



## A - INTRODUCTION TO BROKENNESS

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spirit: a broken and a contrite heart,  
O God, thou wilt not despise.”  
Ps. 51:17 KJV**

# God's Call to Brokenness

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O God, thou wilt not despise.”  
Ps. 51:17 KJV**

Brokenness is the gateway to a fuller life in the Spirit. The breaking of our self-will leads to confession, repentance, acceptance and submission to God's authority and sovereign will. It is a humbling and often painful experience, but the breaking is needed so that the Holy Spirit can begin to work within us to strengthen and empower us to go forward in faith!

In the Hebrew language, “contrite” means pulverized or crushed as a mortar and pestle crush a substance into powder. In the verse quoted above, God uses this word to define how our self-will and self-focus must be crushed so that His life and light might be more fully revealed in us. God calls brokenness and contriteness “sacrifices” because they are costly to the giver and require us to forsake our selfishness. As we pass through life's corridors, there are a myriad of opportunities to become broken and to remain broken.

God gives us many examples in the Bible of people who were driven by their fleshly demands, desires and schemes. And God chose numerous ways to break them of their pride so they were able to accomplish great things through the working of His Spirit.

**“ TO BE BROKEN IS THE BEGINNING OF REVIVAL. IT IS PAINFUL,  
IT IS HUMILIATING, BUT IT IS THE ONLY WAY.”<sup>1</sup>  
*THE CALVARY ROAD*  
ROY AND REVEL HESSON**

We all desire trials we can handle in our flesh. Then we can continue to give lip-service to God while living our lives largely on our terms, “regrouping” along the way. But in God's wisdom, He sends afflictions and engineers circumstances that are beyond our ability to handle in the flesh. These messengers from God are targeted to bring us to the end of our human strategies and resources so we will acknowledge and submit to His ownership and authority over our lives. Brokenness often comes through the sorrowful acknowledgement of our sin against a Holy God. The Spirit brings conviction of sin through reading the Scriptures, God's discipline, His consequences, exposure of our sin, someone's admonishment or overwhelming circumstances that bring us humbly to our knees with the realization that once again we have strayed from the Sustainer of our souls.

There may be no direct correlation between our sin and difficult circumstances. The Lord sends affliction to move us to a deeper level of intimacy with Him and to broaden our ministry through His power. Jesus said in John 15:2 that even those already bearing fruit will be pruned so they will bear more fruit.

Brokenness can come in “small ways” through daily decisions to turn from self and to follow Jesus. Many times throughout a day we are given, in Amy Carmichael’s words, “a chance to die;” to die to our lusts, demands, desires, perceived rights and expectations. The daily twists and turns, each involving biblical decisions, seem relatively inconsequential and may not be emotionally painful, but nonetheless, sustain life’s direction of submission to God’s will.

For example: there is a breaking of our wills every time we say “no” to temptation, when we spend needed time with God instead of giving in to what appears to be a more appealing lure, when we spend needed time with our spouses or children rather than “escaping.” On and on the list goes as many decisions to follow God, instead of Satan, are made daily.

Brokenness can also come in “big ways;” the cataclysmic breakings that painfully wrench us from the moorings of self and its demands. These may come at a time when God faces us up to a life-dominating sin that must be forsaken to move forward in spiritual renewal and growth. The breaking point may come when God shows us idols and false identities upon which we have relied, but which must be cast down so that Christ’s life can be manifested through us.

The time of brokenness may come when a major decision must be made in accordance with God’s Word or the Spirit’s leading. For example, we may be called by God to take frightening risks of obedience to advance His Kingdom, to go somewhere we don’t want to go, to take on a task that is beyond our ability to handle in the flesh, to risk a relationship by sharing the gospel or an admonishment, to say “yes” to a command of God. Or He may call us to say “no” to something we really desire or demand.

The time of brokenness may come when we have to give up a loved one to physical death or to the death of a relationship. It may arrive through the door of other types of losses such as reputation, job, ministry, health, financial stability, romance, goals and dreams.

Opportunities to be broken may come through difficult people, strategically placed in our lives by God’s hand, to learn to love. Brokenness is required when we humble ourselves and seek forgiveness of an unlovable person or even of a person who is loveable.

Opportunities may come daily in renewed commitments to live out marriage vows with an insensitive, uncaring spouse. Or they may arrive when a loved one rebels, and we watch helplessly as his or her life slips into the dark world of sin. God breaks our wills when we submit to the “gut-wrenching” act of obedience to give thanks for situations or people who are very difficult. We are broken when we respond in a godly way when we do not receive appreciation for a job well done or when someone else gets the credit for the job we did! The door to brokenness may be opened in the form of slander, and God calls us to not defend ourselves and to relinquish the right to our reputation to Him. As we can see, God uses many ways to break our independent spirit through unfulfilled desires, expectations and demands.

Sorrowful events require acceptance and submission to the will of God as our self-reliant spirits are crushed and snatched from us by the loving hand of One who knows what is best and is working out His purposes in our lives. (Rom. 8:28) Our goal should no longer be to eliminate the pain, but rather to bring glory to God in the midst of the pain as we forsake rebellious attitudes and replace them with righteous ones. Painful times must be learning times.

The least painful route to brokenness and to remain broken is to continually nurture our love for and trust in our Creator so that we desire to please Him and delight to do His will when the testing comes. Repentance and then surrender to His requirements are the deepest expressions of our love and worship. (Ps. 40:6-8)

Though He never sinned, Christ modeled brokenness numerous times in His earthly existence, culminating in the agony of Gethsemane where He said to His disciples,

**“ ‘My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death’... And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me...’ ”**

**MATT. 26:38,39 NASB**

Before his final journey to the Cross His last words were a statement of complete surrender, which encompassed His profound love and commitment to His Father, “**...yet not My will, but Yours be done.**” (Luke 22:42 NASB)

As Christ-followers, we must *expect* many opportunities to die to our plans, dreams, demands, lusts and affections so that we will

**“ ...know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death”**

**PHIL. 3:10 NASB**

**“ For thus says the high and exalted One... ‘I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’ ”**

**Is. 57:15 NASB**

I. Your will, when it stands against the will of God, must be broken.

**“ Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”**

**ROM. 12:1**

A. You are to present your body daily as a *living and holy sacrifice*,

1. which is acceptable to Him.
2. which is the form of worship He requires.
3. which includes your mind, emotions and will, as well as your physical body. (Rom. 6:12,13)

- B. You are to present every aspect of your life as a living sacrifice because of His great mercy toward you.
- II. You must follow Christ's example of living a life of daily brokenness in submission to your Father's will. (Luke 9:23)

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**Christ stated that He did not come to do His will, but instead, He existed to do His Father's will, even to the point of death. (John 6:38; Phil. 2:8)**

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- III. You may fight against being broken and crushed in spirit.
- A. You may *wrongly* believe
1. you will "lose" if you submit your will to God's. (Matt. 10:39)
  2. you can somehow convince God that you are right and He is wrong if you hang on to your demands and sin long enough.
  3. you will not experience God, His peace and freedom on the other side of brokenness.
  4. the unknown path of brokenness is more frightening than the safety of familiar sin.
- B. God's Spirit wars against your flesh, and the battle to not be crushed rages. (Gal. 5:17)
- C. Your stubborn, entrenched pride prevents you from appropriating God's resources at a time when you would greatly benefit from them.

Often the territory we transverse before we are broken is a fierce battleground of our will versus God's will. Proliferating that battleground are our sinful weapons of warfare: reliance upon self, excuses and rationalizations for continuing in sin, lies and self-deception, blame placed on others, intimidation, manipulation, selfishness, demands, escapes, withdrawal, superficiality with God and others, unbiblical priorities and claimed rights. The battleground is soaked with our tears, misery, pride, anger, self-pity and fears. It may also be littered with the carnage of how our sin has impacted others. We employ the idols of our logic and/or feelings to support our cause for not submitting to the will of God. A hardened heart toward God and others is often the result of our entrenched arrogance and stubbornness. (1 Sam. 15:23)

In this situation you stand at a crossroads. Will you fight God, becoming angry, depressed, embittered and blaming others for causing you so many problems? Or will you humble yourself before the Lord and accept your painful realities as coming from the hand of your loving Father who is in the process of conforming you to the image of Christ?

“ONE SIGNIFICANT SIGN THAT THE SOUL HAS BEEN BROKEN IS THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO PRAY A SINCERE PRAYER OF SURRENDER; YOU RELINQUISH THE STRUGGLE AT HAND.”<sup>2</sup>

*EMBRACING BROKENNESS*

ALAN E. NELSON

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**You don't lose the battle through surrender, but rather you win the victory in Jesus!**

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- IV. The brokenness and crushing that you are resisting and fearing is not your enemy. Instead, your enemy is your sinful arrogance that refuses to be broken. (1 Pet. 5:5)
- A. Your crushing allows God to draw close to you since you are no longer filled with self and its demands for life on your terms.
- “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, And saves those who are crushed in spirit.”  
Ps. 34:18 NASB
- B. The very thing you hope to accomplish through hanging on to your sin, demands, irresponsibility, idols or false identities becomes your spiritual downfall. (Prov. 16:18)
- V. You need to realize God is *pursuing you* with His love by bringing you into a crushed state.
- A. Realize that you may go through an emotionally painful experience as you are broken.
- B. Pray by meditating on and personalizing Psalm 51, David's prayer of brokenness.
- C. Confess your rebellious attitudes, which may include:
1. Lack of *acceptance* of the trials, loss and difficulties dispensed by God's sovereign will; rejecting His plan for your life.
  2. Unwillingness to express your professed love for Christ through obedience to Him.

**“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”  
JOHN 14:15 NASB**

3. Refusal to repent of “pet” or secret sins.
4. Refusal to accept that you are wrong and need to change your thinking, attitudes or actions.
5. Anger toward God and/or others for blocking your self-life goals.
6. Fear of loss of control over your life or fear of people; not fearing the Lord.
7. Lack of a teachable spirit toward God and those in authority over you.
8. Resistance toward the risks God is calling you to take to:
  - a. advance His kingdom
  - b. grow your character
  - c. take responsibility
  - d. walk by the Spirit instead of walking in the flesh
  - e. move out of your comfort zones
9. Lack of faith that God will lead you through your pain to freedom.

**“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”  
JOHN 8:31B,32**

**“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.”  
Ps. 51:12 NASB**

- VI. You must be humbled through the crushing of your spirit, so you can experience the fullness of the grace of God.

**“But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.’ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near**



**to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.¶¶**

**JAS. 4:6-10 NASB**

- A. God commands you to be filled with His Spirit, which cannot be experienced unless you are brought into submission to Christ and His will. (Eph. 5:18)
- B. You must accept that God owns your life. Your life is not your own, and you are called to glorify Him with your body no matter how difficult your path is. (1 Cor. 6:19,20)
- C. You must accept Christ's authority over your life, which is revealed through His Word, His Spirit, His commands and His control over all events in your life. (Matt. 28:18)
- D. You must realize that God will bring you through the pain into His presence, filling you with His comfort, joy and peace. (Matt. 5:4)

**¶¶ Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.¶¶**

**Ps. 30:5B NASB**

Many of the subjects discussed in this book will present you with opportunities to be broken. Your circumstances are ever-changing kaleidoscopes that require you to anchor yourself in Christ and His Word in the daily tugging of temptations and in the midst of harsh realities. He alone is the sustainer of your soul. Crushing times are always your Lord's teaching times *if* you cry out to Him and are willing to be taught. As you travel through the dark and difficult times of your life, He longs to teach you about Himself: His never-changing character, His merciful love, His sustaining power, His faithfulness, His goodness, His peace, joy and rest. (1 Pet. 4:12-19)

**¶¶ Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.¶¶**

**MATT. 11:28-30 NASB**

**¶¶ I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay; And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. And He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear; And will trust in the LORD.¶¶**

**Ps. 40:1-3 NASB**

**“ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!”**

Ps. 32:8-11

**“ THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BROKEN IN SELF-WILL, AND BROKEN IN THEIR AMBITIONS, AND BROKEN IN THEIR BEAUTIFUL IDEALS, AND BROKEN IN WORLDLY REPUTATION, AND BROKEN IN THEIR AFFECTIONS, AND BROKEN IN HEALTH; THOSE WHO ARE DESPISED AND SEEM UTTERLY FORLORN AND HELPLESS, THE HOLY GHOST IS SEIZING UPON AND USING FOR GOD’S GLORY.”**

UNKNOWN

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**When suffering shatters the carefully kept vase that is our lives, God stoops to pick up the pieces. But he doesn’t put them back together as a restoration project patterned after our former selves. Instead, he shifts through the rubble and selects some of the shards as raw material for another project – a mosaic that tells the story of redemption.<sup>3</sup>--The North Face of God by Ken Gire**

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