

THE JOURNEY OF BROKENNESS

It's Not About Us; It's About Him!

by Denise A. Basel

I was asked a couple of months ago to be a speaker at a women's retreat on "Releasing the Fragrance of the Lord". I was asking the Lord what I would share if I accepted the invitation. Jerry and I had just come from doing a worship conference at the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in West Orlando, and the story of the woman with the alabaster jar (Luke 7:36-50) was one that the Lord had brought to mind as we prepared for the teachings. But the jar had to be broken for the fragrance to fill the room. It had to be poured out on the feet of the Savior, just as we need to be poured out at the foot of the Cross.

Do you know how it is said that the natural speaks of the supernatural? Well, I had my confirmation on the topic of brokenness when I accidentally bumped a covered vase of mine and sent the cover to the floor to break into many pieces. Inside the covered vase were scented flowers, and I noticed that with the cover broken, the fragrance was released into the room. The symbolism of the broken pieces was also striking to me. Last summer, the Lord showed me a picture of my heart . . . and there were major cracks in it. In the vision, Jesus was standing next to my heart in white, masonry clothes, and He was holding a palette of mortar in one hand and a trowel in the other. He was taking the mortar and repairing all the major cracks in my heart and smoothing them over. Then, He showed me that some of the pieces of my heart that lay shattered on the floor were too badly damaged to be repaired and would need brand new parts. He then applied large portions of mortar to these areas and created a whole, new heart. I said, "Lord, that is great, but cement becomes hardened, and I don't want a hard heart!" He didn't say anything, but took out His "Bic" lighter, flicked it, and set my heart on fire. I thought, "Great, He repaired my heart and set me on fire for Him. I will be full of zeal and passion for the Gospel!" What I didn't realize at the time, was that it was the fire of purification and would take me further on the journey of brokenness, humility and repentance. It was a journey to the Cross.

Scripture often speaks of aromas which were sacrifices to the Most High God that were pleasing unto Him. Is it any surprise that God would find the fragrance of our sacrifice of a broken heart an aroma pleasing to His nostrils? What is the sacrifice He desires? Will any sacrifice be acceptable?

Scripture tells us that God is very particular about the sacrifices that are pleasing to Him. Psalm 51:17 states, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

But what is a broken and contrite heart? A broken heart comes in many forms. It can be broken from sin; broken from an encounter with God (such as in Isaiah 6:5 when the Glory of the Lord filled the temple and Isaiah realized his insignificance and unholiness); broken from wrestling with God for a blessing, as Jacob did in Genesis 32:22-32; or broken from circumstances or from loss. I have experienced my share of brokenness, **especially** since receiving Christ in 1986. Somehow, that was foreign to my thinking that brokenness would increase with a closer walk with God.

In 1990, after 17 years of marriage and no children, we felt prompted by the Lord to pray this one Saturday night for children. We had given up years earlier and had resigned ourselves to being a family of just the two of us. We were lead to pray Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 1:1-20), and felt that if we ever had a son, we were to name him Samuel--"because I asked the Lord for him." I remember telling Jerry, "If God gave me a child, I would know He really loved me." That night we conceived our only child, who was due at Christmas. The doctor did a vaginal ultrasound at 7 1/2 weeks to reassure me that my baby was very healthy. I couldn't believe what I saw on the screen! This little baby looked like Charlie Brown, with tiny arms and legs and a precious little heart that

beat with a red bleep on the screen. Five weeks later I was in the emergency room, miscarrying the only child I have ever had.

You know, I haven't always done brokenness the "right" way. Being broken and at the feet of Jesus is quite different than being broken and angry, broken and bitter, broken and unchanged, broken and rebellious, broken and alone. I've done it all those ways . . . but God still didn't let me go. You have to understand that the words that I spoke on the night I conceived our baby--that if God would give me a child, I would know He really loved me—became retranslated into "God doesn't really love me." One year after my miscarriage, I started my journey back to the Cross-- to rediscover the God I loved as a little girl--when I believed that God was all good. As a little girl, I read every book on the saints I could find. Their lives were lives of brokenness, not prosperity (at least not by the world's standards). They were doers of faith, but more importantly, they were be-ers of faith--abiding in the Vine, being pruned--not only of the unproductive branches, but also being pruned of the productive branches--so they could produce even more fruit, be a more pleasing fragrance unto the Lord. Does the Lord ask any less of us as His saints?

When we face brokenness, we have choices. We may choose to move *around* the brokenness and not face the pain. Or, we may choose to *dwell* on the pain and never choose to go through it. Or, we may choose to *surrender*, to be like the little child who says, "Daddy, pick me up. Carry me. Hold me. I can't, but You can." We can choose to offer the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart and let God use it. That choice is a journey toward God--for **His** glory--not **our** healing--but **for His Glory!** Does that mean God doesn't care about my healing from the loss of my child--that my pain is insignificant in the sight of an awesome God who has more important things to do? No! But God **is** more interested in me being poured out at His feet, worshipping Him, than in ending the pain. Does God see the loss of my only baby as good, so He can teach me higher things? No! Of all people, He knows what it was like to sacrifice His only Son. But He used my pain and transformed it for His Glory. He made me more compassionate; He taught me about grief and loss; He taught me the power of weeping with those who weep and not trying to rescue people from their pain; He taught me to forgive those who hurt me with inappropriate words. I wish I could have just read a few good books on grief and compassion rather than experiencing the pain first hand, but it would not have produced the same results.

In counseling, our goal is not ultimately for the counselees to be healed of their presenting problem, it is that working through their brokenness will lead them closer to God. The violations to our very beings through abuse, neglect, and love deprivation, have created a breach in our relationship with God the Father. We are called to be repairers of the breach, restorers of homes to dwell in (Isa. 58:12)--restorers of a home for **God** to dwell in--a home where worship, trust, obedience, repentance, and brokenness are permanent fixtures. C.S. Lewis said, " When I invited Jesus into my life, I thought He was going to put up some wallpaper and hang a few pictures. But He started knocking out walls and adding on rooms. I said, 'I was expecting a nice cottage.' But He said, 'I'm making a palace in which to live'." And then, God wants us to go beyond the pain of brokenness that was demonstrated by the woman who poured herself out at the feet of Jesus, acknowledging her own sinfulness. Jesus wants us to have a broken and contrite heart for others. Who will plead before God for the Pharisees in our lives? Who will identify with the sins of the abuser, the adulterer, the bitter, the murderer, the addict? Can we be broken for them? We need to see the higher calling of a broken and contrite heart--it is for the healing of the nations. It is so that our purpose would become one with God's purpose--to bring all things together in Christ until every knee bows before Him.

At the West Orlando worship conference we were leading, God lead us in the second afternoon session to speak about repentance, specifically Daniel's identification with the sins of others in Daniel 9. That evening, we were hearing testimonies of what God had been doing in people's hearts during the conference, when all of a sudden a dirty, drunk, angry man walked down the aisle of the church, yelling at the people and at the "church." A couple of men took him outside and the people in that church fell on their faces before God, praying, weeping, and repenting for

that one man. I was reminded of the Scripture in Isaiah 53:3: "He was nothing to look at . . . despised and rejected by men . . ." One of the band members said that God showed him two things: 1) the man could have been Jesus seeing if His Church would do what they said they would do; and 2) the man could have been you or me, except for the grace of God.

God is calling us to a journey of brokenness that is never ending. It is a daily walk. It is not about life and living, it is about death and dying . It's not about doing, it's about being. It's not about performing, it's about abiding. It's not about us, its about Him. It's **NOT** about us. It's about **HIM!** To Him be ascribed all the Glory!