

# *This Ole 'House*

My hand trembled as I carefully put the tiny pin back in the loop of the watchband and gently slipped it into place. You see, this watch is incredibly special to me and when it had broken, there was just no question as to whether I would fix it. Someone said, "Are you sure you want to try?" and I answered, "Are you kidding!? Of course!"

Now consider this - you and I are broken too. We are made far more intricate than the watchband of course, but we don't work, we don't function as originally designed. We are a sad comedy of missing the mark, one malfunction after another. But, we're in good company – our dear brother and apostle, Paul, wrote,

*"...what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do... I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. ...For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:14-24)*

In this passage of scripture, he explains clearly that the problem with us is sin or to be more specific, our sin-nature.

Some of you know that before you establish a saving relationship with God through belief in Christ, you are bound, that is captive, to this sin-nature. However, once you recognize the power of what our Lord did for us on the cross and receive His gift of salvation,

you are free not to sin anymore – you have a choice and the power.

Nevertheless, if you're like the rest of us who love the Lord, you find yourself making the wrong choices at times – malfunctioning. "...we all stumble in many things" (Jam 3:2) However, the good news is that our Manufacturer is a highly skilled repairman. He is marvelously insightful –

*"...there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." (Heb 4:13)* and His intent in fixing us is generally not just a temporary remedy but our eternal welfare.

And this is what's disturbing about our God, isn't it? He rarely does anything the way we 'know' it should be done especially when it comes to repairs – critical repairs. Behind the lenses of sin, we see things differently. We often fail to recognize His handiwork and when someone points it out, we often don't want to accept it. We don't 'get it' and sometimes we don't want to 'get it'.

Here's the dynamic – this is what's going on. Sin first deceives us then it distorts our perception of reality. It deceives us into accepting its twisted version of what God is or isn't doing and then calcifies, if you would, our heart and soul so that we resist the truth of eternity (i.e. eternal consequences, heaven and hell) and our God.

*"...but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb 3:13)*

Consequently, we become encased in a temporal view – and it's really pretty nuts. For example, to use an admittedly weak illustration, if your child was very ill with say a cancer and the doctor told you that there were just two options – one, was to give your child a pain pill and send him home. As a result, he'd

feel better for a short while but would succumb to the disease in a few days. Or two, your little one could undergo a move to a nearby facility and receive a fantastic new surgery that though a bit stressful, a bit painful, would heal him for a long life. What's your choice?

It's obvious, isn't it? No sane parents who loved their child would choose the short term option. Yet, when it comes to our understanding of God's remedies, we usually fail to appreciate the permanence of His eternal fix. We want the pain pill, the earthly, temporal solution because our 'lens' causes us to see it as 'reality' when in fact it is only a vapor.

*"Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor." (Psa 39:5)*  
*"...what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (James 4:14).*

Yes, we're broken, and God usually puts us 'in a fix' to fix us. It's because we're broken that we need to be broken! What? Yes, breaking through the hardness of our hearts is God's way of bringing forth His light and of giving us a new walk.

To illustrate this we need to take a look at the Old Testament book of Judges. There, we find a man named Gideon. Now this fellow, became an awesome courageous leader of the nation but he started out as a chicken. When he was first called by the Angel of the Lord to lead an attack against the Midianite hoards, he was hiding. After this, God had to break through his fear with several answers to his prayers confirming His will. But the real 'shattering' came when He reduced the size of Gideon's army from 30,000 to a mere 300 so that they were outnumbered by their enemy 750 to 1. In God's eyes, Gideon still had them outnumbered but He wasn't doing it Gideon's way. Sound familiar?

But there was more than one result -- of course, God used this little group to defeat the mere hosts of Midian. But He also did something eternal in Gideon. By the time of his attack, this chicken became a real hero of faith (see Heb 11:32) -- utterly dependent on the Lord and trusting Him rather than the doubts of the devil.

This is amplified in type by his plan of attack. You see, each of his men brought with them a clay pitcher, a trumpet, and took up positions surrounding the Midianite camp. Upon Gideon's signal, they broke their pitchers revealing flaming torches inside. Then they blew their trumpets and shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" At this, the enemy host freaked out and began attacking themselves and soon, it was basically a 'mopping up' operation. What a victory!

But our point is that when the pitchers were broken, the flaming lights were revealed, and so it is with God's children. (Read also Jeremiah 18)

Now, this 'breaking-to-fix' doesn't always result in a battle charge into the enemy's camp. Sometimes, the breaking itself has to remain as a reminder of the fix. Consider the patriarch Jacob:

Here was a man who was always looking for an 'angle', an 'edge', scheming to get his way. From the family birth-right to the patriarchal blessing to the acquiring of his flocks and fortune – we see him endeavoring to make his way through life on his own terms. When he first meets the Lord at Bethel, he even declares,  
*"If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I'm going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God." Gen 28:20,21 emphasis added.*

And throughout his early life, though he acknowledged the Lord and his belief in Him, when you study his story you can't help but sense his tremendous self-will and self-reliance.

As he returns to Canaan, (trying to follow the Lord) after more than 20 years of absence, he learns that his twin brother Esau is coming to meet him with a band of 400 men. Now, the reason Jacob fled from the Promised Land in the first place was because he tricked his father Isaac into giving him the blessing rather than to Esau. Consequently, his brother had been furious and sought to kill Jacob.

Obviously, he did not now anticipate a warm welcome from the approaching host. So first, he splits his family and flocks into two groups hoping one will escape if the other is destroyed. Then prays to the Lord, but it's almost like he's just 'covering all the bases' for once again, his clever little mind starts scheming. He sends drove after drove of presents to his brother hoping to buy his favor.

Finally, he retreats to a campsite alone, looking for a sorely needed rest -- if he's to out-smart his brother again, he's 'got to have some quiet time' and if all else fails, he can run like he did before long ago.

But this is where God steps in – a “Man” appears in Jacob's camp (the Son of Man – Jesus) and suddenly they are wrestling. Imagine that, a man actually trying to overcome physically his Creator – talk about self-reliant!

After tussling literally all night, the Lord puts the 'fix' on Jacob. With the touch of His hand, He puts his hip out of joint. Nevertheless, Jacob fights – fights with His God! (This should sound painfully familiar to some of us!)

As the morning begins to dawn, his carnal strength is broken and he finally cries out for the Angel to bless him. Now, this was not a victorious cry, but as Hosea 12:4 describes, it was a pitiful cry of desperation and weeping.

At last, this is where God wants him – he has come to the end of himself. He's held on to the Lord but let go of his schemes, his insufficient self-sufficiency. He is no longer fighting with the Lord but rather clinging to Him. He won't let go until he gets God's help.

The Lord then proclaims that this attitude indeed has power with God and men. That is, his utter dependence on the Lord. Consequently, the Lord does bless him and Jacob is changed. Not only does God deliver him from his brother, but from himself as well – his far greater enemy.

And self-will, being the besetting sin that it is, God also leaves Jacob broken physically in order to remind him of the spiritual fix. You see, he limped the rest of his earthly life.

Now, you might respond, “How could a broken body fix anything?” Consider this – it was the brokenness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, that made it possible for us to be made whole.

“...the Lord Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” (1Cor 11:23,24)

And so, as we trust in Jesus, that is fall on Him – we ourselves will likewise be broken –

“The stone (Jesus) which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, ... And whoever falls on this stone will be broken;” (Mat 21:42-44)

For it is in that state that we get fixed for the long-term – the “long tomorrow” – the eternal repair.

I used to like watching this TV show called “This Old House”. In it, the crew would, over a series of episodes, take an old house – one with potential – and completely re-make it. I mean, they would rip out any and everything that was unnecessary for their desired end result. Then they would pains-takingly rebuild it into an amazing dwelling. I real home.

And I've often thought of myself as that ole' house in a way. But, unlike Bob Villa and the boys, who did such a marvelous job only to have another 'burn-able' building, our Father in heaven is making us for an eternal home (and an eternal home for us!) – more spectacular than mere words can describe!

The final fix on this ole' house is when we are united with our new home in heaven. Until then, don't despair during His repairs. The big, BIG picture is our eternal welfare – and because our God is good and kind and infinitely capable, we can trust Him for the results!

***“When the true story of all things shall be known, then will it appear how precious in God's sight, how powerful in his hands, were many broken things. Broken earthly hopes will be found to have been necessary to the bringing of the better hope which endures forever. Broken bodily constitutions will be found to have been needful in some cases to the attainment of that land where the body shall be weary and sore no more; broken earthly fortunes, to the winning of the wealth beyond the reach of rust and moth and thief; broken earthly honor, to the being crowned with the diadem which fades not away.” P.B. Power***