

Call to Obedience #228
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Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

I am a Broken Vessel

By Reimar Schultze

"I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel" (Psalm 31:12).

If you want to know why Jesus was not only called the Son of God but also the Son of David, you find it in this Scripture. If you need to know why God called David a man after his own heart, you find it in this Scripture. If you want to know why David's Psalms have produced the sweetest fragrance and the finest Balm of Gilead for thousands of years unto millions of saints, you find it in this Scripture (see Ma. 1:1, Ac. 13:22).

"I am...a broken vessel." God is ever looking for broken vessels, for broken bread and poured out wine.

David is the most broken man in the entire Old Testament. Jesus is the most broken man of the gospels, and Paul is the most broken man in the apostolic writings.

Men who refused to be broken became nothing but miserable shipwrecks in the history of the church, and their ministries always ended at their tombstones. The more broken we are, the more God can do with us. God's ways with us and through us have little or nothing to do with our education, our finances, our institutions, and our blood-lines. It is all a matter of brokenness.

This is so aptly illustrated in the parable of the feeding of the 5,000 men. Let me ask you, if there had been 10,000 men, would those five loaves and two fishes still have been enough to feed them all? What if there had been 100,000, or one million men? Would Jesus have requested more loaves and fishes to feed them all, or would the five loaves and two fishes have been adequate?

Are you getting the picture that the limits of what God can do with that which is broken are endless? God had a broken Son, a broken lad who was willing to give away his food, and broken bread, and we are all still feeding off this brokenness nearly 2,000 years later.

Now, for a moment, let us consider one at a time the three most broken men in the Bible, the three men who continue to give us the greatest feast. Let us clearly see that all three of these servants had the least of this earth, yet the most of heaven.

David's reputation was that of a runt: the weakest, smallest, most useless creature in a litter of the eight sons of Jesse -- a good-for-nothing man but for the herding of the sheep. This drove him to God.

Then, God, overruling all the opinions and all the wisdom of men, chose David to be king. Yet, it was not long until he learned that his kingship would be other than that of all the kings of Israel. He would be a fugitive king.

First, he was hunted by Saul like a wild dog for nearly seven years, living in cold caves. Later, David was again hunted for a year or so by his own son, Absalom. David was lied to, betrayed many times, and forsaken by many of his friends who became his enemies. During this time, he also committed adultery and murder, causing him to live in his own wounds and the consequences of these sins the rest of his life.

Indeed, hardly any well-trained theologian at that time would have given David's future spiritual prospect the slightest chance. It is highly unlikely that he would have been chosen as a

good prospect for spiritual leadership by any committee. He, to them, was a wreck that had missed its harbor of success. Yet, the gospels herald him as the "father of Jesus" in both spirit and kingship.

Despite all of this, and because of it, David became the greatest, most influential, spiritual person out of the pages of the Old Testament. He refused to die with the closing of the age of law only to become even mightier in the days of grace, simply because he became what God wants all of us to become: a broken vessel. David was a broken vessel!

Jesus was broken bread and poured out wine from the beginning of his life. Being totally divine and having to put on humanity to live each day amongst sin and sinners was in itself enough to break the heart of Jesus at an early age. Throughout his life, the misunderstandings and misjudgments of people toward him brought further brokenness. Not only was he condemned for his eating manners, for the company he kept, for the truth he taught, but even his mental state was questioned by his own friends and family (Mk. 3:20-21, 31). They did not realize that the very God of Israel himself had lived among them for three whole decades.

Jesus, the holiest man in human history, judged as the worst man in Hebrew history, died a shameful and painful death. He wrote no letters, he appointed no scribes, he started no committees, he never made a schedule to be kept, he never announced a meeting in advance, he never promoted or joined any organization, and he left behind no manual as to how his disciples were to proceed. He did everything against what human wisdom would demand for success, yet, by becoming a broken vessel, he became the author and finisher of salvation for all those who believe. Jesus was a broken vessel!

There is absolutely nothing that can be said of the lives of David and Jesus to account for their worldwide blessings that continue to this day, save that they were broken men. And so it was with Paul.

Paul's conversion experience began when he was suddenly struck with blindness -- and as far as he knew, it would be forever.

My friend, God does not waste much time with his choicest of surrendered men, to break them, and to break them, and to break them again, until nothing of the world, of man-made religious systems and methods is left in them.

Having received his sight, Paul was broken again by the suspicion of the Spirit-filled church in Jerusalem. And then, because of his bold stand, and for his own protection, the church shipped him back to his childhood home of Tarsus. I need not tell you of how the church held him at arm's length, finally rejecting him altogether to leave him cold, naked, and hungry so that he had to earn his own bread by making tents; only to end up in prison once, and finally in prison again to die there by decapitation.

The epitaph on his tombstone could have read, "Praying for You Day and Night with Tears." Paul was a broken vessel!

Are You a Broken Vessel?

If there is any pride, criticism, analyzation, resentment, bitterness, jealousy, self-seeking, impatience, competitiveness, dishonesty, or love of the world in our hearts, we are not broken vessels. We cannot find any of these traits in these three most broken men of the Bible.

These three men -- David, Jesus, and Paul -- never became robots or puppets of a religious system that tried to enslave them in programs, or trap them in a lifestyle that would cause them to worship only when corporate worship services were scheduled. **These three greats of the Bible worshipped God every day.** In fact, their chief entertainment, their greatest joy and relaxation, was to be alone with God. When they came to the Father, it was not only to get something, but to be made into something better, and to love and adore the one who was their constant fellowship. They did nothing without him, but everything with him.

Oh, dear friend, are you a broken vessel? Are you religiously so busy with programs and chasing schedules, that when you meet with fellow Christians, you are too empty to talk about Jesus, instead being able to talk only about what you have done for him? Has your spouse seen you change from glory to glory in the past 20 years, or is he, or she, still living with the same person, having the same flawed attitudes and habits of yesterday? Has your heart grown cold, and have your religious steps and efforts become mechanical?

Indeed, the world is perishing, not for the lack of more Christian TV and radio programs, nor for the shortage of money given to missions or evangelism, nor for the lack of better or bigger religious machinery -- but for the lack of broken men.

Oh, may I plead with you to break out of the machinery, to flee to the feet of Jesus and to remain there until a new man is made out of the old man, until a fresh man is made out of the worn out man, until a man estranged to Jesus becomes a man indwelled with Jesus again.

Will you be willing to "un-busy" yourself to wait at the feet of Jesus to observe the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and his precious Word? Are you willing to let the searchlight of his love expose yet unveiled carnal characteristics in your heart that have for years prevented you from hearing his voice and getting his directions? Are you willing so to wait on God for weeks, months, and years until he is able to take out of you all the things that mar, deter, hurt, crush, and cause the Holy Spirit to be grieved? Will you become a dead man to the Self and the world to be made into a broken vessel?

God can only work through those who have waited long enough to be broken. God cannot operate through people, even the most dedicated, who follow their own ideas and pursue the path of convenience. God is looking for a people who have become nothing so he can become everything!

Brokenness Was the Mark of the Early Church.

Consider now what God did with the broken vessels of the early church. The early church multiplied four thousand fold in threescore years. The success of the early church can only be ascribed to brokenness, and the obstacles she faced were staggering in proportion to what she faces today. When Jesus ascended to heaven, there were only about 120 saints who received the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Let us draw from A. M. Hills' remarkable book, Holiness and Power, as he relates to the first generation of Christians:

Of all the ages of history, it was the age of universal corruption. Outside of Judea, idolatry reigned supreme. Gods and goddesses, representing every phase of vice, were openly worshiped in magnificent temples and at costly shrines. All power was in the hands of a magnificent and heartless imperialism. The masses were sunk in hopeless degradation, without means, without learning, without protection, and sixty million of them in the Roman Empire alone were slaves. Aged parents were suffered to die of starvation, children were exposed and murdered. Men fought each other as gladiators in the amphitheaters and died by thousands for the amusement of the cruel populace. Every precept of the moral law was violated almost without conscience and without hindrance. The early disciples had no wealth, no social position, no prestige, no Government aid, no help from established institutions. They were in themselves a despised and feeble folk, without influence, without skill, without education, without a New Testament, or even the Old Testament in the hands of the people, without a Christian literature, or a single Christian house of worship. Pomp, power, custom and public sentiment were all against them. They were reproached, reviled, persecuted, and subjected to exile and death.

But those early Christians had the help of an indwelling, sanctifying Saviour and the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and with that equipment, they faced a hostile world and all the malignant powers of darkness, and conquered. Within seventy years,

according to the smallest estimate, there were half a million followers of Jesus, and some authorities affirm that there were a quarter of a million in the province of Babylon alone. In other words, with Holy Spirit power upon them, they increased more than four thousand fold in threescore years.

Here you see broken vessels filled with the Holy Spirit, intensely in love with Jesus, whose Christianity refused to become mechanical, programmed, and tooled by anything but by the power of God.

Now, what is brokenness? The Hebrew word of Psalm 31:12 is abad: "to lose oneself, by implication to perish!" Jesus said, "...whosoever will lose his life..., the same shall save it" (Lu. 9:24). Almost every person tries to save himself. Even many of the most notable, seemingly successful, religious leaders try to save their lives and their ministries. Jesus says: It must all be surrendered.

Dear ones, will you continue in the life you have lived with its prideful and pitiful fruits, or will you choose brokenness as David and Jesus and Paul did so that the perfume of Christ's life in you will spread beyond your tombstone into the decades, generations, and ages to come? Jesus was a broken man who took the loaves of a broken lad; and having broken that bread, he could have fed the whole world! Have we ever considered that brokenness may have the greatest potential for evangelism and worldwide revival? Truly, truly, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."