



water from rock

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – September 28, 2024

The Lord be with you.

Your broken places are where my light shines through.

It was like... It was like the spirit of God of whispered that to me once as I was feeling very broken, it was a time of darkness for me. The feeling that things were out of control, and I sense the calm voice of God's Spirit saying, Your broken places are where my light shines through. And I thought about that for a bit, and I remember the Bible story I learned in children Sunday school about Gideon.

It's in the Old Testament Book of Judges, Chapter 7, where get in with an army. Well, if you can call it that an army of 300 untrained men, defeated an invasion force of 135000 soldiers. And do you remember what weapons Gideon and his men had... Well, each man, it has had a trumpet and a clay jar with a light burning inside. And when Gideon gave the signal each man blew his trumpet, broke the clay jar. And as he broke the clay jar, the light shown through... It's all there in Judges chapter 7. A 135000 man army was panicked. They turned their swords in each other, fleeing over the Jordan River. That's the story that came to mind as I sense God saying to me, Tim, you're a clay pot and your broken places are where my light shines through. And I do think that that is a story that Paul is remembering in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 6 and seven, were in Paul's brokenness, he writes. For it is God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that its extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. So as Paul is broken, the light of God, the light of the good news of Jesus Christ shines through a clay jar, broken clay jar named Paul. The whole of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, it's filled with Paul's brokenness. As Paul was very vulnerable here, in a way, unlike any other of his letters, it is in Second Corinthians, that Paul tells us about his thorn and a flesh that so afflicted him, dogged him. In second Corinthians, he opens up on the first page, chapter 1:8, as Paul is telling us about a time of ministering, when he says in verse 8, quote, he says, We were so utterly unbearable crushed that we despair it of life itself, indeed we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that...

So that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. It is in a time of Paul's brokenness, a feeling utterly and unbearably crushed that Paul learns new lessons about what it means to rely on God, and that Paul learns that he is a clay jar like Gideon, clear when he is broken the light of Jesus shines through those broken places.

And when I began ministry years ago, I must have thought that it was about me, that was about me being good at what I was doing, about performance, about being a shiny vessel, and then in my brokenness God reminded me that it's not about me, it's never been about me. But it's about Jesus, and the good news about him. Now, I don't like hard times, I don't like difficulty and pain, but the God shows me that it is at our broken places where his life shines through. Just listen to Paul's next verse. Paul says, we are afflicted in every way, but we're not crushed. Perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed. Always carrying in the body, the death of Jesus, so that so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. In other words, others can see the light of Jesus shining through the brokenness.

Follow this over to Second Corinthians 12 or time where Paul can say, so I will boast all the more gladly at my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me, therefore I am content with



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weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. And so I'm learning, I am learning that my brokenness is a far better way for people to see the light of Jesus than my pretended wholeness, and when you and I are honest about our brokenness, then others get to see how the grace of God works in people's lives.

The American playwright, Thornton Wilder asks, "Without your wounds, what would your power be? The very angels themselves cannot persuade the wretched and blundering children of this earth, as can one human being broken on the wills of living in love, service, he says, in love's service only wounded soldiers, concern." And I would add to that, in love's service only the broken can serve, so that the light of God shines through.

Loving Father give your people grace in this time of pandemic, of fear, of uncertainty, of brokenness, give us grace to live faithfully. And may the light of Jesus shine brightly. Through us to the world. Amen.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening until next time.