

# Emptied From Vessel to Vessel

by John Follette

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*God puts us through trials and experiences to produce a broken, yielded spirit and to refine us, making us more like Christ.*

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 48:11, Ezekiel 36:27, 2 Corinthians 11:23, Philippians 4:11

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

John Follette preaches on the spiritual application of being emptied from vessel to vessel, likening it to the refining process of wine-making. He emphasizes the importance of yielding to God's training in the Holy Ghost, allowing Him to take us step by step into growth and maturity. The sermon highlights the need for a broken and yielded spirit, as demonstrated by the Apostle Paul's life of trials and pourings, leading to a deep transformation and conformity to the image of Christ.

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## Transcript

"Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." (Jer. 48:11).

In the text before us we find a partial statement of the judgment against Moab. It is not my purpose to take up this judgment and from an historical standpoint show the reason for and outcome of it. But I would like to take from this verse a little group of words, really a figure of speech, and find if there be any spiritual application therein for our profit.

The words, emptied from vessel to vessel, are so suggestive! The Holy Spirit in making use of such an expression means more than we may think from a surface or careless reading. The figure has to do with wine-making. It tells one of the methods used in producing a clear, rich, well-refined wine. It is poured into a vessel and allowed to stand for a certain length of time under respective circumstances perhaps of heat, cold, light or darkness. Then it is poured again into another. Each time there is a settling of sediment and dregs which remain in the vessel as the wine-maker carefully pours the precious liquid into still another one. This process he repeats until the wine is perfectly refined and it is poured in clear smooth streams, it yields a freshness of scent or fragrance very choice and pleasing to the maker. This is not so if the wine is allowed to stand all the time in one vessel. If so, it settles upon its lees and becomes scented with the essence of the dregs and loses its proper color value.

Does not such a figure speak? We are, as Christians, familiar enough with God's methods in soul training to recognize at once its teaching. There is a very useful lesson in Scripture in which we are mentioned as vessels. The Holy Spirit uses that type to teach us lessons concerning character building, frailty, usefulness, emptiness, and other helpful truths. But the figure here is quite different; instead of being represented as vessels we are to play the part of wine which is emptied or poured out. The vessels then are quite distinct from us and are produced by the wine-maker alone and serve only for refining the wine.

I wish we could see more clearly than we do and recognize the fact that we are at the present time in the wonderful school of the Holy Ghost. God is a Master-teacher and has us, His children, in training. We are not saved, sanctified and baptized in the Holy Spirit because we are matured or a finished product. These marvelous blessings have come to us because we are not matured. So as we yield to their purposes and ends, the Holy Spirit will see to it that we are taken step by step (vessel by vessel) into growth and maturity. And with wills yielded and spirits mellowed and broken we shall then become wine on the lees well refined.

It is here we find one of the methods God uses in accomplishing the desire of His heart. What may that desire be? That we may be conformed to the image of His dear Son. This is a work indeed. When once we get a vision of what we are by nature and realize it is God's purpose to transform us into the image of Christ, we are amazed. Well we may be, for there is no natural power to carry out so titanic an undertaking. We are helpless before it and see that if ever it is done the power must come from a source other than ourselves. So it does. We are God's little children. He furnishes the means and power for our transformation. He simply asks for yielded, willing material upon which to work. Can we not afford Him this today?

Have we not all found ourselves being emptied from one vessel to another in God's ceaseless dealings? What may these vessels be? I think they represent the various trails, unique arrangement of trying circumstances, peculiar conditions, unexplainable leadings, tests in relation to healing and the general array of experiences and vicissitudes common in the life of a consecrated Christian. He does not say the vessels are all alike. That would spoil the teaching given in the figure.

The vessels are quite different; scarcely two alike in the whole number. Let us consider a few. Here is one made of glass (but it is not wine colored) and as the wine is emptied into it, it assumes a yellow tinge or a green or blue cast as the color of the vessel may produce. This is the vessel of misunderstanding. People judge the color of the wine by the color of the glass, and at once label the wine as off color. Then an endless course of reasons ensues as to the cause of its being thus colored and why such rich looking wine should suddenly take such an unusual shade. Of course the "wine" is all the time conscious of such remarks and has a prayerful time getting settled. For the wine must become absolutely still and stand long enough for the sediment to settle and cling to the bottom and sides of the vessel. Many keep the wine in motion trying to explain the fact that it is really all right; only the glass is colored. Thus there is a delay and longer time is needed to get clear wine. Just as it gets settled and there is a clear condition again, the Maker carefully lifts it up and pours it into another vessel. What is left behind? Praise God, a few more dregs of self-vindication and a few more shreds of the self-life.

As the wine is poured out, it beholds the new vessel, a large, round open receptacle--gray and ugly. At first there is a shrinking perhaps--for the vessel seems so unusual, so uninviting and so absolutely unlike any into which it has ever been emptied. It is so flat and open that as the wine is poured out it can no longer keep its proper course so it runs and spreads, filling the whole open vessel. This is the vessel of

public gaze. It is where God pours us when we are to experience public humiliation and weakness. The wine cannot gather itself up and appear in any other shape. It must spread out flat and be open to public judgment and criticism. The trying light, the confusion, and scores of remarks made concerning the "spill," (as it seems to the people) altogether work a miracle. The wine becomes quiet, yielded and silent. Then it is poured out again. Clinging to the sides of the ugly, gray vessel there are dregs of pride and self-preservation; but added to the wine is a richer hue.

The next vessel is made of clay. It is not transparent and can reflect no light. It is tall and has a long, narrow neck. It matters not about the shape of the vessel, the wine is poured into it. As usual it has some difficulty in getting settled (owing to the darkness). It has some fear as to the certainty that it belongs there. But at last it yields and fills the vessel in quietness. Here it stands for hours, days and even months in shadow and darkness. At times the wine hears music and the delightful cries of those in light; but the clay affords no transparency so the wine remembers the light found in other days and simply trusts for light to shine again. This is the vessel of long, dark trial. The kind in which God lets us alone to prove us even in shadow and dark-ness. But lo, it works wonders in the wine. As it is again poured forth it gleams with light--faith tried and tested. Left behind are dregs of impatience, questioning and unbelief.

That is not all. Again the wine is poured off into a new vessel. This one is unusual in size and quite unique in design. The shape is most peculiar--it is full of bulges, angles, corners, dents and ridges. The wine has a hard time in finding its way into all the odd nooks and corners. People watch it and at once consider the wine is in the wrong vessel. It was never called to go into such a receptacle. It is a waste of time, money and energy and so the wine's leadings must have been all wrong. This is the vessel of strange guidance.

Let me tell you, dear friends, God's ways are not our ways. He does not come down with a private secretary and explain to the public all the leadings of His children. It is certainly a death to the flesh to be taken from one end of the earth to the other and not be able to satisfy their curiosity and the reasonings of the flesh. The wine, I am sure, had no real pleasure (in the natural) in finding its way into the different bulges and dents, but it had been poured and must now needs run and fill the vessel. I am glad that we do not have to know why God does everything. Neither do we have to explain to the public why He leads us as He does at times. As soon as the wine is settled and the lesson learned, the gentle hand of the Maker again lifts it and pours it off. How it sparkles and gleams with fresh yielded-ness and obedience. Behind are dregs of distrust and fear.

We cannot take time to speak of the many, many vessels so different in character. Here is one made of such a variety of materials--nearly everything enters into its composition. It is not at all the choice of the wine. It was never even considered to ask how it should be formed. This one speaks of the complex arrangement of circumstances into which we are thrust when we truly are not to blame for the situation at all. It is the vessel of everybody else's fault. It is an awkward place to be. People fail to do their duty, or forget, or someone is not broken and yielded, or another refuses to come or go as he should. Before we know it we are involved in a predicament quite to our disapproval.

We are often willing to go through a trial or test when we are to blame or have some touch upon it, but to be dragged into a plight with which we had nothing to do and for which we are not at all to blame, is (to the flesh) a real death. But listen. Who made the vessel ? God is not blaming you for the trial or its makeup. The wine had only to yield, be poured into, and fill. We need not take too much time in telling the Lord all about the size, shape, color, and texture of this vessel. He made it. Rather let us melt and flow.

Enough has been said concerning the vessels and what they teach. Let us now turn to another phase of truth g/ven here. How may the wine act in being poured? In the study of my own experience and in watching others go through trials and testings, I have found three ways we may act.

First we may be poured, but with an unbroken spirit. The will is surrendered and the pouring continues, but the dear soul keeps rigid and unbroken in spirit. So doing, the object of the pouring is lost. The soul retains its own shape and does not melt so that a sediment may settle. He has truly surrendered to God "to do His will or die" and may even die doing the will of God, yet utterly fail in that he is not broken in spirit.

Did you ever try to pour out a pan of thick milk into a smaller receptacle? You know the difficulty and result. Why the result ? Because the milk was set. There was no brokenness in it. The text tells us that because the wine was not emptied from vessel to vessel, it settled on its lees. This is a Hebrew word which means to thicken or curdle. How true ! Some souls are so set, as we say, that they become curdled. The question then is not, "Am I poured?" No, we are all poured and emptied. The question now is, "Am I broken?" One may be poured and emptied into a hundred vessels and never learn the lesson and "break." Oh, let us break in spirit and as we are emptied out there wiU be less agony, pain and distress for we will with grace melt and fill the vessel quickly.

Another way is to yield to the pouring, find ourselves filling a number of different vessels and yet, just enduring it. Quietly hidden away in our spirit there is a pout. Did you not ever yield to God in a trial and really go through, too, and yet have a little pout in your spirit? You were convinced in your intellect through God's Word and past experience that the best thing and safest thing to do was to yield and go through. You yielded your will (away back at consecration) to go through. But at times you go through the test by "enduring" and all the time say (very faintly in your heart), "Yes, Lord, I am going through, but just the same I don't think it is quite fair, for You could have made it easier," etc. You consent in will but do not break in spirit. Do you not see how very possible it is to yield to do God's will and even go to the stake, and yet not break? Many are "enduring" the pouring, but never seem to learn the lesson. Let us break and let the dregs settle.

The third way is to not only surrender in will but to break in spirit and heart. This is so pleasing to God. As we break in spirit we lose our setness; our natural spirit gives way and we become pliable and run easily into the most intricate parts of the vessel. Here we are truly able to say, "Sweet will of God," "I delight to do thy will, O God," etc.

Now a word as to the reason for all this pouring and emptying. Surely God does not thrust us into such trying places to mock us. Since we are consecrated our lives are not our own to order them as we might and avoid many pourings. God is back of it all. He is training us. The object in emptying us from vessel to vessel is to produce a broken, yielded spirit.

Let us note a difference here. A surrendered will is one thing and a broken spirit is another. The surrender of our wills is understood as a basic, underlying principle in the consecrated Christian. This is a foundation upon which God is working. The surrender of our wills is really giving God the permission to empty and pour us. As we say "Yes" to God's will and surrender, He begins to empty and pour. This He must do in order to produce a yielded, broken spirit in us.

The second reason for pouring us out is to keep us from settling on our lees. There is such a tendency in life to want it easy. We dislike disturbances and having to do things differently from the way we have for forty years. We are afraid even to let our work be taken by another's hands. "The road of least resistance

is a rut." So if we never get poured from experience to experience, the wine gets spoiled and scented with dregs. Do not be surprised if God is emptying you from a vessel in which you have been blessed for days and months or even years. Maybe you are settling on your lees. Since He is very choice of His wine, He may wish to refine you a little more.

Another reason is to broaden us in sympathy and understanding with each other. The one who has had but little trouble in life is not a particularly helpful person. But one who has gone through a hundred and one trials, experiences, deaths, blasted hopes, shocks, and a tragedy or two and has learned his lesson--who by reason of use has his senses exercised -- such a person is worth while. He is able to enter into the need of suffering humanity and pray it through. He can enter into perfect fellow-ship with a person who is in unspoken agony of spirit and pressure of trial. He is able to look beyond the frailty of flesh and, remembering we are but dust, to trust God with a sublime faith for victory and power. Do not be afraid of the process. I see such rich possibilities in it all. We long to be of service to needy mankind. Nothing can better equip us than to break in spirit and heart and so become clear, sparkling wine, rich and refreshing.

Again let me ask, why this broken spirit? O friends, need we ask why when once we have caught a vision of the adorable Bridegroom of the soul? We not only find in Him a yielded will, but, oh, the broken heart and spirit. He became limp, weak and broken until His life was poured out. "Crucified through weakness" is the Word. And this was the mighty God. What broken-ness! Such was one of the characteristic marks of our Bridegroom.

Do we desire fellowship with Him? If we are to be united to Him we must be broken in spirit for our Bridegroom is yielded, and broken in spirit. Do you not see more of His purpose in it all? He is getting His people more loosened from the earth than ever before and making them yielded and broken for translation. I do not want to be earthbound and "settled on my lees," do you? If not, then let us yield quickly and learn our lessons. He is coming soon, and cannot translate un-broken spirits. The material must be yielded.

As an illustration of this emptying let us consider Paul. Surely as choice an instrument as he, must have known something of this method of development. I believe that in his conversion God accomplished a feat which often takes years to gain in the lives of many Christians. I think that Paul surrendered his will then. Does he not pray immediately, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Even though Paul surrendered his will to God's will and at once began to walk in it, there remained in him a strong, natural spirit (not necessarily wicked or too rebellious). This did not give way to a mellow, broken, quiet spirit all in one minute. We find Paul poured and emptied, and emptied and poured, time and again. Was it to get him to yield his will? Never. He was emptied from vessel to vessel because he was yielded in will. But in all these strange and trying experiences his natural spirit was giving way--breaking and melting until at the close of his life we find in Paul a broken, mellow spirit which led him to pour out his life and that even with a secret and heavenly joy. Look at 2 Corinthians 11: 23-29.

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in

fastings often, in cold and naked-ness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

Is this not a very. real picture of being emptied from vessel to vessel? Look at Phil. 4:11:

"Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." This is an unfortunate translation, and is misleading. From the use of the word content we infer that Paul became indifferent to his surroundings and was satisfied to let them mount up over him while he contented him-self as best he could. That is not what it teaches. The correct reading is, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be independent. How very different I He did not let the condition or trial overcome him, but he became master and independent of it, and thus made it to serve him. So whenever any angle, corner or side of the trial rose up to torment or fret him, he melted and ran into that very part and silenced it. He became independent of the vessel because he recognized the wine was of more value than any earthen receptacle. He made it serve to collect the dregs and sediment of his old life.

In closing we might consider how we may more gracefully be poured; how we may break and become the desired wine. First I think we are to see God. He is the Maker of the vessels, He does the pouring, and we are His wine. To see this will clear up many difficulties. The Lord may use the enemy and other people as instruments in forming the trials but only to accomplish His purpose. He is first. We are H/s wine and very choice. We cost Him His life and so He is particular to have the wine refined even to the last degree. We only leave behind the dregs of the old creation and self life.

"Behind my back I fling,

Like an unvalued thing,

My former self and ways,

And reaching forward far,

I seek the things that are

Beyond time's lagging days."

We must then depend upon the Holy Spirit who is now given to us instead of the old, set, unyielding spirit of the natural. As we yield and break in our spirit, the Holy Spirit becomes all we need. Ezek. 36:27. "And I will put my spirit within you ...."Some day the last vessel will be filled and the last pouring finished. May it please His heart to find in us choice wine, rich, sparkling and well refined, because by His grace we have been emptied from vessel to vessel.

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