

# Brokenness Study #3 - the Process

by Charles Stanley

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*In this sermon, Charles Stanley explores the process of brokenness as a means for spiritual growth, using the Apostle Peter as a key example of God's transformative work in our lives.*

**Duration:** 48:07

**Scripture:** Matthew 14:22-33, Matthew 16:21, Matthew 18:21, Matthew 26:33-35, John 13:5, John 21:15-17, 1 Peter 5:5

**Topics:** "Brokenness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding God's targeting of our areas of brokenness. Brokenness, according to the speaker, is God's way of dealing with our self-life and bringing us into submission to the Holy Spirit. The speaker uses the example of Peter, who had to be shattered and broken in order for his determination and strength to be directed towards the Lord's work. The speaker also highlights that God targets the specific areas in our lives that need to be broken, and that we all have strengths and weaknesses that make us vulnerable. The ultimate goal is for us to be in a usable condition, clothed with humility towards one another, as God opposes the proud.

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## Transcript

Brokenness is God's method of dealing with that self-life within all of us, which is that desire to act independently of God. And His ultimate objective is to bring every aspect of our life into total submission to His will, so that God's ultimate purpose for creating us would be accomplished. Oftentimes, we object to the way God does that.

This is the third message in our series on brokenness, the way to blessing, the first, the principle, secondly, the purpose, and now today, the process. That is, God doesn't just react, God goes about breaking us in a very systematic fashion. And what I'd like for us to do in this message is to look at the process God uses to break us, and as in each of these messages, we want to illustrate this principle by some biblical character, and today, it is the Apostle Peter.

So if you'll turn to Luke chapter 22, and let's read a portion of this chapter, and remind you that Jesus has been arrested, and they've taken him away, and this is an incident that happens after that. Verse 54 of Luke chapter 22, And having arrested him, they led him away and brought him to the house of the high priest. But Peter was following at a distance, and after they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard, and had sat down together, Peter was sitting there among them.

And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight, and looking intently at him, said, This man was with him too. But he denied it, saying, Woman, I do not know him. And a little later another saw him and said, You're one of them too.

But Peter said, Man, I'm not. And after about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, Certainly this man also was with him, for he is a Galilean too. But Peter said, Man, I do not know what you're talking about.

And immediately while he was speaking, a cock crowed. And the Lord, who was walking by, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had told him, Before a cock crows today, you will deny me three times.

And he went out and wept bitterly. Peter was not a normal sort of a fellow, very talented, very gifted in many ways. And if you will take a concordance and look in the Gospels, you'll find the name of the Apostle Peter, above all the other names of the Apostles, many times over.

In fact, you'd be surprised how many times his name is mentioned in the New Testament. Now, if you recall that Peter, James and John were the group that were in the inner circle with Jesus, somehow there seemed to be a relationship more intimate with them than all the rest of the Apostles. He was a fisherman, rather impulsive, self-centered, was written all over him, and impulsive, lots of talent and ability, very strong, strong willed, self-willed.

Jesus said about him, in fact, he said, I'm going to change your name. I'm going to call you the Rock, which I'm sure didn't help his ego any. And you and I may wonder, well, why in the world would Jesus choose a fellow like this? For the same reason he's chosen you and me.

He didn't choose us because of what we are. He chose all of us for what he could see within us, that all of us have the potential of becoming in Christ Jesus. And so Jesus chose a man through whom he could work as he did all of those Apostles, but he had a special work for the Apostle Peter.

And in the process of preparing Peter for the work, the process is a beautiful example of the process of brokenness. God getting him ready for the work God had called him to do. Now, I want you to listen very carefully.

There are only four points to this message. The first one is extremely important that you understand what we mean by God targeting our area of brokenness. Now, remember we said that brokenness is God's way of dealing with self-life, that part of us, that desire within us to act independently of God's will and purpose and plan for our life.

So what he does, he through brokenness brings our physical body, our soul, our mind, our will, our emotion, our conscience, our consciousness into submission to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who is there residing within us for the purpose of guiding and controlling our life. But it's a struggle not for most of us, but for all of us. And so what is this process? That is, how does God go about breaking an individual? So I want you to jot down four things and the first one is this.

God targets the area, God targets the area of our life in which we need to be broken. This is the process. God targets the area in our life in which we need to be broken.

All of us have strengths and all of us have weaknesses, all of us. And so you would think, well what we're to do, we're to live by our strengths and work on our weaknesses. But the truth is that in our strengths we probably are the most vulnerable because that's where we let our guard down.

In our weaknesses, we're the most conscious of our weaknesses because we think I'm so weak here, we probably are more guarded there. But I want you to understand how God operates when we say that he targets the area in which we need to be broken. Here's the way he does it.

Here is a need over here in our life, or rather a hindrance in our life, to what God wants to accomplish in our life or what he wants us to become. He sees this area, it can be an attitude, it can be a habit, it can be a relationship, it can be something that we desire so strongly that we hold on to, but something usually very valuable in our life. So he sees an area over here that's hindering what God wants us to become.

So what does God do? Does he go over here and work on the hindrance? Well he does. He targets the hindrance, but the way he operates is this. He looks at our life and sees what's the most valuable to us, what is the most precious to us, what is that we cherish the most, what is it we are holding on to, what's the last thing in the world we want to give up, and God puts his finger and begins to break us in that thing that we depend upon, that which we cherish the most, that which we hold on to in order to deal with something over here that probably most of us don't want to deal with.

It is all human nature to try to rationalize this, rationalize this, camouflage it, explain it away. God wants to deal with it because he sees it as a hindrance. Now there are times when the hindrance in our life, we're not even aware of what it is.

We know that there may be something, but we can't even put our finger on what it is. God knows exactly what it is. And so we may either rationalize it away, excuse it if we know what it is, or even if we don't know what it is, God has already targeted it, and what he does is he goes after the target by the way of getting our attention with something we hold on to dearly.

He knows exactly how to get our attention because you see, whatever I'm depending on over here or relying upon, God is going to remove it one way or the other because he wants us relying only upon him. He wants no relationship to take the place of our relationship with him, no reliance upon anything that would substitute for him. And therefore, in order to force us to deal with that which we don't want to deal with or not even aware of, God begins to crush and to break and to shatter and to remove from our life oftentimes that which is dear to us, what we cherish, what we hold on to, what is the most valuable to us.

And in the process of that breaking, God gets us to a position of such neutrality and such openness, then he can point to that area of our life that needs to be dealt with if we don't know it or in the process of being broken, we very soon begin to realize God is after this and now I have to deal with it. So when we say that God targets an area in our life, that's what we're talking about. Now, you don't have to be accused by anyone else.

The Holy Spirit is living in your heart if you're a believer and already, even now in this message, he's already surfaced in your life what he wants to deal with. You already know what most of you probably know what it is. Something in your life that is a hindrance to the free flow of the Spirit of God in your life, freedom in your witness, freedom of victory in your daily life, the free flow of the Spirit of God, something hinders that, something you have to keep dealing with, something you get drawn to, something you get magnetized to, something that disrupts your peace and your harmony with the Lord Jesus Christ and your

contentment with him.

You already know more than likely what that is. Now, Peter's life is a beautiful example of God identifying and targeting the area he has to deal with. Now, this is one of those sermons that I wish we had about an hour and a half and we could just talk back with each other because I'd like to ask you some questions and let you respond.

So what I want you to do is I want you to follow me through some events in the life of Peter and I want you to see if you can detect what it is and if you're listening, if you just take your Bible and read these verses with us and see if you can identify what Jesus saw as the greatest hindrance in Peter's life and the area in which he dealt with over and over and over again and the way Jesus broke Peter in order to deal with his hindrance. So let's begin with the 14th chapter of Matthew, with several passages in Matthew. 14th chapter of Matthew and you recall in this chapter, Jesus had left his apostles, went up in the mountain to pray.

They're out on the ship and the storm comes up and so they are in desperate conditions, scared to death and so here comes Jesus walking on the water and they cried out for fear and he said, now take courage aside, do not be afraid. Verse 28, Peter, now he's the only one, Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it's you, command me to come to you on the water. Lord, if you ask me, I'll come walking on the water.

Now remember this, that Peter had never seen anybody walk on water nor had any of the other apostles ever seen anybody walk on water except that day when they saw Jesus. How many of you have ever seen anybody walk on water? So here he says, he says, Lord, if it's you, you tell me and I'll walk on the water to you. So I want you to turn to Matthew chapter 16.

Matthew chapter 16 is the beginning of a turning point in the ministry of Jesus when he says to his apostles, I'm going to have to suffer and die and rise again. Verse 21 of Matthew 16. From that time, Jesus Christ began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised up on the third day.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. Can you imagine somebody rebuking God? He began to rebuke the Lord Jesus and he said to him, God forbid it, Lord, this shall never happen to you. And Jesus turned and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan, you're a stumbling block to me.

You're not setting your mind on God's interest, but on man's. All right, let's keep going. I hope you're getting warm.

Chapter 18, verse 21. Then Peter came and said to him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Seven times, which he thought was very, very generous. And Jesus said to him, not seven, but 70 times seven.

Then if you will turn to John chapter 13 and you'll recall this is in the upper room and the cross is the next day and Jesus is preparing to tell them the most important things. Probably he could tell them before he left, much of which was about the Holy Spirit. And verse five of chapter 13 says that Jesus poured water into the basin, began to wash the disciples feet and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.

And so he came to Simon Peter and he said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered and said to him, what I do, you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter. Peter said to him, never shall you wash my feet. That's interesting, isn't it? The same old Peter.

If you'll turn to Matthew 26. Matthew 26. Here he is again.

Let's start with verse 31. Then Jesus said to them, you will all fall away because of me this night for it is written, I will strike down the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered. But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.

But Peter answered and said to him, even though all may fall away because of you, I will never fall away. Then let's look at Luke chapter 22 in verse 49. And when those who were around him saw what was going to happen, they said, Lord, shall we strike with the sword now, either before Jesus had a chance to answer this, or even after he answered this, look what happens.

And a certain one of them, Peter struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. Now, if you'll notice, of course, there are other experiences in the life of Peter, but everywhere you see Peter, what happens? He's out front impulsively doing what? What is it that is so paramount in Peter's life? What is it that God, that the Lord Jesus Christ, what is it in his life that he saw as a hindrance that he must deal with in order for Peter to become the man he became? And you'll recall, he became the preacher at Pentecost. He was the foundation and the strength of that early church.

And what is it that Jesus saw in this man whom he called the rock that he had to shatter? He had to deal with a great hindrance in his life. What was it? Pride. I'll never leave you.

Oh, I know that James and John, all the rest of them, they count on me, the old rock. When everybody else has left you, I'll be here. You're not going to wash my feet.

They're not going to kill you. Call on me. I'll walk on the water.

Oh, prideful Peter. Let me ask you something. Is there a hindrance in your life that the Holy Spirit has identified that's just as pronounced in your life as it is in Peter's life? Now, Jesus had to deal with that.

And the truth is, either now or in the past, there are areas of our life just as pronounced, just as much a hindrance to us and God's work in our life as pride and egotism and arrogance oftentimes was in the life of the apostle Peter. How could Jesus raise this man up, fill him with the Holy Spirit, make him the strength of that early church in its early days? Prideful, full of arrogance, impulsive, thoughtless, oftentimes rebellious, going to do it his way. If we're going to take care of these Romans, we're going to do it by the sword, not by love.

What is it in your life that God has identified he's already targeted that must go if you're going to be the person that God wants you to be? With the apostle Peter, it was his pride. And so what we find as we go through these passages and you look at his life, what we find is the Lord Jesus Christ beginning to break Peter in order to deal with his pride. So I want you to watch the process.

So the first step in the process is God targets the area in our life that he must deal with. It may be a habit, it may be an attitude, it may be a relationship, it may be our covetous, greedy grasp of something we do not want to give up, we do not want to surrender. But the Holy Spirit is the one who stood in about that in your life.

Second step in the process, and that is that God arranges the circumstances in which we're to be broken. God arranges the circumstances in which we are to be broken. And let me say two things about that.

First of all, sometimes he puts it all together in order for us to be broken. Sometimes God allows us and sees us moving in a direction in which we will get ourselves in a position by our own actions and our own moves, he will allow us to get ourselves in a position whereby the Spirit of God begins to break us. So either way, God is behind the process.

Now when you think about this in Peter's life for a moment, here's the Lord Jesus Christ walking on the water. Now I'm not saying that Jesus sent the storm just to prove this to Peter, but in the circumstance of the storm and Peter says, Lord, if that's you, I'm coming. Well, he could have said, Peter, stay in the boat with the rest of your friends.

He didn't say that. He said, come. And so he comes walking on the water.

And of course, we know he looks around, he begins to sink. Now, you know, Jesus could have saved him at his ankle deep. At ankle deep, he could have raised him back up.

But I have a feeling he let him get deep enough that Peter began to really get scared because he didn't say Jesus, please save me. He cried out, Lord, save me. He thought he was going to sink because he was sinking.

Now imagine this for a moment. Imagine what Peter was thinking about sinking. Then also imagine what he must have thought the rest of his apostle friends were thinking.

There he goes again. And how embarrassed he must have been because, you see, if Peter was up to his old regular self-centered self, he was probably thinking, watch me, fellas. And out on the water he began and now he had to come back, brought by the Lord Jesus Christ, sinking, sinking.

Imagine how humiliating that must have been. Now here he is, the Lord Jesus Christ, turning point in the life of the Lord, saying to him in very serious terms, I want you to understand what's going to happen. I'm going to have to die and leave you.

I'm going to be crucified. I'm going to die the death of a criminal on the cross. I'm going to be accused falsely, crucified.

I'm going to die. I'm going to be buried. I'm going to rise again.

Peter said, no way is it going to happen. Now, here's the Lord Jesus Christ giving his apostles God's divine plan of redemption. That is, this is the most important thing in the life of Christ.

This is why he came. And Peter steps in to say, no way, it's not going to happen that way. I'm not going to allow that.

So what did Jesus do? He took his chisel out and popped him one more time. He said, right in front of his apostle friends, he said, you act just like the devil. Now, let me ask you a question.

Suppose you went to work tomorrow morning, you're sitting around 12 of your employees and the boss comes in and he says something and you say something and he says to you, you act like, man, you act just like the devil. Each time the chisel is humiliation. Up in the upper room and in the most precious times in the life of Jesus, here's Peter.

You're not going to wash my feet. And Jesus has to say to him, if you won't allow me to be a servant and wash your dirty feet, you can have Peter, you can have no part in this ministry. What did he say? Humbled by that, he said, just wash me from head to foot.

Everywhere you turn, Lord, all the rest of these, they don't quite have the courage I've got. They'll probably leave you when the going gets rough, but you look behind and I'll be right at your footsteps. And a girl says to him, I believe you're one of those.

Not I. A man says, you look like a Galilean. I don't know what you're talking about. The cock crows.

And all of a sudden, he is humiliated and smitten with overwhelming conviction that his boast of loyalty and faithfulness, all of a sudden it wasn't there. You see what Jesus did? Jesus took advantage of every opportunity to chisel away, chip away, and prune away every ounce of dependence Peter had upon himself. Now, here's what I want you to see.

God zeros in and targets that which hinders us. The outward expression of this is pride. Count on me.

I can handle it. I want to be first. Everybody else may be wrong, but I'm going to be right.

You know what Peter's basic, ultimate problem was? It was pride. But you know what God had to chisel away at? The thing that really and truly was the thing that really took Peter to the last moments of Christ's life before he ever yielded. Well, I'm going to tell you at the last point, but I want you to think about it.

You can see his pride and how the Lord Jesus is working in him. Now, let me ask you a question. Is there something going on in your circumstance today that you don't like? You're thinking, God, what are you up to? Could it be that he's targeted some area of hindrance in your life and you're in the process of having targeted it.

God is in the process of setting up circumstances in your life to absolutely remove everything that you can grasp, hold on to, depend upon, rely upon, except other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. That's part of the process. He doesn't want us relying on anything else but him.

I can't give up this relationship, God, then what'll happen? What'll happen is God will supply his part. Lord, I can't give up this job if I do. What'll happen? God will give you a better job.

You see, it doesn't make any difference what you're grasping, what you're holding on to. I can tell you, my friend, it's going to crumble sooner or later. And if you, in your insistence, determination, and willfulness, hold on, all you're going to do is to slow up the process of brokenness in your life.

He sets up the circumstances. He sets it up in a business and a man fails. He sets it up in the home and there's great consternation and anxiety and dissension and lack of harmony.

God knows how to set up the circumstances in order to bring us to the end of ourself in order that we can see are willing to deal with the thing that is hindering us. If we don't know what it is, he's going to reveal it. If we know what it is, we won't deal with it.

The pressure gets on until finally we say, God, okay. Third thing I want you to jot down in the passage is this. God chooses the tools with which to break us.

Now, we don't like them. I don't like them any more than you do. If God would choose the tools that I'd like for him to break me, I'd say, God, just give me a book.

Give me about two pages. I believe I can get the message. But the reason there are no such books is because nobody's ever gotten the message in two pages.

You see, God chooses the tools with which to break us. Now, let me say two or three things about the tools. Number one, they're beyond our control.

We don't do the choosing. God does the choosing. You see, we think we know what it would take to break us, but we don't.

And secondly, we certainly wouldn't choose much of what he chooses because you see, God's tools with which to break us are pointed and very sharp, very painful, cause great hurt, and oftentimes great suffering. He knows exactly what it takes. Beyond our control, I can't tell him how I want to be broken.

That's his business. Can't tell him what tools to use. That's his business.

They're absolutely beyond our control. Now, one thing I do know about them, they will be painful, hurtful, and oftentimes bring suffering. Now, that does not mean that God cannot use his word to penetrate our heart and to break our stubborn will.

He can use his word. But most of the time, even when God uses his word, there's going to be pain and suffering and hurt. Now, let's think about some tools, for example.

In the life of Peter, and we could never reproduce this situation, so it's not going to be this way with us. In the life of Peter, the tool that Jesus used most of all was his own word. Peter, you're acting like the devil.

That was a rather penetrating, piercing word. Peter, you're going to deny me. Peter, you're going to fall away.

So, in his relationship with Christ, the primary tool was the words of Christ, but also probably some of the embarrassment that he had among his fellow apostles and his failures. What are the tools that God uses in our life? Now, I want you to listen to what I'm not saying. I'm not saying to you that God's going to kill this man to get this woman to do this, or kill this woman to get this man to do this, or take this child to get this man to do this.

I'm not going to say that. It's true that sometimes when God takes a life, that someone else close to that life straightens up, and God gets a hold of their life, but I don't think you can say, well, God killed him to get her to do so-and-so. Well, God loves both of them.

So, I don't want you to hear me saying that, but I want you to hear me saying this. Sometimes, God will use tools that are very precious to us, very dear to us, the most precious, dearest thing in life to break us. The second thing I want you to remember is this, that you cannot be broken privately, that is, all secluded in a capsule, because somebody around you, it's going to spill on somebody, whether it's your wife, or your children, or your parents, or your friends, or whoever it may be.

And so, God uses a tool. Here is a Christian couple whose priorities are out of sorts, progressing and succeeding in business, and God sees the hindrance. And so, what happens? God knows exactly what to touch in the life of that family.

And so, the next thing you know, and listen what I'm not saying, I will never say, God caused this son to get on drugs, or this daughter to get involved in sex. I didn't say God caused that, but God will take advantage of their weaknesses, and their sins, and their disobedience to break their parents. On the other hand, God may do the same thing with a husband and wife.

He may use one of them to break the other. He may use a man's business to break him. Here's where his heart is, his life, his business has become his life, and all of a sudden, it's not there.

What is it that God's doing? Was it misplaced? You see, all of us have strengths and weaknesses, and there's nothing wrong with the strengths, as long as we understand that God and God alone must be our ultimate strength. And secondly, the problem is that we misdirect the gifts, and the abilities, and the talents, and the strengths we have, and what happens is we violate God's principles, sin against God by the misdirection of what we have. So what does he do? He deals with that which is precious to us, and he uses the pruning knife, and the hammer, and the sword, and the fire.

He burns, he hammers, he breaks, he shatters, he cuts to the very heart and the quick of a person's life. Why? Is it because God is ruthless, and crude, and cruel, and heartless, and lost his compassion? No, it's because God knows your potential. And you see, the truth is that knowing your potential, God isn't going to let you alone.

And so, whether it is your health, and for some people, that's the way he gets their attention. That's the thing they pride themselves the most. Some people pride themselves in their looks.

So what does God do? He begins to deal with it. Their possessions, he begins to deal with them. Some relationship, he begins to deal with it.

God puts the pruning knife in our life at the point of my greatest love and devotion. Sometimes we don't even know what that is. We think, well, you know, I don't love my job, or I don't love my business, or I don't love money, I don't love this, I don't love that.

The truth is, we do. And it has very seductively become an idol in their life, and so God deals with it. Now, you know the worst tool God ever uses in anybody's life? Our enemies.

He uses our enemies to break us. That's the tool. And sometimes he'll use a tool that is so precious and dear to you, you don't know how to respond to that.

You know what God does? He just keeps on increasing the pressure. He's got his eye on the goal, dealing with the hindrance, and all the time we're over here thinking, God, why is this happening to me? Why don't you stop this? Why don't you settle this? Why don't you straighten this out? God has the answer for all that. He knows he's dealing with whatever's hindering us in our life.

So you see, sometimes your enemy can be God's, too. I didn't say your enemy was right. What they're doing to you may be absolutely, totally wrong.

The way you've been treated in your vocation, your job may be absolutely wrong, could it be that God has utilized someone else's wrong attitude to break you in an area to get you to look over here to deal with what absolutely must be dealt with? We don't like the tools. We don't like husbands and wives being the tool, our children being the tool, loss of finances and loss of friends or status or position. We don't like any of that.

But you see, God knows what it takes to get down here in my heart where I have to say, God, I don't have anything. It's just you now, Lord. And that's the best position to be in.

He chooses the right tool. Then the last thing I want you to jot down, that is God controls the pressure. God controls the pressure in the process of being broken.

Remember that it's not God's purpose to break your spirit, because that would be devastating. God breaks the stubborn will in order that my will may be subdued to the spirit of God who is within me. And now what I am keyed in on is, Lord, what would you have me to do? So he breaks our stubborn will to bring it in submission to his spirit who is within us.

Not our spirit, but our will, he's the process of breaking. Now, my resistance to the breaking process will prolong it or my willingness to yield early will shorten it. So I do have something to do with the breaking process.

The earlier and the quicker I'm able to identify and yield to what God is after, the quicker I do that, the quicker it's going to be over. But you see, sometimes we're just stubborn. We're willful, just like the apostle Peter.

Somehow I'm going to be able to handle this. Now, I want to get back to what I said while I go. What is it that Peter had the biggest problem dealing with? Do you know why it took him three years before he was broken? The last thing in the world Peter wanted to give up is control.

You see, think about this. He said to Jesus, we're talking about God's eternal plan of redemption. It's not going to happen that way.

I'm not going to allow them to kill you. Peter's in control. You're not washing my feet, I'll do the foot washing.

Everybody else may leave, count on me. If we're going to have a fight right here in Gethsemane, I'm going to be the first one to get a trophy. So he whacks off the Roman's ear.

Peter had a very difficult time giving up control. But you know what? Every one of us do. Amen? We don't want to give up control.

Somehow we want to have a little bit of the final say. But you see, brokenness is for the purpose of bringing us to the point when we don't have any more say. Lord Jesus, what would you have me to do in this? Lord Jesus, what would you have me to do in this? Lord Jesus, what would you have me to do in this? You see, brokenness is to bring us to the point that in every aspect of our life, the only question is, Lord, what do you want? Not how's it going to affect me.

Is it going to make me richer or poorer? Am I going to have more recognition or less? Am I going to have more friends or less? Am I going to have more money or less? Am I going to be in... None of that's the issue. The issue is, Lord, what would you have me to do? And my friend, at any point in your life and mine, when we are confronted with a decision or a situation or a circumstance, and our conversation with God begins on any other line of thought, mark it down. He's targeted some area that he's going to deal with until you can begin to say, Lord, what do you want in my life? And you see, if there are none of those things back there, then there's no conflict between us and God.

And so the question is, Lord, what do you want? If I, by stubbornness and self-will and selfishness, decide that I am not going to give up my right here, all I do is prolong, listen to this now, prolong the brokenness, but I also force God's hand, turn the vice just a little bit tighter, or to stick it a little bit deeper, or to sand a little bit stronger, or to chisel away a little bit deeper, because all I'm doing is forcing God to bring on more pain and more hurt and more suffering until I'm willing to give up. Now, there are those who can hang in there, resisting God, refuse to deal with it, and after a period of time, you know what God does? He sets them on the shelf, just puts them on the shelf. And sometimes in a church, when God has put somebody on the shelf, great potential, unwilling to be broken, sometimes we're going to take them off the shelf and ignore it.

You see, what God's doing by breaking us is loving us. He sees the potential. Now, we said Peter's biggest problem was pride.

God broke him. When did he break him? Luke chapter 22. Look at this.

Here's when I believe Peter was ultimately broken. Out there by the fire, he denied to a young woman that he knew Christ, he denied to two different men he knew him, and then here's what I want you to notice. Peter said, man, I don't know what you're talking about, and immediately while he was still speaking, the cock crowed.

And the Lord, now think about this, the Lord, walking by at that moment when the cock crowed, having more than likely heard, Peter said, man, what are you talking about? I don't know him. The cock crows, and there's Jesus, and the Bible says, and Jesus turned, and he looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered the sayings of the Lord. Jesus kept going.

He was with the guards, but here's what happened to Peter. When he looked into the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ, after all of his three years of boasting and pride and arrogance, when he said, I don't know him, for the third time, and Jesus didn't say anything. He just turned and looked at Peter.

The Bible says he broke down in overwhelming brokenness, guilt, shame, sorrow. The Bible says he wept bitterly. It took him three years, Jesus chiseling away from him, for three years, until the day, my friend, he fell on his face before the Lord Jesus Christ, out away from where the Lord was.

And think about this now. Here is Jesus going to be punished before the crucifixion the next day, and what's Peter doing? Peter's over here on his face, crying out for forgiveness, remembering time after time the wonderful things that Jesus said to him, remembering time after time, and all of a sudden it began to dawn on him. That's what he's been trying to tell me all the time, that I can't do it myself.

I can't live this life myself, and here at the most crucial time in his life, I failed him. Peter's broken and shattered and splintered, and there's nothing left. His Savior, his best friend, has gone to the cross and died.

The apostles are all scattered, and he has failed to support the man who said he was God, and the man whom he testified as being God, and he's failed him. Shattered, splintered, broken, here he is. Now, it is this man who in the early church has great faith, and God begins to work through his life in a magnificent way.

It is this same man after he's broken, turned to 1 Peter, his epistle, 1 Peter chapter 5, it is this man now having been broken, shattered, splintered, now in a usable condition. Listen to the epistle that he wrote

years later, verse 5 of chapter 5. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders, and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud. Now, brother, he could write that with a great conviction.

God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble, and then he says, humble yourselves, therefore, into the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you at the proper time. Is that not what happened to the apostle Peter? After three years of Christ Jesus working on him, breaking him, the process going on, finally broken and shattered, what happens? In his broken, shattered condition, at the right time, Jesus, the resurrected Lord, having sent the Holy Spirit into the apostle Peter's life, now he transforms him, and the day of Pentecost, he is exalted as the spokesman of the apostles. He's exalted as the rock.

He is that tremendous leader that God starts and sets out in that New Testament church. But that proud, arrogant, egotistical Peter had to be shattered and broken, and the pieces then put back together in their proper place, so that all of his determination and persistence and strength could now be, having been saddle-busted, could now be corralled, and now be directed toward the Lord's work. Do you realize, my friend, that's what God's up to in all of our lives? That's what he's up to in your life and my life.

We can shorten it or prolong it by our response to what he's doing in our life. I want you to listen to something that you may have heard before, but it just fits this particular message. And I want to say to the women, most of these things are written, we'll say a man this and a man that, but God intends for it to include men and women as well.

Listen to this. When God wants to drill a man and thrill a man and skill a man to play the noblest part, when he yearns with all of his heart to create so great and bold a man that all the world shall be amazed, watch his methods, watch his ways, how he ruthlessly perfects whom he royally elects, how he hammers him and hurts him and with mighty blows converts him into trial shapes of clay, which only God understands. While his tortured heart is crying and he lifts beseeching hands, how he bends but never breaks when his good he undertakes, how he uses whom he chooses and with every purpose fuses him, by every act induces him to try his splendor out, God knows what he's about.

Sometimes we think, God, what are you about? God knows what he's about. Breaking that which we hold dear, that I may deal with that which hinders me, that having dealt with it, you and I may become what God so beautifully and perfectly designed for our life. And it's following the humiliation of brokenness that God exalts us at the proper time.

Father, we praise you for loving us. How beautiful you've given us the truths in your scriptures. How like Peter, oftentimes we act and respond.

Thank you for not giving up on him. Thank you for not giving up on us. I pray for those who are listening.

I pray for that one who has never received Jesus Christ as their personal savior, who does not understand what's going on in their life. There is hurt, there is suffering, there is pain, and they want to blame. Would you help them to understand that what you're allowing is for the purpose of breaking all reliance upon anything so that they'll end up with nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ in whom they can believe, who will forgive them as a result of the repentance and confession of their sins, who will save them from their sins as they receive him personally as their savior by faith? I pray, Father, for every believer who hears this message.

That we would not blame the hand that holds the knife, the hammer, the sword, the chisel, or the fire, but we would look to you and be able to understand you love us so much that you will not let us get by with our own self-will, our own prideful ways, our own strengths, our own self-reliance, but rather the strippers of all of that, that all we have left is Jesus totally relying upon you as our life and all that we need. How I pray that you will root this message and lock it into the heart of every person who hears it, that we might be able to praise you amidst the hurt and the suffering and the pain, knowing that as you did for Peter, so will you do for us also in your own way, according to your personal purpose for our life, by humbling us, you're able to exalt us in due time. So we humble ourselves before you today to thank and praise you for loving us enough to so work in our life that you will be pleased and glorified is our prayer in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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