

Steadfastness, Willingness, And Brokenness

Brokenness – Introduction

After King David's tragic liaison with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-27; 12:1-24), he cries to God (Psalm 51) ...

Concerning Psalm 51:

- David's confession (in Psalm 51) is regarded as a model for repentance in both Judaism and Christianity*.
- The *Midrash Tehillim* (an ancient Hebrew Commentary on the Psalms) states that one who acknowledges that he has sinned and is fearful and prays to God about it, as David did, will be forgiven. But one who tries to ignore his sin will be punished by God.
- Charles Spurgeon (Baptist Preacher, 1834–1892) calls Psalm, "The Sinner's Guide", as it shows the sinner how to return to God's grace.
- Athanasius of Alexandria (the 20th bishop of Alexandria, 328-373 A.D.) would recommend that this chapter be recited each night by some of his disciples.
- The idea of using brokenheartedness as a way to reconnect to God was emphasized in numerous teachings by Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (who revived the Hasidic movement, and whose religious philosophy revolved around closeness to God and speaking to God in normal conversation "as you would with a best friend.", 1772–1810 A.D.). He taught: "It would be very good to be brokenhearted all day. But for the average person, this can easily degenerate into depression. You should therefore set aside some time each day for heartbreak. You should isolate yourself with a broken heart before God for a given time. But the rest of the day you should be joyful". (*Sichot HaRan #41*)

**Adapted from, and you can find more references at, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalm_51*

David's prayer of penitence pleads for a spirit characterized by:

I. STEADFASTNESS:

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a STEADFAST SPIRIT within me." (Psalm 51:10,12)

Paul exhibited a *STEADFAST SPIRIT* as he set his face toward Rome and certain death:

"I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." (Acts 20:23, 24)

By way of contrast, Peter reveals his spongy character at Jesus' arrest as a young woman links him with Jesus. In response, Peter blathers back to her, *"Woman, I don't know Him."* (Luke 22:57)

II. WILLINGNESS:

"Restore to me the joy of your salvation... grant me a WILLING SPIRIT, to sustain me." (Psalm 51:10,12)

Remember the father who approached Jesus to heal his son who was afflicted with an evil spirit? In his struggle to believe he exclaims, *"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"* (Mark 9:24)

Now that is the kind of *WILLING SPIRIT* — imperfect as it is — that Jesus can work with!

III. BROKENNESS:

"The sacrifices of God are a BROKEN SPIRIT; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."
(Psalm 51:17)

A BROKEN SPIRIT is evidenced when:

- Our ungodly self is slain.
- Our impenetrable hardness is softened, and when
- Our haughty pride is brought low.

In Conclusion:

In our quest to walk with God, let us join with David in seeking a spirit characterized by STEADFASTNESS, WILLINGNESS, and BROKENNESS.

Brokenness – Part One

“My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17)

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:18)

Brokenness Is:

- A prerequisite to usability by our Heavenly Father.
- Viewed by the pride-driven world as a sign of weakness.

Which category do you fall into:

PROUD, UNBROKEN PEOPLE	BROKEN PEOPLE
Focus on the failure of others	Are overwhelmed with a sense of their own spiritual need
Are self-righteous; have a critical, fault-finding spirit; look at their own life/faults through a telescope, but at others' with a microscope	Are compassionate; forgiving; look for the best in others
Look down on others	Esteem all others better than self
Are independent/possess a self-sufficient spirit	Possess a dependent spirit/recognize the need for others
Maintain control; must have it their way	Surrender control, trusts
Have to prove that they are right	Are willing to yield the right to be right
Claim their rights	Yield their rights
Have a demanding spirit	Have a giving spirit
Are self-protective of their time, rights, and reputation	Are self-denying
Desire to be served	Are motivated to serve others
Desire to be a success	Desire to be faithful to make others a success

Brokenness – Part Two

Brokenness is the product of a person who has come face to face with:

- The holiness of God:

"I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted... above Him were seraphs... calling... 'Holy, holy is the Lord...'" (Isaiah 6:1, 2)

- His own depravity:

"Woe to me!... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips... and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." (Isaiah 6:5)

PROUD, UNBROKEN PEOPLE	BROKEN PEOPLE
Are driven for self-advancement	Desire to promote others
Are driven to be recognized or appreciated	Possess a sense of unworthiness; are thrilled to be used at all; are eager for others to get the credit
Are wounded when others are promoted and they are overlooked	Rejoice when others are lifted up
Think of what they can do for God	Know that they have nothing to offer God
Feel confident in how much they know	Are humbled by how much they have to learn
Are self-conscious	Are not concerned with self at all
Keep people at arms length	Risk getting close to others/are willing to take the risk of loving intimately
Are quick to blame others	Accept personal responsibility – can see where they were wrong
Are defensive when criticized	Receive criticism with a humble, open heart
Are concerned with being "respectable"	Are concerned with being real
Are concerned about what others think	Care only about what God thinks

Brokenness – Part Three

Brokenness is the one quality God looks for in visiting and enabling the needy:

"The Lord has anointed me (Christ) to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." (Isaiah 61:1b)

PROUD, UNBROKEN PEOPLE	BROKEN PEOPLE
Work to maintain an image/protect their reputation	Die to their own reputation
Find it difficult to share their spiritual needs with others	Are willing to be open/transparent with others
Want to be sure nobody finds out about their sin	Are willing to be exposed (once broken, you don't care who knows as you have nothing to lose)
Have a hard time saying, "I was wrong; will you forgive me?"	Are quick to admit failure and to seek forgiveness
Deal in generalities when confessing	Deal in specifics their sin
Are concerned about the consequences of their sins	Are grieved over the cause/root of their sins
Are remorseful over their sin; over the fact that they got caught/found out	Are repentant over their sin (forsake it)
Wait for others to come and ask for forgiveness	Take the initiative to be reconciled
Compare themselves with others and feel deserving of honor	Compare themselves to the holiness of God and feel a desperate need for mercy
Are blind to their true heart condition	Walk in the light
Don't think they have anything to repent of	Have a continual heart attitude of repentance
Don't think they need revival (but everybody else does!)	Continually sense their need for a fresh encounter with the filling of His Spirit!

a broken spirit

Psalm 34:18 — The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalm 102:17 — He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea.

Psalm 147:3 — He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

2 Kings 22:19 — *[The Prophet Huldah sent this word from the LORD to King Josiah after the book of Law had been found and after hearing it understood that the people had sinned and God's anger burned,]* Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people—that they would become a curse and be laid waste—and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I also have heard you, declares the LORD.

2 Chronicles 33:12-13 — *[When King Manasseh ignored God, the LORD moved against him and gave way for the Assyrians capture, imprison and torture him, and finally...]* In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.

Isaiah 57:15 — For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Isaiah 61:1-3 — The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, ³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

Isaiah 66:2 — Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. “These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.

Ezekiel 9:3-4 — Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side and said to him, “Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.”

Matthew 5:3 — “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Luke 15:21-24 — “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Luke 18:11-14 — The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ ¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ ¹⁴ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”