

Editorial: BROKEN THINGS

In English vocabulary the word 'broken' is defined as 'physically and forcibly separated into pieces, cracked or split; subdued or brought low in condition or status; having been violated or disregarded; out of working order; weakened or crushed'. Every person will have the experience of something being broken. In childhood days we may have shed tears over a broken toy or been dismayed by a broken record. Sustaining a broken bone at any stage of life can result in great discomfort, annoyance and inconvenience. But there are other things which, when broken, are vastly more significant in terms of their impact. It is to five of these things I wish to turn the spotlight of Scripture in this editorial.

1. Promises can be broken. After a heavy snowfall one winter I remember hearing the father of a childhood friend promising him he would build him a sleigh the following day. As far as I know, that sleigh never was built. Politicians often face criticism for failing to honour pledges made in their election manifestos. Human beings often make – then break – promises. Sometimes we may forget what we promised to do; at other times changed circumstances or dwindling resources may hamper us. But our Heavenly Father knows no such failings or limitations. “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent (*change*): hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Num 23:19) Reviewing the many victories God had wrought on their behalf, Joshua reminded Israel that “... Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you ...” (Josh 23:14). The Bible is replete with “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4) and, for those who know Christ as their Saviour, and who will stand upon and plead them, He will be the guarantor that God will fulfil them (2 Cor 1:20). God has promised, “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.” (Ps 89:34) and assures us “... I will hasten (*watch over*) my word to perform it.” (Jer 1:12) The big question for us is – do we know His promises well enough to claim them, so we may avail of their glorious fulfilment?

2. Hearts can be broken. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wisely observed: “by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken” (Pr 15:13). I know a dear lady who is heartbroken at present following the unexpected death of her spouse. Heartbreak is a practically universal part of human existence at some point in every life. Thankfully there is Someone who knows and cares about us when we are at our lowest ebb. One of the reasons the Lord Jesus came to earth and took on our frail humanity was that He could be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15) and to “bind up the brokenhearted” (Is 61:1). The writer of the lovely hymn, “Does Jesus Care?”, had obviously traversed some dark valleys, yet what was his conclusion as regards the hymn’s key question: “Oh yes He cares, I know He cares / His heart is touched with my grief / When the days are weary / The long nights dreary / I know my Jesus cares.” Is your heart broken today? The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart (Ps 34:18). Whatever burdens you carry today, bring them to Jesus, who “healeth the broken in heart” (Ps 147:3).

3. Rules can be broken. Following widespread rioting in several London boroughs and in other English cities in early August 2011, Prime Minister David Cameron said tackling Britain's "broken society" was back at the top of his agenda. Issues like social deprivation, educational under-achievement, and lack of leisure facilities or employment prospects were in all probability considered. The general practice is to try to reform people from the *outside in*. But this ignores the reality that the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart (Jer 17:9), and it is only as the Lord Jesus transforms us from the *inside out*, and deals with our sin problem, can true, deep and lasting change occur. Yet I feel another key factor is that our nation now largely ignores God's rule book, the Holy Bible. In sport there are rules to ensure fair play. The rules of the road are there for everyone's safety and wellbeing. The laws of the land exist to protect us, defining the boundaries of what is – and isn't – acceptable behaviour. Don't make the common mistaken in thinking that the boundaries of God's word are there to take the fun out of life, when, in reality, just like the guard rails on those twisting, high alpine roads, they are there to protect us from danger and from ourselves. "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Prov 6:23) God's rules and expectations aren't meant to limit or frustrate us, but instead to benefit and to bless us through their observance and keeping.

4. Bodies can be broken. In the vigour of youth and health, with the wind in our sails, we can sometimes feel almost unstoppable. If the Lord has blessed you with a healthy body, look after it well. The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20). You wouldn't abuse or disrespect a church building, so why treat your body less favourably. Sadly, though, through illness, disability, the aging process or as a result of crime, we are reminded of how fragile we are (Ps 39:4). How wonderful is the Christian's prospect – a place where the lame shall run, the mute shall speak, the deaf shall hear, the blind shall see, and where the words 'infirmary' and 'disability' will have no place in the vocabulary. What was sown in corruption and weakness will be raised in glory and power at the resurrection (1 Cor 15:42-43). Dear reader, have you trusted Christ, that you, too, might share this joyous prospect?

5. Family circles can be broken. What an immense blessing our families are. Yet there are things that break up families. One is *bickering*. How sad it is when family members fall out, won't speak, and virtually detest each other. It is especially astonishing, though, when this happens within Christian circles. How can such behaviour be squared with the following words of the Apostle John: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20) If these words apply to you, isn't it time to stop and wise up? Life is too short: harbouring grudges, resentment and bitterness can harm *your* health; and God has clearly told us to patch up our differences, as a right relationship with our fellow man is vital to our also enjoying a right relationship with God (Matt 5:23-24). But another thing to break up families is *bereavement*. A well-known hymn asks the question: "Will the circle be unbroken bye and bye, in that better home awaiting in the sky?" Here below, when a believer bids an earthly farewell to a fellow saint, they rejoice in knowing that the parting is only for a while. Will *you* meet your Christian family members in heaven? Do not put off this vital matter until it is too late. "... *Now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." (2 Cor 6:2)