthians, what did I tell you? Oh, sorry. I didn't mean to do that. 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 25.

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brothers, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty men, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

And God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. And base things, little things, and things which are despised, God hath chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. That doesn't make sense, does it? Why has he done that? So that no flesh could boast in his presence.

You see, I would pick the big guys and the head guns and the successful people if I were God. That's who everybody admires, but God says that's not what I use. I use the exact opposite of what the world puts its credence in.

And my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways. You see, so many times when we think we're being destroyed, God is only moving us into a place of really being used. Everything in us resists it.

But it is the supernatural broken life that speaks out the loudest about Jesus. Louder than any sermon, louder than any witness with my lips I could ever give, it's an exhibition of grace like Job, a glory showcase. Throughout church history, it's those people who have blessed the church the most.

The people that have blessed the church the most are not those who've been the greatest preachers, although they've been a real blessing, but the people that we remember and honor for having blessed the church the most are those ones who, not who've been the most strong, but those who've suffered the most. The people who've been the most broken. The people who have taken up their cross and followed the Lord, those are the ones that we honor today.

Let's look at a few scriptures to see the premium that God places on brokenness and some of the promises too. Psalm 34, verse 18. We'll look at three scriptures in the Psalms and then three scriptures in the book of Isaiah.

Psalm 34, verse 18. You see, maybe you feel brokenhearted over your results of your little test this afternoon. Well, verse 18, Psalm 34.

The Lord is near unto them that are of a broken heart, and he saves such as be of a contrite spirit. Psalm 51. One of David's penitential psalms after he's been caught red-handed by the Holy Spirit and nabbed by the prophets for his sin with Bathsheba and for his murder of Uriah.

He realizes his sin against God. He weeps. He confesses.

He asks for mercy. He knows that God has broken his bones and he's asking for God to create newness and cleanness in him. And in verse 16 and verse 17, he wants to make up for his sin.

He wants to somehow come to God in a right way, but he realizes there's nothing he can do. It says in verse 16, Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. You do not delight in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. In other words, God will look for, as that sacrifice that's pleasing to him, a broken heart.

The only thing that can be offered to God that is an acceptable sacrifice and pleasing to him is a broken heart. Over and over it says it in the scriptures that he doesn't want bulls, goats, and all the rest as offerings. He wants the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart.

Well, brothers, if that's the case, if that's the only thing that really brings God pleasure, how can we offer him statistics? How can we offer him success and the things that we place such credence in on man's level? I would say this, if brokenness is the sacrifice that's pleasing to God, then any ministry or any church that isn't producing broken and contrite hearts, no matter how good it looks to men, no matter how big the statistics are, is a failure in the eyes of God. No matter how good it looks to men. Psalm 138, verse 6. This is what God wants in our life.

Psalm 138, verse 6. Though the Lord be high, yet he hath respect unto the lowly. Humble, but the proud he knows from a distance. There he is again saying, I respect, I know the one who's broken, who's

contrite.

But on and on it goes in the book of Isaiah, chapter 41. We see God's promise to the brokenhearted and the poor and the needy. Psalm 41, excuse me, Isaiah 41.

Give me a second, I'll get with it. Isaiah 41, verse 17. It says, when the poor and the needy are seeking for water, and there is none, their tongue is failing for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them.

And I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open up rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys. From heaven he'll send blessing, and from the low places, the valley of the shadow of death, he'll open pools of refreshing.

I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water. The promise of real spiritual awakening to the bankrupt, to the poor and to the needy. But it goes more clearly even than that.

Isaiah 57, talking about revival, talking about renewal. Isaiah 57, verse 15. Thus saith the high and the lofty one that inhabits eternity, whose name is holy.

I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit. How does that go together? Almighty God, holy God, dwelling in the heavenlies with a contrite and humble spirit. He dwells there, it goes on, to revive the spirit of the humble.

And to revive the heart of the contrite or bruised one. Well, even further it goes in Isaiah 66. This passage is quoted by Stephen just before he is stoned.

He's pointing to the temple and saying, God doesn't dwell in temples made with hands. This is not the house of God. He dwelleth not in bricks and stones, but he has a special kind of house.

And he's quoting Isaiah 66, these words of the Lord. He says in verse 1, thus saith the Lord, heaven is my throne, earth is my footstool. Where is the house that you would build for me? Where is the place that I will rest? All these things my hands have made.

And all these things have always been, saith the Lord. Bricks and rocks and all the rest. Here's his house, look.

To this man would I look. Even to him that is of a poor and a contrite spirit who trembles at my word. That's the temple of God.

That's the house in which the Holy Spirit feels at home. He that trembles at God's word. Yes, there's the fear of the Lord there.

There's contrition. There's poverty. And God loves that kind of heart.

You see, maybe you're that way after that list. Oh, there's no hope for me. How could I ever, ever stand before God? You're getting close to being a candidate for real grace.

Well, it was David's heart of brokenness, I believe, that made God call him a man after God's own heart. You know, he actually was a broken man. And he was confronted by the prophet.

You're the man I've been talking about in this sin. And he said, I've sinned against God. He was quick to confess.

He was quick to humble himself. I believe that's why he was a man after God's own heart. He says in that Psalm 51, verse 4, after he sinned, he says, Against thee and thee only have I sinned, O God.

He had murdered. He had committed adultery. But he saw his sin against God.

He was sorry, not just for what sin had cost him, but he was sorry for what sin had cost God. Before he confessed, as we read today, it says in Psalm 32, verse 3 through 5, Before I acknowledged my sin, when I kept silent, my moisture, my vitality turned to nothing physically. He had stiff bones and he was dry and he was depressed and God's hand was upon him.

But then he acknowledged his sin and God forgave him. And he was walking with that limp that those who've met God at that level retain in their life. I believe that the broken heart is that good heart that is speaking about in the parable of the sower.

You have the four kinds of ground, the hard ground. Then you have the ground that's good on the surface, nice and kind of sweet on the surface and emotional, but it's hard down beneath that little skin. And then you have the third kind of ground that's covered with thorns and is fallow ground and the word doesn't grow there.

But the fourth kind is that good ground. It's broken, plowed, opened, moist, like our tears. Broken, plowed, opened, moistened with tears.

This is the good ground of the scripture, humbled and soft in the parable of the sower. What's the Hebrew word for broken mean? Well, it means shattered, shattered by the hammer of God's word. Oh, blessed is he who's wounded by Moses because Jesus will heal him.

Oh, the hammer of God's word on the hardness of the human heart. It means shattered. It means in the Hebrew the same word as broken cistern, a big rock cistern with a big crack in it, shattered.

The word broken is used for a noble ship breaking to pieces in a storm in the book of Ezekiel. Broken. It's also used for a fallen sheep into a ravine with broken bones, bruised and bleeding.

That's what it means to be broken, a broken heart. That's the kind of heart God is looking for. Well, the word contrite, it's a word that means bruised.

It's the result of blows and being smitten. It's wounded. It's a mourning.

It's being in contrition and wailing of heart because of what's been happening. God resists the proud, but the broken hearted, he cannot resist. He cannot resist them.

Let me ask you, brothers, with all the Christian seminars going on around us, finances, family, all these things about planning and all the rest, and I'm not minimizing them, with all the seminars, have you seen any seminars on how to be broken? How to be humbled? Well, if you did, nobody would come anyway. They wouldn't come. Yet, it's the needful thing.

It's the one thing God wants. It's the pleasing heart to God. Brokenness must precede blessing.

We talked about this morning how that there must be a drilling before there is a filling. There must be a scraping before there's a shaping. There must be a breaking before there's a making.

And there must be a tearing before there can ever be a sharing. Broken bread, poured out wine, you name it. It's only the broken that God gives.

He gives broken bread, and he uses a broken heart. And so, as a Christian, as a new Christian, growing in the Lord, we often don't know that down on the inside of us, the new nature, the Holy Spirit, is crying out to be mastered by our Heavenly Father. Abba! Father! Abba! Master me! And, oh, that I may know Him, cries out the new nature.

And often, this call is so deep within us that we don't even know what really is going on. We know we're longing for something, but we don't know what it is. It's the desire to be totally conquered by the love of God.

And maybe this will come to us in a way that we don't know. We think it's strange when God begins to answer the prayer of our deepest nature. You see, God must come and conquer the natural strength of a man.

Spirit, soul, body. God must come and take all those things, especially the good things, that I was born with. My talents, my natural love for people.

It's all of our life He must take and He must break those things in order for me to give the Holy Spirit control. Man is like a seed. And the outer life, his soul and his flesh, are the outer casing for that deep inner spirit that God seals him with.

We're a container of the life of God. And we walk around knowing that God has His life in us that He wants to give. Well, God has to break the outer life in order to release the inner life for it to come out in power.

You see, He does this by many ways. He bankrupts your intellect and breaks you. He brings you to the end of your own resources.

He shows you that good with man is not good with God. You see, not only my bad points, but my good points too. Quote, good points have to go to the cross.

This is so hard for us because we are so sincere about offering our good points. But God says, away with the whole man to the cross. So, the outer man must be broken if we are going to be able to allow the Holy Spirit to have His way in our life.

If the outer man is not broken, then the outer man will never submit to the Holy Spirit. And you will always walk in the vanity of your own mind. You will always demand for the slide rule and the geological explanation and the mathematical equations to work out just right in order for you to believe God, if your intellect has never been broken.

You will always demand for God to meet your goose bump requirement, to really know He's worked until you've been broken. You will always demand for your blessings until you've been broken. Well, if we don't allow God to break us, we will be left doing, even as a Christian, what comes naturally.

Naturally. As it says in Galatians 5.17, The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. That's the war in every man in this room.

The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. These two are contrary one toward the other. So, then you cannot do the things that you would do.

That means naturally. And if you're not led by the Spirit, if you're not broken in the outer man, if not yielded, then the outer man will always overpower this still small voice of God. If we live in the Spirit, Galatians says, let us walk in the Spirit.

There must be that brokenness. Even Jesus was broken. As a man, He had to be broken.

It says in Hebrews, amazing Scripture. He learned obedience by the things He suffered. As the master, so shall the servant be.

Romans 15.3 says that Jesus pleased not His own self. God denied Himself. Amazing.

Amazing to me. Well, only brokenness causes the outer to release the life in our spirits, so it can really flow out. And my human will must be shattered if God is going to use me to the maximum and release His will.

And the will of man is only shattered when it meets the sovereign will of God. Brother, you cannot do the things that you would do. You're going to have to be inconvenienced.

Unless you want to just be a natural Christian. I call it a carnal kernel Christian. Unbroken.

Shiny outer shell. Nice and beautiful like a corn of wheat. Nice, shiny, golden, but all alone.

No fruit-bearing power. No ability to bring forth life. We'll talk a lot more about this tomorrow morning.

But in John chapter 12, Jesus uses this very illustration about our lives. John 12, verse 24. These words in verse 25 and following are the most repeated sayings of Jesus in the gospel.

Five times recorded. More than any other. So, we better listen to them because they're important.

He starts off by saying in verse 24, Verily, verily, I say to you, except no other way, a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die. It will remain alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.

He's talking about brokenness. He's talking about the corn of wheat. The beautiful, nice, shiny kernel going into the ground and dying.

And then he explains it. He that loves his life shall lose it. And he that hates his life or soul in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal, spiritual life.

He's saying this. There are processes that God brings into my life to loosen me out of that nice, sterile existence as a cozy, kernel Christian. All in the pod, nice and safe in my little Christian fellowship and all the rest.

And he wants me to fall into the ground and die. And I don't like this process because, you see, it gets all over my pretty little coat. And my outer man is dissolved.

And I begin to lose everything. And I say, oh no. He says, unless this happens, you won't bring forth any fruit.

But if I seek to preserve my life, he that seeks to save his life will lose it. If we try to hold our life together and resist this and resist that and escape that, then we'll really bind up that life of God. But if we lose our life, let go of it, abandon ourselves, even when it's scary, let go.

Then we will discover, as we are broken, the life of God coming out from the inside and ministering what it says in 2 Corinthians 4. 2 Corinthians 4. Paul writes this very experience under different terms, a different metaphor. But he says in 2 Corinthians 4, beginning in verse 7, we have this treasure in earthen vessels. They used to make clay pots around gold treasures so that you had to break the clay pot to get the gold out.

It's the only way you could get it out. And so, he does it so that the excellency of God's power might be of God and not of us. He goes on to say, we're troubled on every side, but yet we're not distressed.

We're perplexed, but we're not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Cast down, but not destroyed.

Look at this. This is brokenness. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord, the cross.

So that the life of Christ might be revealed in our body, coming out. We which live are always delivered over unto death for Jesus' sake. That's the future of every Christian.

To lose our own life. To decrease that He might increase. To let go of the natural and visible and physical.

To trade it for the reality of the spiritual, invisible and eternal. It says, we which live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake. So that the life of Christ might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

So then, death works in us. Brokenness. But life works in you.

When I was in Cairo, I saw some wheat there that they'd found in one of those pyramids that had been there for 3,000 years. It was there, locked up inside of a little case. It was there, this wheat.

And when they discovered it, they took some of it and they actually planted it. And you know something? It grew. For 3,000 years, life had been locked up in that little kernel.

And you know something? For 70 years, it can happen in your life, too. The life of Jesus can be successfully quenched if you resist the breaking process of the Holy Spirit. Those whom He loves, He breaks.

Well, we can weasel out of brokenness. We can manipulate our way out through our cleverness, through good planning. And we call it escaping hardship so many times.

But when we do, we only relegate ourselves to the shell. It might be in a church pew or somewhere like that if we resist the processes of God. When we value the outer life and the tangible more than the spiritual.

Paul said, he said, listen, I take heed to buffet my body and keep it under subjection. I let God break it, he's saying, lest after I have preached to others, I myself should be a dachamas, a castaway, set on the shell, not able to be used. A lot of people pray, oh, God, use me.

Oh, God, use me. And God would love to use me. He'd love to use you, brother.

But the question is, am I willing to pray, Lord, make me usable? If you'll begin to pray that, if I'll begin to pray that, God will make me usable. And soon, instead of saying, use me, Lord, we'll say, Lord, could I have a rest? I am so tired, Lord, give me a little time to come apart or I'm falling apart. Well, every person God has ever used mightily has had to be broken.

Brokenness is not only a thing that happens to you, it is a process. And brokenness is not only an act that God does in our life, but brokenness is a state of being to which he wants to bring us. The outer life is dealt with, and we become tender and sensitive, and we weep easily.

I'll never forget, in Australia once, Ian and Vince and I were there for 17 nights in one church, and the Lord had given us a word beforehand, burden, brokenness, and blessing. That's the order of these meetings. And we preached.

We preached back on back and through those times, and it got heavy. I mean, they were no fun, these messages. It got heavier and heavier, like what it means to backslide and turn or burn, those kind of things, you know, and it got heavy in there.

We met with the elders, and they said, what's going on? You could say they want us to slack off, and the word seemed to come that it was burden, brokenness, and blessing. And so we gave another word. Instead of taking the pressure off, if you're carrying a load of firewood into the stove in the winter, and you want to break somebody, what do you do, take off a log? Of course not, throw a big one on.

And so we threw some big wood on. And I'll tell you, that church broke. And they went down to their face, brokenness, misery, weeping.

I'll never forget it. It was glorious. And then, those last days, God raised them up on tippy-toe.

It was sweet. But you see, they didn't appreciate the tippy-toe until they'd been on their face. And it was brokenness before blessing.

It's the same with individuals. It's the same with me. It's the same with you.

Consider Moses. I mean, intellectually now, you would think that being brought up in Pharaoh's court, being the second man under Pharaoh, having been taught in all the knowledge of the Egyptians, he knew all about their dentistry. They had it then, root canals and everything.

They did brain surgery. They did all those things, and he knew it all. You'd think that he'd be perfect when God called him to march right into Pharaoh's court and say, by the way, God is saying this, and I'm here.

But you know what God did? God said, Moses, you know too much. Moses, you're too smart. Moses, you're too self-sufficient.

And so, he took him for 40 years to the backside of the desert, looking at the backside of a sheep so that he could lead the front side of God's sheep. He got very quiet for 40 years. Eighty years old before God even began to really use him.

Amazing. It's not like what you and I would do it that way. What about Jacob? He was clever.

He was a trickster. He was the perfect businessman of our day. And he came, and God renewed his covenant, but he wrestled with him all night long.

And you know something? God broke his thigh, one of the strongest muscles on a man's body, so that after that he limped, a reminder of his encounter with God. You know something? When Jacob became lame in man's eyes, God said, now you're a prince with God. It says in Isaiah, the lame take the prey, brother.

It's those who have no strength that he giveth strength, and he increaseth those who have no might. What about Joseph? Joseph was given great promises, like some of you have. God's going to use you.

Well, Joseph thought that too. He told them his dreams. And God said, I'm going to use you, but first I'm going to break you.

And so he sent him down to Dothan. That means double sickness. And they threw him down into the pit.

And he cried out, deliver me. But they laughed and ate their lunch and watched him suffer. And then they sent him down to Egypt, and then down into the dungeon, and then down into the bottom of the dungeon.

And it says the whole time, down, down, down, God was with him. And in one day, God said, that's enough. You're broken.

Up you go, to the very top of the empire. You see, he had to have the character to give out the bread later. It's not enough just to have a Bible.

It's not enough just to know how-tos about the Roman road and Isaiah road and all the other roads, Baptist road, whatever road. It's not enough. You've got to have the character to administer the Word of God.

You've got to be what you preach. Of course, the message is always greater than a man, but you've got to back it up with a heart that's honest before God. Well, what about Elijah? He spoke to the king, and then God said, go hide yourself.

Three and a half years. He had to go and eat bird food, meat from raven. I can't think of anything grosser.

Of course, when God gives it, it ought to be pretty good. And drinking from a brook called Cherith, which means cuttings. God had him eat that meat from ravens and brook called cuttings.

And then he took him to a place called Zarephath, which means the refining pot, and broke him. And then he said, now go show yourself. First he said, hide yourself.

Then he said, show yourself. It was brokenness before blessing. God sends all his best men to Bush University.

Hard knock college, I call it. Or pressure prep. School of loneliness.

And it's a curriculum that was not designed on earth, nor desired by the majority. But you know something? It's a required course for freshmen in the kingdom of God. Paul was the cream of the crop.

He was the theological darling of his day. Taught above all the Jews of his day. Three years, God took him to Arabia.

To dry him out and shrink his brain from his theological input. And to empty him from swivel chair theology. Then he was sent, when he came back, not to the Jews, but to the Gentiles.

What a waste, is it? Is it? Well, who did he send to the Jews? Well, we heard about him this morning. The old fisherman. It's crazy.

You'd send Paul, the aristocrat, to the sophisticate. But no, no. You send Peter to those who think they're something.

And you send Paul to those who know they're nothing. It's amazing. That's what he does.

So that no flesh can glory in his presence. God wants to get rid of that part of my life in which I trust. He wants to get rid of my self-reliance, my self-confidence.

And he wants to bring my natural tendencies down to the grave. So that I can be, although I hate it, free to live in the power of God. If all you ever are content with is a love for people that's yours, that's all you'll ever have.

But if you confess that as just sloppy, agape human affection and let God take it to the grave, he'll bring it out in the glory of God. A mother's love or a daddy's love is never enough on a natural level for a child. It's got to be the love of Jesus in our day.

And it's a lot more than a natural love. Well, Paul saw this so clearly. He saw the process of God that he said in 2 Corinthians 12, after he had been asking God to take away the pain and the inconvenience of something that was breaking him.

In 2 Corinthians 12, verse 8, he said, I asked God three times that this might depart from me. Don't listen to those who change the Bible for their own theology that it wasn't a physical thorn. Because the Greek word means physical thorn.

And he said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. It says in the next chapter that Jesus was crucified through weakness. My strength is made perfect in weakness.

In Hebrews 11, 34, it says, Out of weakness these people were made strong. Weakness. Most gladly, therefore, Paul says, I will glory in my infirmities so that the power, power of Christ may rest upon me.

Therefore, I take pleasure. Amazing. In infirmities, sicknesses, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses.

Not for themselves, but for Jesus' sake. For Jesus' sake. For when I am weak.

When I'm being broken. When I'm showing how nothing I am is the time when God springs out and gives his answer and shows who he is. Lord Jesus, I'm being destroyed.

I'm destroyed, Lord, I'm destroyed. Oh no, child, I'm not destroying you. I'm making you.

We try to show the world. I know I have the constant temptation to try to show those in my hometown that are intellectuals how sophisticated I am when I talk to them. I want to talk to them on a sophisticated level.

I want to talk on an intellectual level. And we want to show the world how successful we are in business. How prosperous we are.

And no Christian comes behind the world in anything. Only the best for the king's kids. I'll tell you, that may be true to a fashion, but what do you call best? Educated, successful, prosperous.

And when we put our confidence in those things, we say weak is bad. Strong is good. And we find ourselves doing exactly what it says in Jeremiah not to do in chapter 9, verse 23.

Listen to this verse, Jeremiah chapter 9, verse 23. It says, Thus saith the Lord, Do not let the wise men glory in his wisdom. Do not let the mighty men glory in his might.

Do not let the rich men glory in his riches. Let him boast, he that boasts in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, discernment, righteousness, judgment in the earth. For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

I'll tell you, sometimes God wants to make people think that we are absolutely nothing. He wants us to be mocked. He wants us to be laughed at.

But yet deep down inside, they know the reality of the love of God coming out of our life. They know it. And that's what bothers them more than ever.

You know, it says in Jeremiah 17, verse 5. Cursed is the man who makes flesh his strength. Cursed is the man who makes flesh his strength. Brothers, tonight there's only two ways to stand before God.

It comes out so clearly in that parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee stands there and he looks at the publican and says, Lord, I thank you that I've been delivered. Lord, I thank you that I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't cuss.

He didn't say that, but that's the way it's translated into our day. Thank you that I don't run around like all these other guys. Thank you that you've taught me the word of God and I'm not like this struggling one here.

Thank you, Lord. And we stand there in our self-righteousness like a Pharisee, that's one way, or as this little broken publican who says, God, be propitiated, be merciful, be letting your blood cover me. To me, a sinner, cover me up.

We either stand as a Pharisee in self-righteousness or as a sinner, broken, in crying for mercy. Look at Matthew 11. Oh, how telling this verse is in the light of what we've been saying.

Matthew chapter 11. It says in verse 28, Come unto me, all of you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you refreshment or rest. Take my yoke upon you.

Learn of me. I am meek, I am humbled or lowly in heart, and you'll find rest to your soul. My yoke is easy.

My burden is light. You know what that yoke is, brother? It's being yoked with a lamb. It's being yoked with one who says he's meek, he's lowly in heart.

And I'm going to tell you, when we come into that yoke, Jesus has always said he hates an unequal yoke. If I'm going to get in the yoke of Jesus and be used in service, it's going to be as a broken one, because he does not get in an unequal yoke. He tells me, don't be unequally yoked.

And so, why would he be unequally yoked with a proud, hard, carnal individual until we allow God to bring us down? I love that verse in Psalm 18 verse 35 that says, Thy gentleness has made me great. You know, that's God's kind of gentleness to our wives. God's kind of gentleness to our children.

God's kind of gentleness. It doesn't mean going around and being effeminate, milquetoast. It means that you have the compassion and love of God and the sensitivity to let his character come through.

Brokenness must precede revival. I'm thinking of that verse in Hosea 10 that says, Break up your fallow ground. It is time to seek the Lord.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness. I think I'll just read it to you in Hosea chapter 10. I sometimes misquote Scripture.

And Ian over there, he knows them all. And when I do, I can see him just cringing over there. So, for mercy's sake, I'm going to turn to Hosea 10.

Chapter 10 verse 12. Sow to yourselves in righteousness. Reap in mercy.

Break up your fallow ground. It is time to seek the Lord until he come and rain righteousness on you. God is saying here for us, brothers, to prepare our hearts.

That means to allow God to break our hearts. It says there, Break up your fallow ground. Break up your fallow ground.

In Proverbs 16.1, it says, The preparation of the heart is belonging to man. But the answer is from the Lord. God wants me to prepare my heart.

In the Old Testament, they prepared their heart to seek Him. The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer is from the Lord. If we want God to rain revival on us, to use us, we've got to prepare our heart.

We've got to seek Him. And that's like this afternoon. Dealing with the things like that list.

Breaking up our fallow ground. What is fallow ground anyway? Fallow ground is ground that's been plowed. Fallow ground is ground that's been plowed and has been allowed to lie inactive.

And in the process of time, that broken up ground has become hardened and therefore unreceptive to fresh seed. Maybe some of you have been plowed by the Word of God in the past. And you've become complacent.

And you've allowed things to come in. But see, fallow ground is also ground that's yielded fruit in the past. But now has become unproductive due to a lack of attention.

And this is like the heart of a believer that's grown hard and can't cry anymore with the things that break God's heart. Sins that grieve the Holy Spirit no longer grieve you. There's an insensitivity.

There's an idleness. There's a dullness. You sit under the Word, but there's no fruit.

Fallow ground. God says, break it. Come with that little iron bar and break up those little hard clods that the Holy Spirit shows you.

There's a hardness there because of unbelief. Hebrews 3, verse 15, Take heed, brothers, lest there be any among you with an evil heart of unbelief departing from the living and true God. So, it's hard ground, but it's also weed-covered ground.

Thorns. What does that remind you of? Thorns. In Jeremiah, it says, break up your fallow ground.

Now, don't sow among thorns. That's the characteristic of thorns. Did you know that when you go out and make a garden in your backyard and you plow up some ground and get it all ready for the good seed, you know what? It's not only ready for good seed, it's ready for bad seed.

And you can see all these weeds growing in that garden that wouldn't even ever touch your yard. I mean, you don't have thorns growing in your grass. It just comes to that cultivated ground.

God's plowed your heart and you haven't let the Word take root. And all these other things, heresies, isms, wasms, spasms, whatever, come and take root and they begin to bring forth things. Thorns.

Bad fruit. And God says, you're supposed to break up your fallow ground and you're supposed to take up the thorns and burn them. You know what thorns are a picture of? Jesus talks about thorns in the ground of the parable of the sower.

He says what thorns are. Listen to what they are. And see if you have any fallow ground in your heart.

The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust for other things beside the Word of God. Those are the thorns that choke out the Word of God and make it unfruitful. So, when you sow among thorns, the results of the seed are choked.

I want to take you to the Sermon on the Mount for a moment in Matthew chapter 5. And I want to change gears now and talk about the characteristics of brokenness. How will they come out of your life? What does it mean to have a broken life? Matthew chapter 5. I want to just run through in the remaining moments of my time the Sermon on the Mount. You can't study this without seeing it's overwhelming.

The first verses, the Beatitudes, I like to call those the character qualities of brokenness. Because that's what they are. This is what Jesus is after.

This is how He wants to express His character in you and me. We can't rise to this life. We've got to let it flow down into us.

It's got to flow into a broken, humbled, contrite heart. It shows us what we're meant to be as His life is expressed in and through us. This is the kind of man that God will use in an ungodly world.

The character qualities of brokenness. He's talking to a multitude. He's speaking to His disciples.

Verse 2, He opened His mouth. He taught them, saying, Number 1, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Brokenness.

Blessed are they that mourn, they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God, praise the Lord. Blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you, persecute you, say all kinds of evil against you, falsely, got that underlined, for my sake. Rejoice, be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

For in the same way, persecuted they the prophets before you. You know something? These are beatitudes of a transformed heart. This is the attitude of a heart that God has broken.

And if these aren't in you, to some degree, it is impossible that you've been saved. In some degree, these will be in every true Christian. Blessed, Jesus is saying, Makarios, happy state, is the one who recognizes

these marks in his life.

You see, the world doesn't say this, going down them in order. When it says, blessed are the poor in spirit, the world says, happy are the rich. Happy are they who have arrived, who are respected, who get what he wants, handsome, popular, well known.

Not the poor. Not the poor. Oh no, gross me out.

Not the poor. Blessed are they that mourn over evil, brokenness and sorrows. Not what the world wants to see, that's looked on as weakness.

A man who cries, come on, go put on lace cuffs, bud. Happy are the carefree. Happy are those who are light hearted, who live in Marlboro country, with all that horse manure and all the rest, and stinking cigarettes.

Happy are ye. No problems. Happy go lucky, but watch where you step.

In verse 5, we see the meek. Not the gentle. Not the meek.

The world doesn't envy them. Don't let people walk over you. The world says, happy are the strong.

Happy are the self confident. You have to have backbone. Stand up for your rights.

Don't let them walk over you. Take care of yourself. I mean, be humble for a while, but if they really come against you, brother, I mean, let them have it with both barrels.

Verse 6, blessed are they that hunger and thirst. Don't be a Bible thumper. Good grief.

I mean, don't be holier than thou. Be reasonable. You're tuned out of reality.

You've got your head in the clouds, brother. Don't you ever do anything but go to church? Do you have to live like that? You're a fanatic. Ooh, the word that brings horror to the average church member's heart.

Fanatic. You know what I'd say? At last you've noticed. What are you a fanatic for, bud? Anyway, it's not happy are those who hunger and thirst.

Happy are those who have a zeal for life. Zesto. Gusto.

Busto. Whatever else. You're well read.

Balanced in all areas, you know. Blessed are those who are merciful. Oh, no.

Happy are those who are nice. Nice to other people. It really boils down to old number one.

If you have to, get even, but do it nicely. Do it sophisticatedly. Don't be merciful.

Happy are those who do the best they can. Happy are those who say, we're only human. Not those who are pure at heart.

Who really think you can sinless perfection. Come on, are you kidding? You're idealistic. Happy are those who mind their own business.

Not the peacemaker. Mind your own business. You aren't called into this.

Don't get involved with what's not your business. Happy are the secure. Happy are the popular.

Those who are well known. Happy is Mr. Sanguine. Not those who are rejected, scorned, laughed at, mocked, and evil spoken of, and all the rest.

Well, I want to say a word about each of these. You think that I'm winding down, but I got a surprise for you. I'm just gearing up.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. What does it mean to be poor in spirit? That's the first rung on Jacob's ladder. These are progressive.

This is the way God comes to a man. Blessed are the poor in spirit. It's where we start.

Poverty of spirit. That's where some of you are after that list this afternoon. God, there's no hope for me.

Alas, there is hope for you. Can you say, I'm just as righteous before my Father as Jesus Christ? I'm just as righteous as Jesus when I stand before Him. Let me tell you, if you can't, you say, Ooh, I could never say that.

I would never say that. Well, then you're trusting some other kind of righteousness. And I'll tell you, it won't stand the test.

If you can't say tonight, I'm as righteous before my heavenly Father as Jesus because I'm trusting in His righteousness as my own, then you have no righteousness at all. It's filthy rags. If it's your own in any fashion, it's only by Him.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. It's not an outward righteousness like the Pharisees. It's an inward righteousness.

God's standard is perfection. It always has been, always will be. You say, that's impossible.

I can't live up to that. There's no hope for me. Now you're at the place where this beatitude reaches right down to where you are.

Bankrupt. That's poverty of spirit. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

The ladder of grace comes down to where every honest heart really is. Bankrupt before God. Fig leaves gone.

Powerless. We can't live up to God's standard. Poor in spirit.

The word poor is patakos. P-T-O-K-A-S It actually means a cringing, leprous beggar who has no rights, who has no merit, who is aware of his self-abnegation, recognized helpless at the end of himself. It's the same word used for poor, talking about that old beggar that was at the rich man's gate named Lazarus.

Poor beggar. He could do nothing but sit there and cry out, Mercy! Mercy! Unclean! I can't help myself. Well, this is what we are to be.

Blessed is this one. It's when we confess our moral destitution, our utter sinfulness, because we've seen His light. And now we confess it.

Grace seeks the one who knows their need. And thank God, grace first looks on poverty before it looks on purity. If it started with purity, we'd be in trouble.

But it starts with poverty, and that's where every honest soul really is. So, Jesus is the friend of sinners, publicans, and He receives sinners, and eats with them, but the proud He knows are far off. Let me tell you, brother, the greatest unfitness for Jesus is my own imaginary fitness.

It disqualifies me. It disqualifies me. We can always find someone else to make us look good in our own eyes.

God is looking for the man who has no props left. Blessed are they that mourn. You see, the first in poverty of spirit are the broken.

The broken. Well, the second one is the contrite. Broken and contrite.

That's where God starts. Blessed are they that mourn. That means to lament.

To lament. It's a moral mourning. It arises not from a fear of consequence because of sin, but from a deep sense of the greatness of my crimes against God.

I'm crying out to Him. I'm mourning over the cause of my poverty, which is sin. Is this getting too much for you? Be honest.

I'm telling you. I feel like it's getting heavy, like y'all are getting Dr. Cave-In on me here. I'll just have to quit.

I don't want to give you more than you can stomach. You might regurgitate. That's worse.

We used to feed our kids and we'd feed them for a long, long time and get them almost down and blew it. It'd all be gone. It'd be better to give them just half of it.

Give them just half. Anyway, this is the contrite heart. Those who mourn.

You see, to mourn is to have God's view of sin and self. I'm going to tell you the Christian life is not all laughter. Be afflicted.

Mourn. Weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and let your joy be turned to heaviness, it says in James 4. The opposite of mourning in the world is a lack of sobriety, surplus living, little prayer, boredom.

The unbroken are sorry for their own pain. You see, brokenness feels with God and it's repentance that God gives to me as a needy person. Blessed are the broken.

Blessed are those who are contrite. Blessed are the meek. Verse 5. That's the absolute surrender that we heard about.

Broken, contrite, and meek means absolute surrender. It's the word for a broken colt. A soft wind.

Gentleness. Meekness. And the first two bring us to this meekness.

It's not weakness, but it is power under control. A life willing to yield totally and be ruled by God. Accepting God's dealings with you as good.

Giving up your rights. Meekness doesn't defend itself because it sees there's nothing there to defend. A meek person's not touchy.

They've given up their rights. Willing to have our plans changed. God says this person will inherit the earth so they can be content.

The opposite of meekness is self-pity or retaliation or hard or anger or greed or resentment or stand up for your rights or I'm a sinner, but don't you say it. Don't you say that I am. Well, this is progressive, you see.

First comes brokenness. Then comes contrition. Then comes yielding of rights.

And then when we see that we're nothing, then there's a hunger that's birthed in us. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. This means present tense.

Inner longing for the things of God. Holy aspiration. Brother, are you hungry tonight to really know Him? Brokenness, contrition, and full surrender lead us to long for God's righteousness because we have none of our own.

We want to stand in His righteousness. A spiritual hunger not just for gifts, power, blessing, knowledge, but for righteousness which is conformity to the revealed will of God. Righteousness.

And when there is no appetite for righteousness, there's something sick. When you lose your hunger physically, it means your body's ill. When you lose your hunger spiritually, it means your spirit is in dire need.

The opposite of being hungry in the spirit world is being indifferent, not being antagonistic. It's being indifferent. It's being careless, being passive, having apathy, minding the world, having too much business to give time to God.

Then you'll be merciful. As you're hungering, you'll find there'll be an outward manifestation of pity. That's what merciful means.

It's love in contact with need. Mercy forgives those who've offended us. And this mercy comes because we're absolutely amazed that God could have ever had mercy on us.

We're amazed. We're absolutely amazed. Our mercy's response to His.

Vengeance. Get even. Be fair.

Protect yourself. Don't be vulnerable. It serves them right.

That's the unbroken heart. This is broken, merciful, and loving. Then, sixthly, it says, Blessed are the pure in heart.

This is an inward purity, motives, and desire under the control of God because I've tasted and seen that He is good. It's the result of all the preceding in my life. It's free from falsehood.

It's not a life different when the pastor's there than when you're alone in your bedroom. It's the same in business and at church. It's the same.

A life that's pure. Purity means to will one thing. It doesn't mean that you're lock, stock, and barrel clean.

It means that your heart is set toward one thing. Only single. This one thing.

I do. That's purity. Doing and willing one thing.

The opposite for the unbroken is a double-mindedness. A man who's vacillating up and down, undependable, unpredictable, and with the fear of man. Then comes peacemaking.

As I begin to let God break me, there's a sympathy with conflicting parties, and I'm in the middle. God puts me there. I become a moral mediator, and I make things right.

You're not a peacekeeper. You're a peacemaker. And this kind of peacemaker, it always costs the one that makes it.

They shall be known as the children of God. Why? Because it costs them their blood to make peace between conflicting parties. That's what it does here.

Not peace at any price, but peace with purity first before peace at any price. The opposite is in the unbroken to be accusing, fault-finding, critical, condemning, and to choose sides. Well, the end result of all of this is that I'm persecuted for righteousness' sake.

As I live out these other beatitudes, as I let God break me, the inevitable result is that I will be persecuted. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. We are not summoned to a blissful life, but to a blessed life.

And as we let God have His way, people will throw stones. When we unashamedly, without reservation, love Jesus, there will be a threat to darkness. And they will hate us.

And they will find our attitudes disgusting. They will not want our help. You're so different.

You're a fanatic. You're a troublemaker. You try to be a peacemaker with them, and it will only agitate and fan the flame.

There's a cost there. Those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness will be willing to suffer for it. And even though we lose everything on earth, we'll inherit everything in heaven.

If you aren't experiencing persecution as a Christian, it's because Jesus is not being seen through your life. All who choose to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. And so, I come to the place where I acknowledge my depravity and my sinfulness before God.

I mourn over this with sympathy with God. God, be merciful to me, a sinner. This produces meekness and humility in me and in all my relationships.

And therefore, God becomes my source. I hunger and thirst for Him through the development. And He begins to put it into my heart.

Because of gratitude, I want to show others this same mercy and grace. And I can't be quiet. I want to reconcile God and man so they can be learners about God's mercy.

Longing to know Him. And so, I can't withdraw and move to a hill, a monastery. So, I share.

And as I share and become a peacemaker and seek to deliver others, people don't want it. They begin to call me a meddler. And they begin to throw rocks at me.

There's no applause for this life. And I'm persecuted. Eventually, if I'm really effective, they might even kill me.

Blessed are ye. Nine times, Jesus says, blessed, blessed, blessed is such a one as this. You say, Al, I'm not sure I want that kind of happiness.

That's what blessed means. I'm not sure I want that kind of happiness. Well, I can appreciate that.

But let me say this, brother. You better decide whether you do or don't because you're staking your life on it. Blessed is the one who recognizes these marks in his life because this one and only this one is the sense of the Greek has God's approval.

Oh, what a searchlight from the top of Golgotha. Well, in just one last moment, I want to take one more moment and encroach on you for just a moment to just give you tonight what you should do to bring your life into a place of brokenness. Several things quickly.

If you want God to break you, you must look at God as He really is. Look at Him, number one, as He really is, holy, majestic, glorious. In our day, people have lost sight of God as He is.

We've brought Him down to a God who serves us and we treat Him like some kind of cosmic genie who'll meet our needs and grant our wishes if we rub Him just right. How dishonoring. He is holy.

He is Almighty God. And the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That's the first step in brokenness because we see His glory, then we see our poverty.

Well, secondly, soak yourselves in the Scriptures by faith. Read the Bible, the plumb line, the mirror, the seed, the hammer, the plow, the light, the living water of God's Word. Get earnest and let heaven know you're in earnest.

Seek His face and pray. That's number two. Third, accept the truth of what God shows you in the revelation about yourself.

Some of you might have been reluctant to receive the truth as God showed you this afternoon. But do not pull back from the light. Even Paul could say, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.

I'm chief. Take the low place, humble yourself, and realize tonight our greatest commendation to God is our realized helplessness. He looks upon the poor and needy.

The Lord thinks on me, now on my help and deliverer. Just think about this morning's message. The moment of brokenness was the moment of self-discovery in the presence of God.

Peter never knew himself until Jesus looked at him in that moment. And then He saw, I have it in me to deny the one I love the most. You have it in you, brother.

I have it in me, were it not for His keeping power. When Job saw God, he says, I've heard of you by now by the hearing of mine ear, but now my eyes see of thee. And oh God, I hate my life.

I hate myself. I repent in dust and ashes. Job, a great man of God.

Isaiah, when he saw God, he says, Woe is me, I'm undone. I am a man of unclean lips. He's a preacher.

His lips should be clean. But oh, when he saw God, the best things became corruption. That's like Daniel.

In Daniel 10.8. Daniel, the Bible never says a bad thing about him. But it says, he says these words, when he sees God, there remains no strength left in me. All of my beauty is turned into corruption.

The things I thought were beautiful are the very things that condemn me. And there remains no strength. When you see God, brother, it'll be amazing.

After denial, Peter goes out and cries bitterly because he saw himself. And so, brokenness will come, not when I'm just aware of my sin, like this afternoon, but when I become aware of the grace of God, despite my sin and who He is in the light of who I am, that's when you'll break. When you realize that though you have failed, though you have fallen, though you are undone, wretched, poor in spirit, mourning, yet there is grace and total grace through the precious blood of Jesus.

I'll tell you that'll break you. That God, while I was a sinner, died for me and called me into His grace. Well, the next thing is ask God to break you.

Get on your knees and say, Oh God, break me. Break me. Cry out for mercy.

Remember His character as you will not be afraid. Ask Him to break you. And in the moment of faith, the next step is yield yourselves to God once and for all.

Tonight, on your knees, yield yourselves to God once and for all so that you will go home after prayer with a limp as a prince of God. Yes, you may wrestle with Him. Your future obedience to love your wife, to be a godly man to your children will be a gift from God.

He will pour it into a broken heart. He'll pour His presence into a broken heart. Apart from me, you're bankrupt.

But through me, says Jesus, you can do all things. Depend on Him for everything and be afraid to trust yourself for anything. Hate your own independent self.

Meditate on Jesus and His glory. See how He loves you. And see that it's the goodness of God that does the deepest work of breaking in the heart.

Is He worthy to have all of your being? He is. And tonight, make that full surrender. Choose with an act of faith in that moment on your knees to deny yourself and lay down your will.

Lay down your plans. Lay down your lifestyle. Lay down your future.

And you will find that brokenness beginning. The mark of a high calling is a lowly conduct. Lastly, ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to pray without ceasing.

Be sober. Be vigilant. And see that prayer is really just dependence on God in action.

That's what a life of prayer is without ceasing trusting God in everything. Once I am broken, once I see my true state, once I see His goodness, then God promises to give grace, to send revival, and to give me all I need. Brother, don't resist the one thing that God wants and that's a broken and contrite heart.

We think we have to be strong for God. Lord, I've let you down again. You'll never hold Him up.

Lord, I've let you down. He says, My child, you're not holding me up. This weight you feel is me seeking to break you.

Repent. And come down to the low place because lo, I'm with you. And I will revive the heart of the broken and the contrite one.

And then I can stand in my spiritual leprosy and my poverty of spirit, my mourning and my meekness, and say, although it's not in me, hallelujah, the pressure is off to produce. It's all in Him and I'm in Him. He's made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

And I stand before my Father tonight as righteous as I'll be a million years from now through His blood. It's the broken life that God will use. Little brokenness means little usefulness.

Little fruitfulness. Ask Him to break you and let Him do it.

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