

# Broken Things

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

September 27, 2008

(Today we are celebrating the "Lord's Supper," as we do four times a year. The partaking of the emblems of salvation, the juice which symbolizes His blood and the bread which symbolizes His body, is preceded by the ordinance of foot washing, also called the ordinance of humility, following the example of Jesus, Who washed the disciples' feet that night.)

I'm enjoying reading back issues of the magazine "Signs of the Times." Right now I'm in the year 1890. Besides articles, there are news items, which are really interesting and almost every week a poem. So it was that I came across this beautiful verse written by George Bancroft Griffith called, "Broken Things."

## Broken Things

"The grain must be crushed ere man is fed,  
The plants must be bruised to restore his health;  
From a wasted barrel and empty cruise  
The prophet restored the widow's wealth  
'Twas by broken pitchers that Gideon won,  
On the vessel's broken pieces, Paul  
And his friends were saved; and even Christ  
By His broken life has ransomed all!  
By the broken bodies of saints, the truth  
Was made to triumph, and glorious, too,  
Was the broken box--earth's broken hopes  
May bring Heaven's joy and our crown in view;  
And precious in God's sight appear  
The broken things that grieved us here."

This life is a continual encounter with broken things. At our house, we've been struggling with a shower valve that wants to emit only hot water. I'm sure you can imagine the challenges that

brings! Actually, though, another broken thing at times works to off-set it. Our water heater is also not functioning properly. The pilot light doesn't want to stay lit. So I find myself activating the igniter quite often. The trick, of course, is to take your shower when flame in the heater has gone out and now the water is no longer scalding hot.

I had tried to change the cartridge in the shower valve, but without success. It was stuck so fast that I couldn't remove it, and I was afraid that I'd do more damage than good if I tried to force it. Fortunately, a good friend of mine volunteered to give me a hand. He has a special tool made specifically for stubborn valve cartridges, and we were able to extract the defective one and install a new one. There are many other broken things around our house, but I won't burden your ears by listing them. It may be that you have a few of them at your place too.

Although usually a source of frustration and anxiety, there is a sense in which certain broken things are to be admired and even desired. It might seem strange that we would seek for something broken, but in the Christian life, that is precisely true. The poem we read lists a few. When Gideon's pitcher were broken the victory was won. When their ship was wrecked, the lives of Paul and his comrades were saved by the broken pieces they used as flotation devices. It was when the alabaster box was broken by Mary that perfume filled the room as she bathed the feet of her Lord in gratitude.

The most important thing is to have what the Bible calls a "broken spirit," which is another way of saying we should be humble. The Bible says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart--these, O God, You will not despise." Psalm 51:17. "The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit." Psalm 34:18. "He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds." Psalm 147:3. He says, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit." Isaiah 57:15.

Being a Christian means you acknowledge that God is One Who gives life; your very breath He holds in His hand. It means that you confess that He deserves to be worshiped and obeyed, and yet you realize how woefully short of the mark you've come. Being a Christian means you see in the death of Christ, His broken body, God's Gift of salvation, without which there would be no hope. You realize how undeserving you are of this great gift. This is what it means to have a "broken spirit" and a "contrite heart." This is the attitude manifested by the publican who worshiped and said, "God be merciful to me, a (the) sinner." There's no room for pride here! The cross is God's antidote for the poison of pride. What do we have that was not given to us? asks the Apostle Paul.

Allow me to share a paragraph or two written by one of the founding pioneers of our church, Ellen G. White. This also was from an issue of the "Signs of the Times," February 24, 1890. Allow this to speak to your heart.

"One of the chief characteristics of true love is humility. The apostle says: "Charity (agape love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." The man who has true zeal for God will be distrustful of self, and little in his own eyes. Love teaches us to be meek as well as lowly. Sanctified love will enable us to exhibit the grace of patience; it will help us to restrain impetuosity and fretfulness, so that we shall repine at nothing. Love to God and our neighbor will melt away all hatred, bitterness, wrath, malice, prejudice, envy, and evil surmising.

"A Christian once said that when he reached heaven he expected to meet with three causes of wonder. He would wonder to find some that he did not expect to see there. He would wonder not to see some that he expected to meet, and, lastly, he would wonder most to find so unworthy a sinner as himself in the Paradise of

God. Many who have stood in high places as Christians upon earth, will not be found with the happy throng that shall surround the throne. Those who have had knowledge and talent, and yet have delighted in controversy and unholy strife, will not have a place with the redeemed. Their hearts were not in harmony with the meekness and self-denial of Christ. They desired to do some great work, that they might be admired and flattered by men, but their names were not written in the Lamb's book of life. 'I know you not,' are the sad words that Christ addresses to such. But those whose lives were made beautiful by little acts of kindness, by tender words of affection and sympathy, whose hearts recoiled from strife and contention, who never did any great work in order to be lauded of men, these are found recorded in the Lamb's book of life. Though the world counted them as insignificant, they are approved of God before the assembled universe. They are astonished to hear the word, from the lips of the divine Master, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' May God bless us to that end!