

CHAPTER 12

**BROKENNESS RELEASES THE GLORY OF THE CROSS**

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GLORY WITHIN US AND RELEASING IT THROUGH BROKENNESS

**A**n extraordinary pair of visions that I experienced years ago have taken on deeper meanings recently as I have realized more fully that the glory that shone out through Jesus' brokenness is a wonderful picture of the glory that can shine out through our own.

The first of this pair of visions happened while a friend and I were praying with our host in his kitchen just before our leaving to drive home. While the other two men were praying loudly, I sat quietly, having no idea or feeling that anything special was about to happen.

Without warning, I lost all consciousness of the men and the kitchen and found myself standing in a dark area. A few feet in front of me was a large sphere, about eight feet in diameter, its rough, grey surface resembling the moon's. A shaft of golden light shone out of a small square window in the upper left quadrant. Curious, I approached the sphere and peered through the window. In the golden cloud that filled the interior, I could distinguish figures dancing as in worship around a golden throne. I was transfixed by the beauty and awe of what seemed to be a picture of heaven.

The vision left as quickly as it appeared. I was back in the kitchen listening to the other men praying as before. When I shared with them later what I had seen, neither had any idea about its meaning.

On the way home, as I was asking the Lord for an interpretation of the vision, suddenly, a loud, clear voice shook my mind with the statement: "**THAT WAS YOU !!**" Excited, I realized those words were a declaration that the glory of heaven was actually *inside of me*! Scriptures came to mind with new, gripping meaning. I realized I had just seen a dramatic picture of the "treasure hidden in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7), of the "Kingdom of Heaven within" me (Luke 17:21), and of "Christ in you [me]". (Gal. 2:20, Eph. 3:17, Col 1:27, etc.)

As I was meditating on the vision and these scriptures a few days later, I could make out its shape again as a picture in my mind. To my surprise, a zigzag crack slowly descended from top to bottom until the two halves fell apart. The glory of the hidden golden world within now shone forth, transforming the darkness around into the same glory.

Into my puzzled mind came the name of a book I had read years before—*The Release of the Spirit*. by Watchman Nee.<sup>1</sup> Delighted when I found I still had this book, I discovered in it a fascinating interpretation of my visions. As you will find in other parts of this chapter, Watchman Nee taught profoundly but clearly the necessity of the breaking of our "outer man" to release God's Spirit, His abilities, and His glory through us.

He's like a treasure of great worth  
Contained in vessels earthen-made;  
The vessel must be broken through  
And thus the treasure be displayed.

Witness Lee/John Ingalls

**The Breaking of a Grain of Wheat**

. . . unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. (John 12:24)

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<sup>1</sup>Watchman Nee, *The Release of the Spirit* (Cloverdale, IN: Sure Foundation Publishers, 1965).

In the preceding verse (23), Jesus announced that is the hour for Him to be glorified—in His imminent suffering and death. In verses 25 and 26, He obviously includes all of those who would follow Him as ones whose outer lives need to be broken and to die to bring forth fruit:

The man who loves his life [*psuche*-“soul, outer life”] will lose it, while the man who hates his life [*psuche*-“soul, outer life”] in the world in this world shall keep it for eternal life (*zoe* “life”). Whoever serves me must follow me. . . . (John 12:25, 26)

If we would follow Jesus, we too must be like the buried wheat grain and have our shells broken, as the breaking of the sphere in my vision. Mr. Nee expresses the need of our brokenness as follows:

Life is in a grain of wheat, but there is a shell, a very hard shell on the outside. As long as that shell is not split open, the wheat cannot sprout and grow. . . His life is imprisoned within us and we need the breaking of the Lord to allow His life to flow forth.<sup>2</sup>

Jessie Penn-Lewis points out that the breaking and the dying of our outer life, as in the picture of the grain of wheat, do not necessarily involve repenting of sin; brokenness can also mean the giving up good things for His life to come forth, even as Jesus gave up His good life and His public ministry:

Let us think a moment about that picture of the grain, as applied to the believer. The grain may have a beautiful coat, but it is hard. . . The only way to make it fruitful in the production of other grains is to drop it into the earth, where it loses its outer shell, its beauty, and even the sunshine and all that made “life” beautiful . . . It loses all as it becomes detached and drops into the earth. . . . If it is left in the ground to give its life entirely, a new life will later press through the dark earth back into the sunlight and become an ear of wheat that will ultimately produce fruit, thirty or sixty fold.<sup>3</sup>

Further, Penn-Lewis points out that some have a “victorious soul” but are hard on others. They may do well in working for God, and “yet lack that passion for self-sacrifice, which would lead us to be poured out upon the sacrifice and service of other’s faith like the Apostle Paul.”<sup>4</sup>

There is no gain but by a loss;  
We cannot save but by the cross,  
The corn of wheat to multiply  
Must fall into the ground and die;  
O should a soul alone remain  
When it a hundred-fold can gain?

Wherever you ripe fields behold,  
Waving to God their sheaves of gold,  
Be sure some corn of wheat has died,  
Some saintly soul been crucified;  
Someone has suffered, wept and prayed,  
And fought hell’s legions undismayed.

— Arthur S. Booth-Clibborn

“If it die,” oh, hear the message                      Falling from thy Lord,  
“If it die,” much fruit it beareth,                    ‘Tis thy Savior’s word.

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<sup>2</sup>Watchman Nee, *The Release of the Spirit*. 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup>Jessie Penn-Lewis, *The Centrality of the Cross* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2000) 45.

<sup>4</sup>Jessie Penn-Lewis, *Much Fruit* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC) 14.

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Would'st thou see life work in others, Fall into the ground, be buried,	Thou thyself must die. Low in darkness lie.
Thou shalt learn the blessed secret, From a life poured out in secret	He shall live that dies; Shall a harvest rise.

unknown

### **The Breaking of the Alabaster Box.**

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. (John 12:1-3)

I am sure you will find Watchman Nee's comments on this story very insightful and challenging:

If the alabaster box is not broken, the pure spikenard will not flow forth. . . . some are still treasuring the alabaster box, thinking that its value exceeds that of the ointment. Many think that their outward man is more precious than their inward man . . . Without the breaking of the outward, the inward will not come forth.

Whether we are conscious of it or not, the aim of the Lord is to break this outward man.<sup>5</sup>

The Lord employs two different ways to break out outward man; one is gradual, the other sudden. . . .

The timing is in His hand. We cannot shorten the time, though we certainly can prolong it. . . .

Therefore if we have never before wholly and intelligently consecrated ourselves to the Lord, let us do so now, saying: "Lord, for the future of the church, for the future of the gospel, for Thy way, and also for my own life, I offer myself without condition, without reservation, into Thy hands. Lord I delight to offer myself unto Thee and am willing to let Thee have Thy full way through me."<sup>6</sup>

Then, Mr. Nee goes on to show that the working of the Cross within us brings brokenness. Again, we see that the Cross is a paradigm for our own brokenness and it provides the method for us to receive brokenness:

When we really understand the cross we shall see it means the breaking of the outward man. The cross reduces the outward man to death; it splits open the human shell. The cross must break all that belongs to our outward man—our opinions, our ways, our cleverness, our self-love, our all.<sup>7</sup>

Here are two other scriptures that emphasize the importance of our brokenness:

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. (Psalms 51:17 NASB)

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. . . . (2 Cor 2:14 16)

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<sup>5</sup>Watchman Nee, *The Release of the Spirit*, 12.

<sup>6</sup>Watchman Nee, *The Release of the Spirit*, 14.

<sup>7</sup>Watchman Nee, *The Release of the Spirit*, 14-15.

As a follow-up to the visions of the sphere, which I shared at the beginning of this chapter, I received an interesting sequel to them in the summer of 2002 at a meeting near Atlanta, Georgia. The main theme of the speaker was the value of the difficult times of our life, even of the very sinful things that we have been delivered from. He emphasized that these are part of our testimony of what the Lord has done for us and how he has changed us; and they should not be forgotten but shared enough to give God glory. I thought of my past and some of my own sins that helped bring brokenness into my life—some experiences I would rather forget about than talk about.

Then, the broken sphere came back into my mental vision. This time, the two broken halves served as crude clay lamps to hold the oil that burned and that gave forth the glorious golden light. It meant to me that even the dirty, hard, broken outer self had a purpose in the end; for when it is broken, it can hold the glory of God in such a way that His light and life can shine out continuously and freely through us.

**Truly, as God breaks us, He makes all things work together for good, to conform us to the paradigm of the Cross—He even uses all of our past shame.**

### **Jesus' Brokenness as a Paradigm**

How do we know if we need to be broken further? As you read the following wonderful article forwarded to me by a friend, take time to ponder the brokenness of Jesus and see how you measure up to this paradigm.

#### **Brokenness**

SOMETIMES it is asked what we mean by Brokenness. Brokenness is not easy to define but can be clearly seen in the reactions of Jesus, especially as He approached the Cross and in His crucifixion. I think it can be applied personally in this way:

- WHEN to do the will of God means that even my Christian Brethren will not understand, and I remember that “Neither did His brethren believe in Him” (John 7:5), and I bow my head to obey and accept the misunderstanding, THIS IS BROKENNESS.
- WHEN I am misrepresented or deliberately misinterpreted, and I remember that Jesus was falsely accused but He “held His peace,” and I bow my head to accept the accusation without trying to justify myself, THIS IS BROKENNESS.
- WHEN another is preferred before me and I am deliberately passed over, and I remember that they cried “Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas,” (Luke 23: 18) and I bow my head and accept rejection, THIS IS BROKENNESS.
- WHEN my plans are brushed aside and I see the work of years brought to ruins by the ambitions of others and I remember that Jesus allowed them to lead Him away to crucify Him (Matt. 27: 31) and He accepted that place of failure and I bow my head and accept the injustice without bitterness, THIS IS BROKENNESS.
- WHEN in order to be right with my God it is necessary to take the humbling path of confession and restitution, and I remember that Jesus “made Himself of no reputation” and “humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the Cross” (Phil. 2:8), and I bow my head and am ready to accept the shame of exposure, THIS IS BROKENNESS.
- WHEN others take unfair advantage of my being a Christian and treat my belongings as public property, and I remember “they stripped Him,” and “parted His garments, casting lots” (Matt. 27: 28, 35), and I bow my head and accept “joyfully the spoiling of my goods” for His sake, THIS IS BROKENNESS.

•WHEN one acts towards me in an unforgivable way, and I remember that when He was crucified Jesus prayed “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23: 34), and I bow my head and accept any behaviour towards me as permitted by my loving Father, THIS IS BROKENNESS.

•WHEN people expect the impossible of me and more than time or human strength can give, I remember that Jesus said, “This is my body which is given for you ... (Luke 22: 19), and I repent of my self-indulgence and lack of self-giving for others, THIS IS BROKENNESS.<sup>8</sup>

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I urge all readers to pray through the above article, turning each point into a prayer that includes (1) worship of Jesus in His brokenness, (2) repentance of our lack of brokenness, (3) commitment to express more of His brokenness, and (4) faith that He has put all of His brokenness within us in “seed” form and He will cause His nature to break out, grow, and bear much fruit.

### **Brokenness in Repentance**

A good number of you, I am certain, share my great appreciation for the powerful ministry of Jack Frost, who has helped many to experience the Father’s love in deeper ways.<sup>9</sup> I am convinced that the impressive results of his ministry have been largely due to the Father’s love bringing him to extreme brokenness in repentance. Jack Frost has declared it is vital for him to read regularly *The Calvary Road*<sup>10</sup> (see Chapter 6). In this famous little book, Roy Hession has considerable to say about our brokenness at the Cross being essential for the release of Christ’s nature through us (emphases mine):

. . . The Lord Jesus cannot live in us fully and reveal Himself through us until the proud self within us is broken. . . . It is so often self who tries to live the Christian life . . . is often doing Christian work . . . gets irritable and envious and resentful and critical and worried. . . is hard and unyielding in its attitudes to others. . . is shy and self-conscious and reserved. . . .

Being broken is both God’s work and ours. He brings His pressure to bear, but we have to make the choice. . . . Brokenness in daily experience is simply the response of humility to the conviction of God. And inasmuch as this conviction is continuous, we shall need to be broken continually. And this can be very costly, when we see all the yielding of rights and selfish interests that this will involve, and the confessions and restitutions that may be sometimes necessary.

For this reason, we are not likely to be **broken except at the Cross of Jesus. The willingness of Jesus to be broken for us is the all-compelling motive in our being broken too. . . . We see Him willing to have no rights of His own, no home of His own, no possessions of His own, willing to let men revile Him and not revile again, willing to let men tread on Him and not retaliate or defend Himself. Above all, we see Him broken as He meekly goes to Calvary to become men’s scapegoat by bearing their sins in His own body on the Tree. . . only the vision of the Love that was willing to be broken for us can constrain us to be willing for that.**

Every humiliation, everyone who tries and vexes us, is God’s way of breaking us, so that there is a yet deeper channel in us for the Life of Christ. . . . the only life that pleases God and that can be victorious is His life — never our life, no matter how

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<sup>8</sup>Copies of this leaflet may be obtained from John Collinson, 20 Duke Street, Cullompton. Devon.

<sup>9</sup> Jack & Trisha Frost, Shiloh Place Ministries, PO Box 5, Conway, SC 29528 [www.shilohplace.org](http://www.shilohplace.org).

<sup>10</sup>Roy Hession, *The Calvary Road* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 2001).

hard we try. But inasmuch as our self-centred life is the exact opposite of His, we can never be filled with His life, unless we are prepared for God to bring our life constantly to death. And in that we must cooperate by our moral choice.<sup>11</sup>

**In order to break our wills to His, God brings us to the foot of the Cross and there shows us what real brokenness is. We see those wounded Hands and Feet, that Face of Love crowned with thorns and we see the complete brokenness of the One who said, “Not my will, but Thine be done,” as He drank the bitter cup of our sin to its dregs. So the way to be broken is to look on Him and to realize it was our sin which nailed Him there. . . . some of us have found that there is no prayer that God is so swift to answer as the prayer that He might break us.**<sup>12</sup>

We see in these quotes the brokenness of Jesus both as a paradigm and a motivation for our own brokenness. Do go back and worship Jesus as you read again the above quotes, noting especially the emphasized parts, in which Roy Hession describes Jesus’ glorious nature shining out through His brokenness. In addition; as I have urged before, add prayers of commitment, repentance, and faith for you to be conformed to His death in the specific ways mentioned. A deep commitment includes the willingness to be broken in any way He chooses so that His loving nature, the Father’s heart, can be worked in us and expressed through us. As the Father leads us through such brokenness, we can be confident that His love will embrace us, fill us, and flow through us.

Olives that have known no pressure  
No oil can bestow;  
If the grapes escape the winepress,  
Cheering wine can never flow;  
Spikenard only through the crushing,  
Fragrance can diffuse.  
Shall I then, Lord, shrink from suff’ring  
Which Thy love for me would choose?

— unknown

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<sup>11</sup>Roy Hession, 13-16.

<sup>12</sup>Roy Hession, 31.