

Why God's Will Doesn't Get Done

Until our outward man—our soul—is broken, the fragrance of Christ in our inward man cannot come forth.

Anyone who serves God will discover sooner or later that the great hindrance to his work is not others but himself. He will discover that his outward man and his inward man are not in harmony, for both are tending toward opposite directions.

He will also sense the inability of his outward man to submit to the Spirit's control, thus rendering him incapable of obeying God's highest commands. He will quickly detect that the greatest difficulty lies in his outward man, for it hinders him from using his spirit.

Many of God's servants are not able to do even the most elementary works. Ordinarily they should be enabled by the exercise of their spirits to know God's Word, to discern the spiritual condition of another, to send forth God's messages under anointing and to receive God's revelations.

Yet due to the distractions of the outward man, their spirit does not seem to function properly. It is basically because their outward man has never been dealt with. For this reason revival, zeal, pleading and activity are only a waste of time. As we shall see, there is just one basic dealing that can enable man to be useful before God: brokenness.

THE INWARD MAN AND THE OUTWARD MAN

Notice how the Bible divides man into two parts: "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man" (Rom. 7:22, NKJV). Our inward man delights in the law of God. "To be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16). And Paul also tells us, "Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by

day" (2 Cor. 4:16).

When God comes to indwell us by His Spirit, life and power, He comes into our spirit, which we are calling "the inward man." Outside of this inward man is the soul—the seat of our thoughts, emotions and will. The outermost man is our physical body.

Thus we will speak of the inward man as the spirit, the outer man as the soul and the outermost man as the body. We must never forget that our inward man is the human spirit where God dwells, where His Spirit mingles with our spirit.

Just as we are dressed in clothes, so our inward man "wears" our outward man: the spirit "wears" the soul. And similarly, the spirit and soul "wear" the body. It is quite evident that men are generally more conscious of the outer and outermost man, and they hardly recognize or understand their spirits at all.

We must know that he who can work for God is the one whose inward man can be released, just as the fragrance was released when Mary anointed Jesus' feet with oil of spikenard (see John 12:3). The basic difficulty of a servant of God lies in the failure of the inward man to break through the outward man.

Therefore we must recognize before God that the first difficulty to our work is not in others but in ourselves. Our spirit seems to be wrapped in a covering so that it cannot easily break forth. If we have never learned how to release our inward man by breaking through the outward man, we are not able to serve.

Nothing can so hinder us as this outward man. Whether our works are fruitful depends on whether our outward man has been broken by the Lord so that the inward man can pass through that brokenness and come forth.

This is the basic problem. The Lord wants to break our outward

man in order that the inward man may have a way out. When the inward man is released, both unbelievers and Christians will be blessed.

AS A GRAIN OF WHEAT

The Lord Jesus tells us in John 12:24, “‘Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.’” Life is in the grain of wheat, but there is a hard shell on the outside. As long as that shell is not split open, the wheat cannot sprout and grow.

“‘Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies...’” What is this death? It is the cracking open of the shell through the working together of temperature and humidity in the soil. Once the shell is split open, the wheat begins to grow. So the question here is not whether there is life within, but whether the outside shell is cracked open.

The Scripture continues by saying, “‘He who loves his life [Greek, soul] will lose it, and he who hates his life [Greek, soul] in this world will keep it for eternal life’” (v. 25). The Lord shows us here that the outer shell is our own life (our soul life), while the life within is the eternal life that He has given to us.

To allow the inner life to come forth, it is imperative that the outward life be replaced. Should the outward remain unbroken, the inward would never be able to come forth.

It is necessary (in this writing) that we direct these words to that group of people who have the Lord’s life. Among those who possess the life of the Lord can be found two distinct groups: one includes those in whom life is confined, restricted, imprisoned and unable to come forth; the other includes those in whom the Lord has forged a way, and life is thus released from them.

The question thus is not how to obtain life but rather how to allow this life to come forth. When we say we need the Lord to break us, this is not merely a way of speaking, nor is it only a doctrine. It is vital that we be broken by the Lord.

It is not that the life of the Lord cannot cover the earth but rather that His life is imprisoned by us. It is not that the Lord cannot bless the church but that the Lord's life is so confined within us that there is no flowing forth. If the outward man remains unbroken, we can never be a blessing to His church, and we cannot expect the Word of God to be blessed by Him through us!

WHY THE BOX MUST BE BROKEN

The Bible tells of the pure spikenard. God purposely used this term "pure" in His Word to show that it is truly spiritual. But if the alabaster box is not broken, the pure spikenard will not flow forth.

Strange to say, many 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. This becomes the problem in the church.

One will treasure his cleverness, thinking he is quite important; another will treasure his own emotions, esteeming himself as an important person; others highly regard themselves, feeling they are better than others, their eloquence surpasses that of others, their quickness of action and exactness of judgment are superior, and so forth. However, we are not antique collectors; we are not vase admirers; we are those who desire to smell only the fragrance of the ointment.

Without the breaking of the outward, the inward will not come forth. Thus individually we have no flowing out, and the church does not have a living way. Why then should we hold ourselves as so precious, if our outward man contains, instead

of releases, the fragrance?

The Holy Spirit has not ceased working. One event after another, one thing after another, comes to us. Each disciplinary working of the Holy Spirit has but one purpose: to break our outward man so that our inward man may come through.

Yet here is our difficulty: We fret over trifles, we murmur at small losses. The Lord is preparing a way to use us, yet scarcely has His hand touched us when we feel unhappy, even to the extent of quarrelling with God and becoming negative in our attitude.

Since being saved, we have been touched many times in various ways by the Lord, all with the purpose of breaking our outward man. Whether we are conscious of it or not, the aim of the Lord is to break this outward man.

So the Treasure is in the earthen vessel, but if the earthen vessel is not broken, who can see the Treasure within? What is the final objective of the Lord's working in our lives?

It is to break this earthen vessel, to break our alabaster box, to crack open our shell. The Lord longs to find a way to bless the world through those who belong to Him.

Brokenness is the way of blessing, the way of fragrance, the way of fruitfulness, but it is also a path sprinkled with blood. Yes, there is blood from many wounds.

When we offer ourselves to the Lord to be at His service, we cannot afford to be lenient, to spare ourselves. We must allow the Lord utterly to crack our outward man so that He may find a way for His outworking.

Each of us must find out for himself what is the mind of the Lord in his life. It is a most lamentable fact that many do not know what is the mind or intention of the Lord for their

lives. How much they need for Him to open their eyes, to see that everything that comes into their lives can be meaningful.

The Lord has not wasted even one thing. To understand the Lord's purpose is to see very clearly that He is aiming at a single objective: the breaking of the outward man.

However, too many, even before the Lord raises a hand, are already upset. Oh, we must realize that all the experiences, troubles and trials that the Lord sends us are for our highest good! We cannot expect the Lord to give better things, for these are His best.

Should one approach the Lord and pray, saying, "O Lord, please let me choose the best," I believe He would tell him, "What I have given you is the best; your daily trials are for your greatest profit."

So the motive behind all the orderings of God is to break our outward man. Once this occurs and the spirit can come forth, we begin to be able to exercise our spirit.

THE TIMING OF OUR BROKENNESS

The Lord employs two different ways to break our outward man; one is gradual, the other sudden. To some, the Lord gives the sudden breaking followed by a gradual one. With others, the Lord arranges that they have constant daily trials, until one day He brings about large-scale breaking.

If it is not the sudden first and then the gradual, it is the gradual followed by the sudden. It would seem the Lord usually spends several years upon us before He can accomplish this work of breaking.

The timing is in His hands. We cannot shorten the time, though we certainly can prolong it. In some lives the Lord is able to accomplish this work after a few years of dealing; in others it is evident that after 10 or 20 years the work is still unfinished.

This is most serious! Nothing is more grievous than wasting God's time. How often the church is hindered! We can preach by using our mind; we can stir others by using our emotions, yet if we do not know how to use our spirit, the Spirit of God cannot touch people through us. The loss is great, should we needlessly prolong the time.

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 Your way, and also for my own life, I offer myself without condition, without reservation, into Your hands. Lord, I delight to offer myself to You and am willing to let You have Your full way through me."

And then let us prepare for the breaking of the box and the releasing of the fragrance within.

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