

Conference for Missionaries-1986 - Part 3

by William MacDonald

Brokenness is a state of humility and surrender to God's will, characterized by a willingness to confess and repent of sins, and to forgive others.

Duration: 44:37

Scripture: Luke 17:7

Topics: "Conference", "Brokenness", "Discipleship"

Description

William MacDonald discusses the significance of brokenness in the Christian life, emphasizing that true discipleship involves humility, repentance, and the willingness to confess and make amends. He shares personal anecdotes and biblical examples to illustrate how God values brokenness, as it leads to genuine transformation and deeper relationships with others. MacDonald encourages the audience to embrace brokenness as a pathway to spiritual growth and to seek God's grace in their lives, ultimately calling for a readiness to say, 'Lord, break me.'

Transcript

I would just like to take a minute to speak about the Discipleship Intern Training Program. This is a leadership training program out in California in which we take about a dozen men every year and seek to train them in leadership for local fellowships. I'm not going to take a lot of time to talk about it tonight, but some of you are traveling around and you might come across men that could benefit from this type of training, and maybe you could mention it to them.

There's no upper age limit. The only lower age limit is that men must have been active in business or military service or something of the sort before they come to us. I think we have four of our graduates in the audience tonight.

Maybe I'll ask them to stand with their wives. I said wives, one wife. There, okay, thanks very much.

If you'd like to know anything about you could talk to any of these men, they're our best advertisements. Years ago, there was a Christian professor in Edinburgh University. His name was Stuart Blackie.

One day, he was having his students give oral readings, and he instructed them when they got up to read to hold the book in their right hand and give their recitation. One student arose and held the book in his left hand, and Stuart Blackie, a Christian, thundered out at him, hold your book in your right hand and sit

down. The rest of the students stirred uneasily in their seats, wondering what was going to happen next, and then that student held up his right arm, and there were no hands there.

It ended at his wrist, and needless to say, there was a tremendous pause in the classroom. Stuart Blackie got down, came to the student, threw his arms around him, and said, oh, I'm so sorry. He said, I did not know.

Will you forgive me? Years later, that story was being told in a meeting. At the end of the meeting, a man arose, came down to the front, and held up his right hand, his right arm. It ended at the wrist, and he said, I was that student.

Professor Stuart Blackie was the one who led me to the Savior, but he never would have done it if he hadn't made right the wrong. I'd like to speak to you tonight on brokenness. I've spoken on it here before.

Some of you have heard it before. You don't need it, but I do, and so I will speak on it without apologizing. It's one of the most important subjects we can think of.

Would you turn to Luke chapter 17, and I'd like to read verses 7 through 10. Luke chapter 17, verses 7 through 10. But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by when he is come in from the field, Go and sit down to meet, and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may suck, and gird thyself, and serve me till I have eaten, and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink.

Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I pronounce, so likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do. In his book *The Calvary Road*, Roy Hession points out that there are five marks of a bond slave in this passage of Scripture. He says, first of all, a bond slave must be willing to have one thing on top of another put on him without any consideration being given to him.

That's what it says, isn't it? Secondly, in doing this, he must be willing not to be thanked. Third, having done all this, he must not charge the other with selfishness. Fourth, having done all that, there's no room for pride or self-congratulation, but we must confess that we're unprofitable servants.

That is, we're of no real use to God or man in ourselves. And fifth, the bottom of self is quite knocked out by the fifth and last step, the admission that doing and bearing what we have in the way of meekness and humility, we have not done one stitch more than it was our duty to do. Five marks of a bond slave in Luke Chapter 17.

Years ago, I was attending an all-night prayer meeting conducted by Operation Mobilization at Emmaus. It's likely that dear brother Roger Malsted was there that night. I don't know, but I do know that a cluster of fellows was on the floor, and I was with them praying.

And, in the middle of the prayer, one fellow praying a prayer that was hitting hot, finally said, Lord break me, and I trembled. I trembled because I had never heard that prayer before. I trembled because I had never prayed that prayer before, and I trembled because I wasn't ready to pray it then, either.

Lord, break me. I confess that I was raised in the assemblies, and I thank God for the background I had, but this was one subject I never heard discussed, the subject of brokenness. Brother Gooding referred to it

several times this morning in his message.

Men don't think very much of broken things or broken people. They have little value for broken things. They throw them out into the ash heaps, and they have little respect for broken people, but not God.

God prizes broken people. Listen, Psalm 34 18, the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken spirit. Psalm 51 17, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.

Want to bring a sacrifice to God that he'll be pleased with? Bring a broken spirit. James 4 and 6, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Wonderful, isn't it? The omnipotent God, he knows how to resist the proud, but in all his omnipotence he can't resist the humble.

Amy Carmichael points out four instances of broken things in the Bible. In Gideon's day, the earthenware vessels were broken, and the light shone out. By the shores of Galilee the bread was broken, and a multitude was fed.

The alabaster box of ointment was broken, the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment, and his precious body was broken, and multitudes were redeemed. And he's given us this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of us. Actually, our conversion, in a sense, is a matter of breaking at the foot of the cross, isn't it? In our unconverted stage where wild asses colt, where rebels and enemies of God, and we need to be broken.

Against the God who built the sky, I fought with hands uplifted high, despised the mention of his grace, too proud to keep a hiding place. But thou, Savior, meek and humble, and most such a worm as I, weak and sinful and unholy, lift to dare my head on high but we did, didn't we? In our unconverted days, then the spirit of God came upon us and convicted us of our terrible lostness, of our terrible helplessness, of our terrible hopelessness, and now we're there prostrate at the foot of the cross shaking before the Lord, broken before him at last. The wild asses colt has been broken, and then Jesus said, Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, that you shall find rest unto your soul.

It'd be nice if that brokenness that characterized us, that our conversion would go all through our lives, wouldn't it? But it's strange. Pride is such a strange thing, and we dare to lift our heads on high, and we have to learn the lesson that in going through life, brokenness involves repentance, confession, and apology. I must be ready to confess to God and to others, and I must say to you tonight that I don't find it so difficult to confess to God, but I find it very difficult to break and confess to others whom I have wronged.

Easier to confess to God, isn't it? Brokenness doesn't sweep these matters under the carpet and say, Oh well, time will heal. No, time doesn't heal. Real brokenness goes to the person I have wronged, and says, I was wrong, I am sorry, please forgive me.

Isn't that the type of person you'd like to work with on the mission field? A person who can say that, who breaks easily, and is willing to say that I was wrong, I'm sorry, please forgive me. There's a lot of sham confession today. One lady said, if I have done anything wrong, I am willing to be forgiven.

Well, that's very big of you. Watch out for any confession that is prefaced by ifs. These iffy confessions are not genuine.

If I have done anything wrong, I am willing to be forgiven. True confession doesn't say, I will forgive you if you forgive me. That's not confession.

This is kind of an evening of the scores, isn't it? Confession says, I have done wrong, please forgive me. A man confessed that he had stolen a length of rope. He neglected to mention that there was a horse at the other end of the rope.

That's not confession, is it? We deceive ourselves, we rationalize, and we use euphemisms in all of this. A man came to a Christian worker, he bared his soul, he said, I want to confess that I stole some hay from my neighbor. He said, how much hay did you steal? He said, well, actually he said, I stole half a load, but he said, make it a full load, because I'm going back after the other half tonight.

In other words, there was no intention to forsake the sin. True confession not only confesses the sin, it's a full confession, but it's a determination not to continue in it. We gloss over our sins.

The backslider was confessing to God in the presence of a Christian worker, and he says, oh Lord, forgive my peccadilloes. I have been indiscreet. I have not been as wise as I should have been.

I have strayed from the path of duty, and the Christian couldn't stand it anymore, and he interrupted me and said, tell God you were drunk. What's this? But it's so hard, isn't it? So hard to drag the monster out into the light, in the presence of God, and in the presence of others as well, and tell it the way it is. Why did God love David? I believe because David was a broken man.

If you don't believe it, read Psalm 32, read Psalm 51, and hear the agonized plea of a man who's broken before the Lord. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. Purge me with tissue, and I shall be clean.

Wash me, that I shall be whiter than snow. A man after God's own heart. A man who sinned grievously, but who broke before the Lord, and wept out his penitence before him.

Paul was a broken man, wasn't he? That day he said to the high priest, God will smite you, you whited wall. They said, do you talk to the high priest that way? He broke just like that. I shouldn't have said that.

Scripture says, thou shalt not speak of the ruler of thy people. He broke. That's what we need.

We need that readiness to break before the Lord. Brokenness includes restitution, too, doesn't it? If we're really broken, we'll be wanting, as in Zacchaeus' case, to restore what we have taken wrongfully. That's a wonderful work of grace in a human heart, when that person is sensitive before the Lord, and the Lord takes them back in memory.

It's something that was stolen, something taken from the employer, perhaps, and he has no rest on his bed at night, but he can go and make that thing right. The shame is scalding, but there's glory for God in it, too, especially when it's accompanied by a testimony for the Lord Jesus, and I believe that any time that a Christian does make restitution, it always should be acknowledged as a great work of the Spirit of God in his life. I'm often told of W. P. Nicholson preaching the gospel in Belfast with such power that multitudes were saved, and God worked on their part, and they started to return tools that they had stolen from the machine shops, until the machine shops finally had to send out a notice not to return any more.

They were building sheds to house the machinery, the tools that had been stolen, and they didn't want to build any more. Brokenness includes a forgiving spirit. Not only my willingness to confess, but my willingness to forgive.

Somebody comes to me and confesses some wrong done. Is that bitterness still there? Is that sulfuric acid still churning here? Am I willing to say, dear brother, dear sister, I'm happy to forgive you? Incidentally, I think it's Carrie Ten Boom that tells this in one of her books. When people come to us and confess some wrong, confess some sin to us, they want to hear us saying, I forgive you.

They don't want to hear us waving it aside. They don't want to hear us saying, oh forget it, it was nothing. I'm not conscious that you did anything.

God has put them through deep strivings of soul to come to that point where they're willing to come to us and confess and ask forgiveness. They want to hear it from our lips. I think that's a good lesson for us all to learn.

I believe the scripture teaches a real order in forgiveness. I believe that as soon as someone wrongs me, I should forgive in my heart, but I don't administer forgiveness to the person till he confesses, till he repents and confesses. It says, and if he repents, forgive him.

It's a wonderful thing when I can forgive it in my heart and just forget it. Then the monkey is off my back, and it's between the person and the Lord. Clara Barton was the one who founded the American Red Cross, and somebody said to her, don't you remember the mean thing she said against you? And Clara Barton said, I not only don't remember, I distinctly remember forgetting.

If he repents, forgive him orally and indefinitely, and tell him that you forgive him. Why do I say that? Because I know of a Christian lady out in Hayward, California. Her husband left her and went off with another woman, and this woman was just a babe in Christ, and she got on the phone, and she called her husband, and she called the other woman, and she said, I just want you to know I forgive you.

I hadn't asked to be forgiven. They weren't admitting any fault at all, and to me, she was just innocently, she was encouraged in them and their sins. She should have just forgiven in her heart, and then waited until they repented, if they ever did, and then administered forgiveness to them.

God hates an unforgiving spirit when somebody does confess to us. Brokenness includes enduring wrong without striking back, enduring wrong without retaliation, and I tell you, this demands divine strength and divine life. 1 Peter 2:23, the Lord has left us this example that we should follow in our step.

He was reviled, he reviled not again, and we're called to follow him in this. Enduring wrong without retaliation. I've often told the story of the highland minister who was sitting by the fire reading his bible, and his ill-tempered wife came and snatched the bible out of his hands and threw it in the fire, and he said quietly, I don't think I've ever sat by a warmer fire, but that broke her, because he was broken, she broke, and as the story goes, his thorn became a rose, and his Jezebel became a Lydia.

It's not weakness, is it? It's strength to be able to carry on like that. Brokenness includes repaying evil with good, rewarding every discourtesy with a kindness. I see it in the life of the Lord Jesus.

I want to see it in my life as well. E. Stanley Jones tells of the man goading an elephant down the street in India, had that sharp-pointed metal goad, and piercing the elephants with it. All of a sudden, there's a loud

clanging sound, and the goad falls down to the ground, and the elephant turns around and picks it up with its trunk and hands it back to the men, or should I say, pumps it back to the men.

God puts animals on earth to teach us lessons, doesn't he? There are spiritual lessons in all creations, but we only have eyes to see them. Philippians chapter 2 verse 3 says that we should honor others above ourselves, esteem others better than ourselves. What does that mean? I've often grappled with that verse.

Whenever I read that verse, I think of the mafia, I think of the underground, I think of the gangsters, and I think, how can I esteem them better? Do they have better characters than I have? Is that what it means? It doesn't mean that at all. I read that verse. I'm not to understand that those men have better character than I, but it means that I'm to put others first in my life, to esteem others better than myself, to think of others before I think of myself.

Others, yes, Lord, others. Let this my motto be, help me to live for others that I may live like you. That is what is so wrong about the current emphasis in evangelical circles on self, selfism, self-esteem, self-love, all this nonsense.

You can't love God until you love yourself. You can't love your neighbor until you love yourself. I learned long, long ago that there's no victory in this self.

My victory is in Jesus, in getting my eyes off myself and on him. I remember one of our dear old brethren saying in a meeting once, the sanctified self is a poor substitute for a glorified Christ. What does that mean? Well, it means that even if I could dress up self and put a pink ribbon around his neck and squirt it with some eau de cologne and all the rest, it'd be a poor substitute for a glorified Christ.

So, I want to get my eyes off myself. I don't want to cast my anchor in the boat. That's what you do when you're occupied with self.

You cast your anchor inside the boat. No, no. Cast it outside in the holiest.

I see this in the Old Testament, honoring others above self. Think of Abraham and Lot, and how they come up there, and the strife between their herdsmen, and it's over pastureland, and Lot's men look toward the well-watered plains of Jordan. Lush pastureland, if that's what we want.

Abraham said, very well, you take it, you take it. But I tell you, when Abraham said that, God made him fabulously wealthy. Later on, he says to Abraham, I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward, and Abraham became a billionaire that day.

He didn't lose out by esteeming Lot better than himself. Brokenness means tromped obedience to the word of the Lord. Broken in accepting the will of the Lord, and obeying the will of the Lord.

Oftentimes, circumstances come into life, and we just have a great big question mark in our minds. Why does this ever happen to me? Brokenness sees God in everything but sin, and accepts his will for our lives. There's peace in accepting but can't be changed.

Jonah wasn't broken, was he? God called him to blessing, and he fled from the call of God. God said, go to Nineveh, preach to Nineveh. Jonah went to party.

Makes me think of another time back at Emmaus, when two of our students were up in a room in a dormitory. This was at the time when George Verver was visiting there, and one of these students was on

his knees agonizing before the Lord, and he said, Lord, I can't do it! I can't do it! You know I can't do it! And George was passing by just then, and the door was ajar, and he stuck his head in, and he said, what's the matter? Are you afraid of a blessing? When we resist the leading of the Lord, when we resist the guidance of the Lord, we're just afraid of a blessing. He wills nothing but good for us.

His way is the best way. He does the very best for those who leave the choice with him. I say that everything in nature teaches a spiritual lesson.

What about the cult on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem? Nobody had ever ridden on that cult before. It was broken in the presence of its maker, and that's beautiful, isn't it? That's what I should be, broken in the presence of my creator. Clay in the hands of the potter, unresisting clay, mold me and make me after thy will.

While I am waiting, yielded and still. Brokenness means death to public opinion. I think a lot of us have to struggle with this all the time.

We do care what people think. Going back to W. P. Nicholson again, when he first got saved, he fell in among the Salvation Army, and it was a good fall too. And one of the Salvation Army officers said to him, do you mean business for God? He said, I think so, and so they made a sandwich board for him, and it said on it, dead to public opinion.

And he said, walk out for two hours in Belfast with that on you. He said it was one of the great formative influences of his life, dead to public opinion. I think it was Macintosh, C. H. Macintosh, who said, the faith that enables a man to walk with God enables him to think lightly of the esteem of others.

Brokenness means keeping one's cool in the crises of life. It means poise and equanimity when things go wrong, when there are delays, when there are interruptions or mechanical breakdowns and accidents and schedule changes. Just in my own circle of acquaintances this last month, I couldn't begin to tell you about the schedule changes and the interruptions and the delays.

Wonderful! See Christians going through this without frenzy, without panic, without hysteria, and without ruffle feathers. Flat tire can be a blessing in disguise. Denied slight schedule might mean salvation from death.

So, it's a wonderful thing when we can react calmly and instantly instead of impatiently. Now, the world looks upon brokenness as just a weakness, you know, just a milk toast, you know, but I don't care. That man exerts a power.

Weakness is not weakness, and broken people are the most influential people in all the world. The psalmist said, thy gentleness has made me great. I'm embarrassed to tell you this, but I'll just give two illustrations from my own life.

I was in a home in Chicago once with two esteemed servants of the Lord. I can't reconstruct the scene too well right now, maybe through embarrassment, but I don't know how it ever happened, but they started opening up on Emmaus Bible School, criticizing Emmaus Bible School. I was the president of Emmaus Bible School at that time.

That was my baby, and I can still feel that hot flush coming up under my collar. How would you like somebody to criticize your baby? What an ugly child. So, I bore it bravely for a while, and then the dam

broke, and with a few well-chosen words, I told them off.

And, I'm ashamed to say that as I went away that night, I thought, well, I've really handled that pretty effectively. And, I just swept it under the carpet, thought, well, that's the end of that. But, it wasn't the end of it.

I was traveling down to Waterloo, Iowa after that for meetings on a weekend, where the Spirit of God came beside me, said, I'll find one of you, R. McDonald, going to tell other people how to live the Christian life. And, remember what happened back there in Chicago? How you talked to those men, and you were esteemed servants of the Lord, and you never made it. And, I felt that big.

I'll tell you, you really know it when the Spirit of God is dealing with you, don't you? Well, I couldn't get up in the pulpit that day until I had sat down and written a letter of apology to those men. You say, well, that was the end of a beautiful friendship. No, it wasn't.

It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship. I was closer to those men. They became deeper, truer, lovelier friends than I had ever known before.

Why? Because God's ways are that way. Which is why? God knows what he's doing. It's only through this type of brokenness that friendships are really cemented.

Well, you'd think I would have learned my lesson. I mean, my pride never recovered from that. But, one day, I was in my office there, and I was preparing for a funeral.

There was a brother in town from England, and he called me. He was a great misfortune. I don't know how this ever developed, but it got going improperly.

In case you have any question, I'm an ardent pre-tribulation rapturist. I believe Christ would come to me. Apparently, he didn't, and we tangled on the phone, and it was very poor preparation for a funeral.

I hung up the phone with a feeling of victory. And, incidentally, I've never changed my mind on the subject. That is, the pre-tribulation rapture.

But, one day, I was walking down the street in London, and I can still see that red telephone booth ahead there. The spirit of God came inside me. He reminded me of that day in the office, and of that phone call.

I said, Lord, I do believe it. It's not a question of the pre-tribulation rapture. The question is the way you talk.

It's a question of how you spoke to a brother, he said. Well, I knew what I had to do. I went to the phone, and I got his number, and I dialed it, and I hoped he wasn't home.

But, he was home, and he answered the phone. Not his wife. He answered the phone, and I had to apologize.

I called him. You know what he said? He said, let's meet and have lunch together tomorrow. And we did.

We sat in a London restaurant and had lunch together. He's in heaven now, and I haven't changed my opinion on the rapture, but I tell you, it taught me a great lesson. The last time I was in London, I had the privilege of meeting an a Church of England cleric named Cannon Bill Butler.

To us, a cannon is a big gun, but this man is a humble servant of the Lord, really. And, I had tea in his home, and he told me this lovely story of how, as a young man, the Church of England sent him out to Rwanda. They had a school there, rather a seminary-type school for training the nationals in Rwanda for the Church of England ministry, and he was sent to teach there.

And, as he was teaching month after month, and year after year, his theology began to slide. He became more and more liberal, more and more modernistic, showing doubt and denial concerning the Word of God. There was, in that school, a group of men who were known as the Born-Again Ones.

If you correct me, I think they called them the Abalak-Kali, something like that. Some of you can correct me in. And, these men were praying for Bill Butler.

They would meet every morning at four o'clock, and he found out they were praying for him, and he wasn't happy about that. Nationals, black nationals, praying for a cleric in the Church of England. And, finally, it got so bad that he called in the leader one day, and he just told him off.

He took all his big arguments and just absolutely devastated this poor national, you know. The national listened patiently, and finally said, you do need help. He was furious, absolutely furious.

But, God began to work in his mind. God began to work in answer to the prayer of those dear men praying at four o'clock in the morning. And, he came to the place where he realized what he had been teaching was wrong, he finally went to the bishop, and he told the bishop, told him the whole story.

And, the bishop buried his head in his hands, and he said, oh Bill, he said, now you can never become a bishop. And, Bill said, pray the Lord. Then, the national came to him and said, now brother Bill, why don't you come and meet with us in the morning? At pray? At four o'clock in the morning? A thousand excuses came to his lips.

Well, not a thousand, quite a few. They listened patiently to all his excuses, and finally they said to him, would you try it for a week? And, by then he had run out of excuses. So, he tried it for a week, and he became sold on that four o'clock prayer.

I forgot to tell you, the Spirit of God also worked on his heart. He realized that he had wronged that dear national leader, and he, as the Spirit of God said, you've got to go and apologize. Go to apologize to him.

Clarence, the church of England, how demeaning for me, the teacher, to go to a pop. Spirit of God said, you've got to do it. So, we got in his car one day, and he, on the way, he prepared his speech, just like the prodigal son, you know, his speech of apology.

The dear national opened the door when the car drew up in front, and the minute he saw Bill Butler, he said, hallelujah. The school then drew up a rule that there'd be no meetings before seven o'clock in the morning, and they transferred Bill Butler from another area. And, even after that, those dear nationals came to Bill Butler, and they said, you know, we feel you should go to the bishop and apologize to him, because it's very evident that you are harboring long, harsh attitudes toward him.

And, Bill Butler had to go to the bishop on the advice of those dear national believers. This was a time when revival fires were burning in Rwanda, and a lot of revival had to do with brokenness. I wonder, does that have any message for us on the mission field today? One final illustration.

The time is gone. One day, a member of Dr. Alexander White's congregation came into his office with some of the latest news. It seems that a visiting preacher was saying publicly that one of Dr. White's ministerial associates was not a Christian, and Dr. White blazed with indignation.

He was irate that such a charge should ever be made against a faithful servant of the Lord, and, in a few well-chosen words, he expressed his anger against the one who had been guilty of this sin. But then his visitor said to him, but that's not all, Dr. White. The visiting preacher said that you're not a Christian either.

Dr. White said, please leave the office so that I can get alone before the Lord and examine my heart. Boy, that's broken. Just forgetting his theology for a minute.

That's broken. Please leave the office so that I can get alone before the Lord and examine my heart. He was a lion in his associate's car, but he was a lamb in his own.

God loves broken things, and God loves broken people. I wonder, are we prepared tonight to bow our heads and heart before the Lord and say, Lord, break me? Shall we pray? Lord, your word is truly a sharp two-edged sword. We know tonight that pride is the parent sin, and how your word exposes pride in our hearts.

And perhaps some of us here tonight can look back to incidents on the mission field or at home that have never been made known. Perhaps blessing is being withheld in places because of our refusal to break at the foot of the cross. Lord, we would take those words upon our lips tonight and mean them from the depth of our hearts.

Lord, break me. We ask it in Jesus' name, and for his sake. Amen.

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