

# Brokenness, A Prerequisite To Answered Prayer

by Mark Greening

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## Transcript

And if Mark comes up, there's going to be some more this evening, so don't leave too early. We believe God may have some special blessing. Father, you bless each of us and love each of us.

Lord, just hearing the pain that has happened on others that we heard here this evening and then watching you bless and feeling the love that you pour down is something that we can take away with us. But you have brought our brother here with a word, a word for each of us. Amen.

And I pray, Father, that you would indeed bless him as he brings this word to us, that it would go deep into each of us, into our inner being. And that we would just feel your presence, learn from you and be strengthened and blessed. So, Father, be with our brother, be with his words and his heart.

For we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. I've entitled my message tonight, If It Ain't Broke, Break It.

We're going to be talking about brokenness tonight. It's close to the heart of God. It should be close to ours.

In Psalm 65, too, we read, Oh, you who hear prayer to you, all men will come. We know this to be true. People everywhere pray to God, especially when they're in trouble.

We've all heard that saying, there is, there are no atheists in foxholes. But the question is not whether we come to God, but whether he will come to us. We've heard wonderful stories these past days of God coming to his people in response to their prayers.

And any student of revival knows that prayer is at the heart of every move of God, beginning in the book of Acts, where we find that for 10 days, 120 disciples met alone in a room and they prayed until the glory of God fell. And between chapters two and four of Acts, we find 5,000 people being swept into the kingdom of God. In 1932, what began in Shantung, China, as a movement of holiness and prayer, resulted in thousands and thousands of people coming to faith in Christ in the most dramatic of ways.

It was said during that revival that at the peak of the revival, with all of the praise and worship going on, they would have just praise services. Sometimes they would bring possessed people into that service. And in the midst of that praise, it was said that no demon could last more than an hour before the person was delivered, set free and saved.

Many of us are familiar about the 1972 revival in Saskatoon, where Brother Bill McLeod prayed, as I recall from his testimony, for about two years specifically for that move of God, among others and other pastors. And then God came and we know many of the stories that come from that time in Canadian history. But tonight, I do not want to talk about the need to pray or techniques of prayer or the discipline of prayer, because we all know about these if we've been Christians for any length of time.

I want to talk about the necessity of brokenness in prayer. As a matter of fact, to teach about prayer without teaching about brokenness will produce fleshly, powerless results. We will learn from God's word tonight that the Lord answers the prayers of broken people.

Are you broken yet? Far too much of our church efforts and even prayer are done in the powerlessness of the flesh. Jesus said, flesh gives birth to flesh, but spirit to spirit. I remember years ago in my first pastorate, I was a little disappointed because only eight people were coming to prayer meetings on Wednesday.

And of course, the solution to that is to preach a real barn burner. And so I preached a sermon entitled, My House Shall Be Called a House of Prayer. And boy, did you could smell the fire and brimstone and the sulfur.

I really let him have it. Boy, I let him have it. And faith is the substance of things hoped for, the essence of things not seen.

And of course, I, by faith, that Wednesday, I went and I got extra chairs and put it around because I figured there'd just be standing room only at that prayer meeting. And we went, I waited, and 730 came and we went from eight people to nine people. Yep, one more person joined us, nine people and that poor brow beaten sister who came number nine.

She didn't show up for months, maybe a couple of years after that until God moved and touched us in a real way. You see, the problem was I preached about conviction in prayer, but not contrition in prayer. And so it had little effect to burden the hearts of my people.

It was then I realized that something was missing and the Lord convicted me about a lack of brokenness in my own life. And I remember I began to come before the Lord and he began to break me about my own sin. Jesus said that what comes out of a man's life is not just the actions that defile him, it's what comes out, it's what's in the heart.

And so he began convicting me of motives and attitudes in my heart. He began to convict me about my lack of compassion and a sorrow for the lost all around me. And I began to weep and pray and then I pray, Lord, burden my men to pray and to be broken.

Two more elders got broken before God. They began to weep before God. I remember we would get together in this verse.

I think I heard Lucitara preach on it once and I looked through my concordance and finally found it. And this was a theme that we prayed that God would just break in. And it was in Deuteronomy 28, 23.

And it says, the sky over your head will be bronze and the ground beneath you, iron. And we pray, oh, Lord, our prayers are just bouncing off the ceiling unless you do something. And we were tilling the ground.

And some of you as pastors know what it's like to till the ground in a church. And it's like trying to put a pickaxe, pickaxe through iron. Nothing happens.

We began to say, God, if you don't put a split, if you don't break through this sky of bronze and come down and save in our city, nothing will happen. Remember reading Malachi chapter three, verse two. You see, we thought, oh, Lord, this will be wonderful.

We'll begin to pray and we'll get broken and then you'll come. And the Lord warned us in Malachi three, but who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears for he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap? We began to see what it was like for the Lord to burn the dross of sin and indifference off in our lives. And it was painful and we spent nights weeping before God.

Then the good news. In Isaiah 118, God said to us, come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

Though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. We came and we reasoned with the Lord and the Lord is gracious and compassionate and slow to anger. And we found that he did not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

As far as the East is from the West, so far he removed their sins from us. And he taught us that if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. What a merciful God he was.

Then we read Isaiah 6, 1. Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces, but he will heal us. He has injured us, but he will bind up our wounds.

After two days, he will revive us. And on the third day, he will restore us that we may live in his presence. You know, it's very interesting that we have been here now.

This is the third day. And if by faith, we believe what his word says, one of the 7,487 promises in his word, we can be revived in our hearts tonight, even if it's just one person. But I know it will be more than one tonight.

He can revive you. He can revive this church. He can revive your church.

He can revive your family. He can revive your neighborhood. He can revive this city.

And we began praying like this, and after six months, God appeared. He began saving people every week for 14 weeks straight. This was a direct response to the effectual, fervent prayers of God's people.

People who came to God on his terms, which resulted in him coming to us based on his promises. I shall never forget those days. I will always remember coming into the sanctuary and sensing, as the ancients called it, the *mysterium tremendum*, the manifest presence of God in the service.

Oh, up until that time, there was a lot of chatter, a lot of noise. We would come into the service, and you could hear a pin drop. The messages were no different.

I didn't preach any better than I always preached. And yet God would move in the hearts of people. Sometimes I would say amen, and I'd sit down, and I thought, I have to get up and tell them, and dismiss them, because they just sat there.

No one would move. People, as I mentioned the other day when I preached, sometimes they'd come in, and we'd say, why are you here today? They said, we don't know. God woke us up and told us to come, and they'd get saved.

We found that the presence of God, we had been praying. You see, we hadn't read much about revival. We just heard a few sermons from Lucifer when he came to Kingston back in, I believe it was the early 80s.

But we believed. He believed what he was preaching. So I said, must be true, because the Bible says it too.

If my people will, then I will. Then it must be true. God can revive us.

And we had prayed, Lord, just don't revive the church. We prayed, would you break through this sky of bronze? Would you put these fissures and cracks in it? Would you come down, and would you begin saving all over this city? You know, we had done evangelism the hard way. You know, with a team, we'd visited about 5,000 homes in the area.

We never saw one convert. I'm not saying there's no fruit. I'm not saying God won't honor it or bless it.

I'm not saying that. I'm just saying it's hard work. It's hard work.

We're to do the work of an evangelist, Paul told Timothy. But oh, when God came. I remember a brother saying once, I believe he worked with CRF, and I was on a crusade with him, and he said this, I was working for God, but who was working for me? You ever do that? You just work for God? It's really nice when God works for you.

And I remember the sense of the presence of God. It not only hung over the church, it would go outside of the church, into the city, and sometimes the neighboring cities. I remember people would come under conviction.

And they would, if they were near a Christian, they would go to a Christian and say, they'd begin weeping and they'd say, we need help. And that Christian would come to our church and say, come, my next door neighbor's under conviction. I remember one lady, I'd never heard of her before, I'd never seen her.

And these folks who had attended our church, they'd say, pastor, please come. There's someone, they're under deep conviction. I walk into their apartment, and they were crying.

And I said, what's wrong? They said, we don't know. I said, tell me your background. Well, I've just moved from Singapore.

And I said, well, what do you believe? And she said, this mix of syncretism, this hodgepodge cobbled together of everything and anything. I couldn't figure out what she believed. But she says, when I was a little girl, I had a dream.

And I was a little lamb, and I'd fallen off the cliff. And in my dream, I saw this shepherd with a long crook. And he reached down his crook to me, and I couldn't reach it.

She says, what's the dream about? I said, oh, let's turn to John chapter 10. And as she read John chapter 10, tears streamed down her face. And she fell to the ground.

She says, I saw him. That's who I saw. That's what the dream was about.

And she came to Christ. I remember, and I mentioned again the other day, that the ladies came. This is a wonderful thing when the ladies come and say, you know what, we want to pray and learn to pray like our husbands because they've left us in the dust spiritually.

And so my wife started a prayer group, and we're going to try to find that journal. It's got lost in about five moves, but it's down in the bowels of our basement somewhere. But in that journal, my wife had page after page after page of prayer requests and page after page after page of answers on every line.

While the ladies would pray on their knees, I remember one man, we didn't even know who he was, in Toronto. We were about 20 miles away. And they were praying for him.

And then as they were praying for him, the man gets saved in his apartment, not watching TV, listening to radio with no tracks, nothing, he just comes under commission and gets saved. I remember one man in the church. This man.

The first prayer, God has to raise up prayer warriors in a church. I would say it's the most important ministry in the church. But I'll tell you, it's often the most unrecognized, and sometimes the most threatening for pastors and leaders if they're not surrendered to the Lord because God, the secret of the Lord is with those who fear him, and it's quite something when God speaks to someone, often a lady or a man who's been unschooled and ordinary.

And God tells them things that convict us. We had one lady by the name of Kay like that. She got saved at about 40 years of age.

And she was just a firecracker. And she said, Lord, I'm too old to do anything. I can't preach.

I'm not very talented or gifted. What kind of gift are you going to give me? And she said, Mark, you're not going to believe it. And she talked it across.

She said, you're not going to believe what he did to me. He told me, Kay, you're going to pray. And this dear old woman who was 80 plus, she said, I got up on my bed and I started jumping up and down saying yippee.

She told me that. She was so excited that she could pray. And she would pray and God would answer her prayer.

She was an amazing prayer warrior. But God, in order to keep her broken and humble, he gave her, oh, a thorn in the flesh called a husband. Oh, was he a thorn in the flesh? I'd get along with most anyone.

He was a challenge to me. We had something in common. He was from Montreal.

He spoke French, so I could go and I'd talk to him. I'd witness him in French. So I got along with him a little bit better than most pastors because I could parlez-vous with him and we'd share a few clean jokes in French.

I had to be careful how he got going. This guy was brutal. I mean, he was hard living, hard drinking, and everything else that goes along with him.

People that prayed for him, they had prayer meetings specifically for him. They prayed for years. I think it was 30 years.

They prayed for him and nothing. Well, when God came, I remember the day I thought, well, Lord, we're going to make Hagel the sun shines. You're moving.

I went up to his apartment and people were praying. And as was our practice, we would just open the word of God to wherever the Holy Spirit led us. And I think I opened it to I am the way, the truth, and the life, and I quoted in French to him.

And I gave him the Bible. And I said, read this. He only read one verse.

And I remember him sitting there. And his hands began shaking. But I didn't say anything.

I just sat there for five. You know, sometimes we don't like silences. You know what to do, leaders and counselors and mothers and fathers? When the Holy Spirit's with you, just don't say anything.

Just be quiet. Be still and let them know that he is God. And he shook there for a long time.

And I look. And there she was, looking around. She was going up and down like this, looking around the corner.

She was looking. Because she knew that the Holy Spirit was on him. And 10 minutes later, he wept his way into the kingdom.

And God ushered him into glory. Three months later, he died. Jesus said, flesh gives birth to flesh, but spirit to spirit.

So unless the Holy Spirit does something to bring us to that place of brokenness in our lives, then we cannot pray as we ought. Is this not what Romans 8 teaches us? Verse 26, in the same way, the spirit helps us in our weakness. We don't know what we ought to pray for.

Now, I want to stop there. What is the weakness there? You know what most people will say? The weakness is we don't know what to pray. That's what the rest of the verse says.

No, no, no, no. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray when we understand in our weakness, our brokenness, our contriteness, our humility, our acknowledgement of our inability before God. Then, when we acknowledge and come to him in brokenness, we don't know what we ought to pray for.

But the spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. Have you ever experienced this in your prayer life, being carried along by the Holy Spirit to pray things you didn't even know how to pray for or what to pray about? And sometimes you don't even know all you can do is groan? Do you know that the Lord Jesus Christ even had to groan in prayer? Oh, we know about him groaning and weeping and travailing in the Garden of Gethsemane. But when he was called to the grave of Lazarus, you remember in John 11, the shortest verse, Jesus wept? Just a few verses later, we read Jesus again groaning in his spirit.

If Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, needed to groan so that a man who was going to heaven anyways who had died could be resurrected to life again, if he needed to groan for that person, how much more do we need to groan and weep and be broken for the loss of going into eternal hell? Oh, we don't know how to pray. But when we're broken, then the Holy Spirit comes on us and he teaches us what to pray for. And sometimes it's just weeping and groaning.

And sometimes it's only one sentence. Sometimes it's only one word. Help! Jeremiah 33 says, call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

Oh, it's a wonderful thing, brothers and sisters, to get to the place where we can say, God, I just don't know. Because then, he says, I'm going to show you things. I want to pause here for a moment because this brings up a point in our modern churches.

Counseling. You know we really don't know what to tell people. We pretend we do.

We go and we pay for a shingle in Bible College or some secular university and we call ourselves counselors. You know, I love the look on people's face when they sit down or they call me up and they say, can you help me with this problem? No. Well, I thought you're supposed to know these things.

Well, I don't know, but I know someone who does. Okay. They come see me and they'll say, well, I got this problem.

What do I need to do or how do I get out of this problem? Or how do I get out of this? Or why is this happening? There's another one. Why is this happening to me? I always tell them, honest, I don't know. And they look at me and they say, you're supposed to know these things.

And I say to them, I have no idea, but I know someone who does. We're going to pray about this. Now, let's think of this.

This is a little humorous. The Bible says that the heart is deceitful above all else and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Do you know you are deceitful and desperately wicked in your heart just like I am? Do you know that? And do you know what a definition of counseling is? Without the Holy Spirit, it's two deceived people trying to figure out the truth about a problem.

You know, the best thing that we can do as counselors and pastors and Christian mothers and fathers and friends is to point people to the counselor and to the Lord Jesus Christ who alone can help them. Some time ago, a woman came. She says, there's all kinds of demonic activity in my home and I can't sleep.

All right, counselors, what's the answer? I said, I don't know. I said, let's tell the Lord honestly we don't know. And I had another lady there with me.

I said, let's pray. And here's what we're going to pray. Holy Spirit, we don't know.

But you know, would you please tell me or this woman or this other lady helping me here, this sister, what the problem is? We'll pray silently until you speak to us. We prayed silently and the Lord laid on my heart what the problem was. But I wasn't sure.

And so I said, amen. And then I looked at the other sister and I said, did the Holy Spirit tell you? She says, I wasn't going to say anything unless you asked me first. But yes, this is what the Holy Spirit told me.

It was the same thing the Holy Spirit told me. So we looked at her and we told her and that was the problem. Well, it's not good for repeat business.

It is really not. But I'll tell you, you get time with your family and to do other things that are important. I remember one man had been counseled for five years and no one could help him, bless his soul.

And I said, Lord, you know what Moses said? He said, Lord, if you don't go with me, I'm not going. And I said on a Thursday night, Lord, if you don't speak to me and tell me what this problem is, I'm not going. And I got down on my knees and the Lord laid on my heart what the problem was.

I jumped right up. I said, I'm not telling him that. It's impossible.

I said, can't be that. I said, Lord, if this is what the problem is, then you must explain to me how I'm going to explain this to him. And the Lord did.

We went to that place the next day and in front of his wife, I said, I have a message from God for you. This is what the Lord has laid on my heart. And that dear brother sat there.

I got to rephrase that he wasn't a brother yet, even though he's a teacher in the church. But this dear soul sat there, got down on his knees and wept under conviction of the Holy Spirit and came to Christ. Now, it's not good for repeat business.

Do you know what it, do you know what concerns me? I'm going to really step on toes, but I can go back to Toronto and you won't see me again. So I can pull a pin on this. Remember what Jesus said? He said in Matthew 23, but you're not to be called rabbi, for you only have one master and you're all brothers.

And do not call anyone on earth father, for you have one father and he's in heaven. Nor are you to be called teacher, for you have one teacher, the Christ, the greatest among you will be your servant, for whoever exalts himself, like calling himself by these names and titles, will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Now, if I call myself counselor, what do we call the Holy Spirit who is called the wonderful counselor? I may counsel people, but I am not a counselor.

Your job and my job is to point people to the wonderful counselor. Our job, you know, Jesus didn't put in here, you know, the Greek word for pastor is poimen, means shepherd. The only reason Jesus didn't put it

in there is there was no one really called shepherds and pastors then.

I understand the role of pastors, but if we take it too personally and we like it too much, we ought to be careful. Because Peter says in 1 Peter, that great shepherd of the sheep, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our role, John says, I am not him, but one coming after me is greater than I, the latches of his shoes I'm not worthy to untie.

He pointed people to Jesus. Our role as Christians is to point our children and our friends and our family and our congregations to the Lord Jesus Christ and the wonderful counselor, the prince of peace, everlasting father. I digress and I get into trouble, but getting back to my message, how can we experience this kind of spirit-led prayer that reaches the throne room of God and causes God to come down and meet us in our deepest need or on behalf of others in their deepest needs or for revival? The answer is found in Isaiah 57, 14, where we read, and it will be said, build up, build up, prepare the road, remove the obstacles out of the way of my people.

We'll talk about these obstacles in a few minutes. For this is what the high and lofty one says, he who lives forever, whose name is holy, I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. Where does God live? In a high and holy place, but he dwells with those who are contrite and lowly in spirit to revive us.

And scripture says, will you not revive us again? Brothers and sisters, it's an event as well as a process. I can get unrevived as fast as I can get revived if I'm humble with God and if I backslide. We have to be revived.

Will you not revive us again? It's not good enough that we got revived last month, last year, ten years ago. We need to be revived on a daily basis. We need to be surrendering and humbling ourselves before God daily that his spirit and power might rest on us.

Psalms 65 too that I read at the beginning, O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come. This is what prayer is all about. Not just us coming to God, but him coming to us when we're humble and contrite and broken in spirit.

We read this sign, Emmanuel, God with us. I was thinking I should, I would have gotten in trouble. Take a stencil and write the word when.

Emmanuel, God is with us. When? When we're humble and contrite in spirit, lowly and contrite. That's when he's with us.

Brothers and sisters, it's not about our prayer techniques. It's not about how sincere we are or how correct our theology is. Although that's important.

But it is about whether I'm contrite and broken and humble before Almighty God. That word contrite means ground to pieces. It's the utter awareness of our spiritual bankruptcy.

It's the opposite of what the Laodiceans thought in their church where Christ said of them, You say I am rich. I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. I'd like to add something there.

You say I am smart and I have acquired knowledge. Let me add something else. I am hardworking and have acquired success.

But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. God doesn't need our money. He doesn't need our words or our intellect or even our actions alone.

He wants our hearts. Isn't this what Jesus meant when he said these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Proverbs says my son give me your heart.

And it's not just any old heart that he wants us to give him. Tonight he wants you to give him a heart that is crushed and broken and smashed to smithereens. Crushed of our pride and our self and our plans and our desires and our everything else that we think that we ought to be that is contrary to the image of Christ.

And a potter would take that broken pottery and he would smash it in a type of mortar and pestle as it were to completely crush that to powder so that he could mold that into something that was of value. And if we will come to the Lord and allow him and we will humble ourselves and allow him to break our hearts by showing us our hearts and our sin and our complacency and everything else that we'll look at in a minute then he can take that finely ground powder and he can mold us into the image of Christ. Now do we need proof that the Lord wants broken hearts? Oh, let's look at some proof.

Psalms 51:16 You do not delight in sacrifice or I would bring it. You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

Oh God, you will not despise. Do we need more proof? Proverbs 34:6 This poor man cried. Why did he cry? He's broken.

He cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all, not some, all of his troubles. What keeps you awake at night? God says if you will be broken, he will deliver you from all your troubles. We continue in Psalm 34:17 The righteous cry out and the Lord hears them.

He delivers them from all their troubles. Why does he deliver them? Verse 18 explains why. The Lord is close to who? The broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all. When does the Lord deliver us from all our troubles? When we are crushed and broken and humble in spirit. The greatest barrier to getting to the place of prayer, let alone answered prayer, is a lack of brokenness in our lives.

But how do we get to this place of brokenness? If this is what God requires when we pray, how do we come to that place of contriteness and humility? Brokenness will come once we recognize our sin the way God sees it. In Isaiah 66:2 we read this is the one I esteem. He who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Why do we tremble at God's word? Because God's word warns us of sin that will keep us from being broken and able to pray and see answers to prayer. There's a number of sins that keep us from brokenness. Some have been preached on already at this conference.

We don't have time to look at them all, but there's four that the Lord impressed on my heart just to talk about tonight. We'll try to be brief on some of them. But there's disobedience and rebellion against God, that's one.

Secondly, pride or self-sufficiency. Thirdly, complacency or indifference, not sensing a need or having a desire to pray. And fourth, idolatry, putting someone or something else ahead of the Lord.

Let's look at these one by one. Disobedience or rebellion against God, doing out and outright what we know to be wrong. In Proverbs 28.9, we read, If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable.

We think, oh, the Lord wants discipline. He says, no, it's detestable if you're not obeying me. Proverbs 66.18, If I had regarded sin in my heart, the Lord would not have heard me.

Isaiah 1.13, Stop bringing meaningless offerings. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you. Even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.

Your hands are full of blood. Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight.

Stop doing wrong. Learn to do right. You see, disobedience and rebellion keeps us from that place of praying and brokenness in prayer.

We think that God wants us to pray and desires just prayer for the sake of, well, he wants prayer, but not any old prayer. You know that God stopped a prayer meeting in the Old Testament. If you remember in Joshua chapter 7, the Israelites had gone and had this great victory at Jericho, and then they go to this little podunk town, Ai, and they get beat real bad, and a number of them get killed.

And they come back, and they're just broken, and Joshua's down on his face. You know what this is? He's down on his face. Pick up the story.

Joshua is down on his face, and in verse 10, God says, The Lord said to Joshua, Stand up. What are you doing down on your face? Israel has sinned. They have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep.

They have taken some of the devoted things. They have stolen. They have lied.

They have put them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They turn their backs and run because they have made liable to destruction.

In other words, they're vulnerable because of sin. Do you realize that if we don't deal with sin in our lives, that our families, fathers, your family becomes vulnerable if you will not deal with sin in your life that the Holy Spirit is speaking to you about? Mothers, teenagers, leaders, if we do not deal with sin in our life, we open the door, as it were, for the enemy to attack. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.

Go consecrate the people. Tell them, consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, That which is devoted is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it.

Scripture says, Surely the hour of the Lord is not too short that it cannot save. His ear is not too dull that it cannot hear, but your sin is separated between you and God so that he will not listen. Do you know that God can save? Do you know that if He wanted to, He could just any of you that do not really know the Lord Jesus Christ, He could just come right in today and save you.

He could save your next-door neighbors. He could come into Victoria like a Great Awakening and save everybody. God says His arm is not too short and His ear is not too dull.

He says, but our sins. We learn this the hard way at our church. Remember I started at the beginning by telling you 14 weeks of God saving every week, sometimes four people a week.

It was wonderful. And all of a sudden, at the end of the 14th week, nothing. We knew there was something wrong.

And for two weeks, God stopped saving. And I remember I went to the elders. We stopped having elders.

We would just have elders' prayer, and then everything would come out naturally in prayer, and that was our agenda. We just prayed, and God did things. But I said this, and I had never felt this before.

I said, man, it feels like there's blood guilt on my hands. You know, the Old Testament talks about blood guilt. After you've murdered someone, there's blood guilt on your hands.

And I said, it feels like I've murdered someone. They said, what do you mean? I said, I don't know. We got on our knees and we prayed, and the Lord spoke to us, and He said, I have yet others to come into the kingdom, but there's sin in the camp, and I cannot save.

And their blood will be held accountable at your hands, leaders. Talk about the fear of the Lord. We said, Lord, what is it? And the Lord showed us that the young people had had an event on that Saturday night previous, and I had warned them.

I said, Lord is moving. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Do not grieve them.

And so the leaders in ignorance did some event that was very grieving to the Holy Spirit. I won't get into details, but afterwards, one of the men in the church came and said, do you know what happened that night from the pulpit? And I said, O Lord, have mercy. That second Sunday after that, after two weeks of not having anyone saved, I preached the message on grieve not the Holy Spirit, and at the end of the message, I had everyone stand, we held hands, and I repented and asked God to forgive me for my sins because I was accountable as pastor of the church.

And I prayed that God would forgive me and to forgive the sins of ignorance, and we prayed, and after that, right away, God began saving again, and 20 more people were ushered into the kingdom of God. Someone has said that the power of prayer is no more or less than the mighty power of God released through the life of a man, and I might add, or a church, who stops being an obstacle of God. The power is God's alone.

And so disobedience will keep us from being broken. There's another sin that will keep God from moving, and that is the sin of pride or self-sufficiency. 2 Chronicles 7-14 says, If my people who are called by my name will what? Humble themselves.

The first thing that God says, if you want me to heal you and forgive you, and my eyes and ears be opened to the prayers offered in this place, the first thing you must deal with is pride in your life. Maybe you're proud of how smart you are. Maybe you're proud of your degrees, what you've accomplished, your talents.

Maybe you're proud of your health, or your good looks. I mean, you didn't do anything to get your good looks. I mean, if we did anything to get our good looks, do you think I'd look like this? I mean, when I get to heaven, I'm asking, I want to be, it might be by seven feet, I want to be as tall as Greg.

The last shall be first of the first. He's going to be my height, 5'6". That's, brother, you be ready.

The apostle Paul says, What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? I mean, we can have all kinds of pride, and the problem is, when we have pride, we don't even want to pray. Did you know that? You say, Well, why don't I want to pray? Why don't I have a desire to pray? It could be pride, because Psalm 10-4 says, In his pride, the wicked does not seek him. In all his thoughts, there is no room for God.

Revelation 3-17, you say, I'm rich, I've acquired wealth, and don't need a thing, but you don't realize you're wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. We talked about that. Psalm 119-29, you rebuke the arrogant who are cursed, and who stray from your commands.

Proverbs 16-5, Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. Be sure of this, they will not go unpunished. Now, how will a proud person be punished? James 4-6 says, But he gives us more grace.

That is why the Scripture says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Do you know if I'm proud tonight, that I don't even have to worry about the enemy or Satan. It's God I'm afraid of.

He says he'll oppose us. God will oppose us. I thought God was supposed to help and bless me.

Not if we're proud, he doesn't. But he does it lovingly, and he disciplines us. Because the Lord disciplines those who considers his sons and daughters of his own.

It's so loving. It hurts. But he brings us back to him.

I remember someone saying, I don't know who it was, but they said this, you know, God could never use me until I realized I'd never be great. Why do you do what you do in your church? Do you have visions of walking down an aisle and people singing how great thou art? I mean, what goes on? Why do we do what we do? I mean, really. The third thing that could cause a barrier to brokenness, complacency or indifference, not sensing a need to pray, just plain prayerlessness.

Zephaniah 1.12 it says at that time God says, I will search Jerusalem with lamps. He's going out to look. Who's he going to look for? And punish those who are complacent, who are like wine left on its dregs, who think the Lord will do nothing either good or bad.

Oh, why should I pray? God is sovereign. Do you know how poor, poor Lord, he gets blamed for his sovereignty is an excuse for us to not pray. I've done that.

I'm not pointing a finger. Lord, you're sovereign. You're just going to do what you're going to do, so just take care of it.

The Lord says one day he's going to punish those who think like that. Actually, we punish ourselves because the consequences of our prayerlessness catch up with us. Because a man reaps what he sows or what he doesn't sow when it comes to prayer.

1 Samuel 3.18 So Samuel told Eli everything, hiding nothing from him. He was pronouncing an indictment. Eli was going to be punished.

Then Eli said, he is the Lord. Let him do what is good in his eyes. In other words, I guess I don't have to pray because God is sovereign.

Oh, brothers and sisters, I've done it. So I'm not coming down on you. The Lord wants us to lay hold of him like that woman falling down and grabbing hold of the tassels of his garment because she knew that unless God helped her she was dead in the water.

She could not overcome her sickness. Hebrews 11 says, 6 says, and without faith it's impossible to please God. For those who come to God must believe that he is and that he is what? A rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

Hebrews 3.12 says, see to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God, but encourage one another daily in all the more as you see the day approaching. Encourage one another daily as long as it's called today so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. What is one of the deceitfulness of sin? That God won't hear us if we humble ourselves under his mighty hand.

Is this not why there is so little revival in homes and our churches today? We believe actually that God can't and won't change our wife, our husband, our son, our daughter, our friends, our family, our nation. If the prodigal son had thought like that, he would never have returned home. But maybe he heard a message on Sermon Index, I don't know, but it says in Luke 15 17, when he came to his senses, he said, How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death.

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, Father, I've sinned against heaven and against you. I'm no longer to be worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men.

And when he came to his senses and he went back, even as the words are still in his mouth, his father calls the servants, gives them a robe, which signifies a robe of righteousness, of forgiveness, and a ring on his finger, riches, and he is restored. Do you know that if you come back to the Lord tonight, he will forgive you and cleanse you, and he will restore you as a son, a daughter whom he loves with all his heart. There's another thing that blocks brokenness before we conclude, and that is idolatry.

Someone or something or some goal that's more important than the Lord. And do you know when we do that? We don't bow down to idols of wood and stone anymore. Well, maybe metal, like a car, maybe stone in terms of a house, but we don't bow down to fashioned idols, but do you know what? We have idols in our hearts.

I remember I told that to a man, well, actually last year, and he said, I don't believe that. I don't believe there's any verse in the Bible that talks about idols in the heart. I said, oh, let's turn to Ezekiel chapter 14, 3, where God's a son of man.

These men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all? Do you know if we come to God in prayer, and there is someone or something more important that we love more than the Lord Jesus Christ, our prayers are just bouncing off that sky of bronze and brass. And he's not hearing us.

1 Samuel 7, 3, Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, if you're returning to the Lord with all your hearts, if you are, then what do you do? Rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the asterisks, and commit yourselves to the Lord, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. So the Israelites put away their bales and asterisks, and served the Lord only. Now, the question I want to answer tonight in closing is, how do we get to this place of brokenness in our hearts and our lives if we're not there yet? What does brokenness look like? Brokenness looks like this.

It looks like desperation. It looks like this. God, if you do not help me, I am a goner.

I am dead in the water. Lord, if you do not help that person, they are going headlong to hell. Lord, I am desperate.

It's the kind of desperation that Rachel had in Genesis chapter 30, verse 1, where she said to Jacob, give me children or I die. It's the kind of desperation that Hannah had when she went to the temple unable to conceive, and Eli could not even tell the difference between her being travailing in the spirit and being broken in the spirit and a drunken woman, and he rebuked her. And she says, oh no, I'm not like that.

She was in deep sorrow and grieving before the Lord, and the Lord heard her prayer. It's not only desperation, it's the deepest sense of conviction and contrition that one can feel. It's what Josiah felt in 2 Kings 22, 19, when we read, because God said to him, because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I had spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the Lord.

Do you know how much God values your brokenness tonight, and your tears? I want to say he values it more even than just your service to him. I love what Jim Symbol has said, it's not whether you sing in the choir, but why you sing in the choir. It's not whether you preach a message, but why you preach the message.

It's what's in the heart. And when our hearts are broken and contrite before God and we weep before him, in Psalm 56, 8 we read, you have taken account of my wanderings, put my tears in your bottle, are they not in your book? Do you know every single one of your tears has been saved in a bottle, as it were, in heaven? Do you know when we read in Revelation chapter 5, verse 8, speaking of the 24 elders, that they had in their hands censers, with what? The prayers of the saints in those censers, in those bowls. Your prayers and tears are so precious to the Lord that he keeps them in bottles and he keeps them in bowls in heaven.

Psalm 126, 5, those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. You say, well why should we need to be broken? Brothers and sisters, if the Lord Jesus Christ needed to be broken, how much more we? Hebrews chapter 5, verse 7, during the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Now some of us tonight say, you know, I know what the devil will tell you. You're just too sinful. You're just too sinful.

It's no use. It's no use coming before. The prayer requests and the problems that you have are just greater than God.

He really can't help you and he won't help you. You've just sinned one too many sins. You've tried for so many years.

What? There's no difference. Tonight will be like any other night in your life. But the Lord says that if we will humble ourselves, if we will do that, his eyes will be open and his ears will be attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

It's a promise. I want to conclude with one story. You remember back in 1 Kings 21, the story about Ahab.

And Ahab wanted to buy Naboth's vineyard. Naboth's vineyard was close to the palace, it's said, and Naboth's fields were farther away and he wanted it as a vegetable garden. He didn't want to go down six blocks to the corner store and buy the frozen green giant vegetables.

He just wanted to go there and pick them right out of the garden, right where Naboth's vineyard was, really close. And so Jezebel says, what are you moping around here? I mean, you're a king. What's the problem? I'll fix this.

So she said, let's call a feast for Naboth. For Naboth, yes. And what we'll do is we'll get two scoundrels to sit across from him and in the middle of this feast, they're going to accuse him of cursing God and cursing the king and then we'll take him out and off with his head and that will be the end of that.

And that's what she did. She comes back and she tells Ahab, and Ahab is going down to claim his prize and we pick it up. O thou troubler of Israel, let Elijah Don't you just hate people that always come at the most inopportune times with the word of the Lord to us, to warn us.

And here Elijah just happens to be there. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite. Go down to meet Ahab, king of Israel who rules in Samaria.

He is now in Naboth's vineyard where he has gone to take possession of it. Say to him, this is what the Lord says. Have you not murdered a man and seized his property? Then say to him, this is what the Lord says.

In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood. Yes, yours. Ahab said to Elijah, so you have found me, my enemy.

Not only was he completely rebellious and murderous and a liar and everything else, he even hated God's people and prophets. He scorned them, to add sin upon sin. So you have found me, my enemy.

I have found you, he answered, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. I am going to bring disaster on you. I will consume your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel, slaver free.

I will make your house like that of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and that of Dasha, son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin. And not only did he sin, he caused Israel to sin. Now we're talking a wicked, bad man.

Are we in agreement here? It gets worse. And also concerning Jezebel, the Lord says, dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country.

See why I didn't have to buy my boys DVDs and videos of the world to get there? I used to read stuff like this when they were little kids. They loved this stuff. My youngest son's favorite story was, what do you want me to read tonight? The Baby with the Head Cut Off.

Remember Solomon? Yeah, he wanted to hear The Baby with the Head Cut Off. The Bible's got everything. It's great stories.

The truth is stranger than fiction sometimes. Here he is, he's telling what's going to happen to his wife. And then verse 25, listen to this.

There was never a man like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols like the Amorites the Lord drove out from before Israel. Now, God says here, there never was a man like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord.

Is that a sinful man? Is there anyone here tonight who is more sinful than Ahab? I didn't think so. I didn't think so. We continue.

When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Elijah, can you imagine even Ahab, can you imagine what he's done? Even Ahab has humbled himself. God goes on and says, because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son.

Now, what is it that God is not answering in your life or for your church? What is it? God says, if you will, I will. None of you, none of us have sinned and sold ourselves to do evil like Ahab. There are people who are unsaved and dying to hell that you know.

Your son, your daughter is in rebellion. A husband or wife may be in rebellion. There are problems in your church.

And the Lord says, if you will humble yourself and turn from your wicked ways and seek him, he will hear, he will forgive, he will heal, and his eyes will be opened, his ears open to the prayers offered in this place. The only thing that stands between us and God answering prayer is brokenness and contriteness and humility and seeking God even like Ahab so that God might turn and relent and have mercy on us and save. That's all.

God asked the Israelites, why will you die, O Israel? Why will you die? The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy, and he's done that in some of your lives, but I have come that you might have life and have it to the full. If we will repent and confess our sins, God will revive you tonight or tomorrow or the next day. He will answer your prayers in ways that you could not even imagine.

And you don't even have to know how he's supposed to answer those prayers. That's the wonderful thing about brokenness. You can just go before him and say, help! Lord, here's my problem.

I don't know how you're going to answer it, but I let go of that problem. I release it to you. I'm going to let you worry about it.

Cast all your cares. It's like a hot potato you get thrown. The enemy throws you hot potatoes.

Circumstances throw you hot potatoes, and they're going to be either financial, relational, health-wise, or the enemy attacking you. There's only four that I've ever seen in my counseling years. It's going to be physical, relational, financial, or the enemy is attacked.

Only those areas. And when one of those hot potatoes comes to you, Jesus says, you cast it on me. For what? Oh, I just care about it from a distance.

No, he's going to take care of it for you. I care for you. I'm going to take care of it.

All we have to do is bring it to the Lord tonight, and repent of our sin, and he will have mercy on us, and compassion, and forgive us, and answer our prayers. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you tonight at the end of this conference.

Lord, you have spoken to us through your word. And oh Lord, we are like the prodigal sons and prodigal daughters that we've run off, and we've just squandered everything sometimes, it seems. But Lord, you've brought us to your senses by your Holy Spirit, and through the word of God, and we now realize that you cannot dwell where there is sin.

Your eyes turn away. You hover over the camp, and if you see anything unholy, your spirit turns away, and you cannot protect us. But oh Lord, if we humble ourselves tonight, you will listen.

You will answer. Your arm is not too short that it cannot save. Oh Lord, we pray that you would come upon us, and that you would revive us.

Will you not revive us again that your people might rejoice in you? Father, you've done a work in many lives already this week. We pray that you would multiply it, and there would be a crop a hundred, sixty, and thirty times what is sold as we as that grain of wheat fall into the ground and die. Die to our desires.

Die to our plans. Die to our finances. Die to all of these things, these cares of the world that choke us and make us unfruitful.

Oh Lord, like Martha, we are concerned about many things, but only one thing is needful. And we come to you at the foot of the cross today. We come to you, Lord Jesus.

Have mercy and forgive, and free us by the power of the Holy Spirit as we surrender to you as Lord of our lives, as the Spirit who is the Lord, as Scripture says. Lord, free us tonight for the honor and glory of your name. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Brother Don?

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