

SOME THINGS MUST BE BROKEN

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart--these, O God, You will not despise."

--Psalm 51:17

"Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes."

--Matthew 14:19

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'"

--Matthew 26:26

"IT HAS TO BE BROKEN"

Before an egg can fulfill its function, it has to be broken. This is true whether that function is producing a chick, or providing a breakfast. An unbroken egg has not yet become what it is meant to be. This simple illustration reminds us that some things cannot reach their potential without being broken.

BROKEN BREAD

In the accounts of Jesus feeding the five thousand and the four thousand we are told that He "broke" the loaves (Matthew 14:19; 15:36) before giving them to the disciples to distribute to the people. In the process of breaking the loaves, Jesus made more of them than they had been before. This goes beyond the idea of the egg, because the bread broken in Jesus' hands actually became **more than its own potential**. The bread broken in Jesus' hands became more than it had been, or could be, before it was broken.

"BETTER TO BREAK THAN TO SELL"

Shortly before His death, Jesus was anointed by Mary of Bethany. The Bible relates how Mary took "an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard," broke it, and poured its contents on Jesus' head (Mark 14:3). An astounding action. The flask itself may have been quite valuable, and the scented oil within was *very* valuable--Judas Iscariot said the oil could have been "sold for three hundred denarii" (John 12:5), about one year's wages for a worker! "Why this waste?" some inquired indignantly (Matthew 26:8). But Jesus told them to "Let her alone" (Mark 14:6). He did not consider her action a waste. He called it "a good work" (Matthew 26:10).

By breaking the flask, and giving its contents to Jesus, Mary had enabled a great multiplication of value. Left unbroken, the flask and its oil could

never have accomplished anything of equal worth. At best, perhaps, the oil could have been sold, and the considerable proceeds distributed to the poor (Mark 14:4-5)--a great good done, granted. But a far greater good was done that day. It was better to break than to sell.

The human mind in its carnal or worldly outlook views Mary breaking and pouring, and says, "What a waste, the potential is lost." The spiritual mind, however, which Jesus and Mary shared that day, views the breaking and pouring and says, "This is beautiful, this is important, this will not be forgotten." The flesh struggles against being broken, or even admitting to its limitations, but the spirit within can only be set free to obtain

BROKEN BUT NOT CRUSHED

its potential when, in fact, the flesh is broken.

Paul used the metaphor of "earthen vessels" to describe our bodies (2 Corinthians 4:7), pointing out that the value of the contents exceeds that of the container, the contents being the "knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). He tells of the ways that he himself had accepted being broken for the sake of Christ (vv 8-12): "hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed...perplexed, but not in despair." Being broken did not crush Paul's spirit, however. He wrote, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). And what flowed from Paul was not of Paul, but of God, and greater than Paul's own potential.

This is the idea of yielding to God, of taking Jesus' yoke (Matthew 11:28-30), of being broken to His will and for His purposes. This is the sacrifice God desires, as David learned: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart--these, O God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51:17). But it is hard to accept that victory lies in an admission of defeat, that success can only be found when failure is admitted, that life only comes to those who accept death.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

God's grace says to us, "Admit your failures, acknowledge your deficiencies, accept My life in place of your own." Knowing our limitations, knowing that we don't have enough loaves to go around unless they're broken, knowing that the oil is trapped and useless as long as the container is unbroken, is the beginning of exceeding our own potential. When does the Spirit help us? "[I]n our weaknesses," Paul says (Romans 8:26). When Paul pleaded with the Lord to have his own weakness (whatever it was) taken away, the Lord's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). We must choose to depend on God, and not ourselves. We must choose to accept being broken for His cause, that He might work in us and through us, that we might not only achieve our potential, but by His grace, exceed it. ▪

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