

THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

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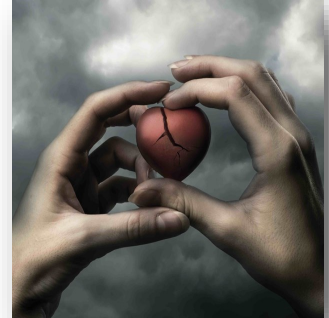
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When Our Hearts Have Become Broken

By Bill Fairchild, Jr.

“But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?”

(Romans 9:20, 21, NKJV)



I suppose that we have all at some time or another been guilty of losing our grip on some object of intrinsic or personal value ... watching it drop in slow motion ... and hitting the counter, the table, or the floor, and breaking into pieces! Just not a good experience to go through, is it?

Life is not fair! Life is not a picnic! Life is as Job pens so succinctly, *“Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble.”* (Job 14:1, ESV) And when it comes, we are often caught off guard ... we may even look around and in the mirror and ask ourselves “how did I get here?”

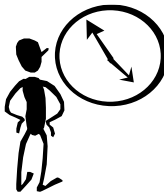
It might be the loss of a job or the loss of a spouse ... the loss of health or a loved one’s health ... a divorce ... a son or daughter choosing to leave the Lord! Any of these and so many more can and usually do ... bring us down to our knees or even prostrate on the floor or curled up in some corner of a room or closet! Yes, life is challenging!

God has given to each of us the ability to make choices but He holds us accountable for the choices that we make. Oh, we can point a finger in someone else’s direction and place the blame there, but in our heart of hearts we know we made the choice and choices bring consequences.

There is a very real truth that so many have a problem



Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

facing, admitting, and even repenting of. It is the problem of sin ... our sin! And we all must deal with the problem of sin in our life (Romans 3:23).

And the fact is, unresolved sin ... unrepented of sin ... when left to exist unattended will actually break our hearts, lives, and souls down ... that is unless we become so calloused to sin that we just don't give it any thought! My friends ... may we never find ourselves going down that road because not only is it a dead end ... it means eternity separated from Him who made you!

Our Heavenly Father gives each of us the opportunity, unlike the passive clay in the hands of a potter, to use the free will that He has blessed each of us with to either become a vessel of honor ... one that chooses to become the vessel of honor and usefulness in His kingdom ... or to be a vessel that honors self and serves the world!

The questions being asked in our text are asked by the Apostle Paul of those who have decided to question the decisions and actions of the Lord! Unlike the clay in the potter's hands that can be molded and shaped and has not life in it ... we do! We have emotions, we have feelings ... we have will power ... and we can choose to resist Him!

Having a broken heart is not a figment of our imagination! It is not some sort of a pity party for one! Our gracious and loving Father both acknowledges and He understands that sometimes things happen in the evil world we live in that can initiate feelings that can best be described as something that is crumbling down within us and we don't know how to stop the crumbling!

There is hope ... there is always hope ... there is One who understands and who promises to be there with us and for us! And when our hearts have been broken by life's disappointments, He does not try to scold us or tell us to 'grow up' and just take it!

No, here is what He says to the broken-hearted among us, "*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.*" (Psalm 34:18, ESV) Nothing escapes His all-seeing eyes and all-knowing awareness of each and every one of us! And the wonderful truth of this assurance is that He never stops caring about us!

But, listen to another reassuring statement, "*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.*" (Psalm 147:3) I want to close with this thought: try and imagine if you can our Heavenly Father seeing our broken pieces on the floor of life ... bending down and looking closely at every broken place and then with a gentle touch that only He could offer, providing the soothing salve to our living clay everywhere it is needed!

My friends ... my brothers and sisters in Christ ... we are all broken in different ways and yet the same. Let each of us turn to the comfort and grace of our loving Father and allow Him to shape and mold us into the vessel of honor He so wants for each of us to be!

“What About?” JUSTICE

By Andy Diestelkamp

Have you ever noticed that when informing, instructing, or correcting someone (especially about a matter that is not particularly pleasant) that there is often a defensive response that points to others with a “what about” question? When one of my parents would tell me to do a chore, I know there were times when I thought it manifestly unfair that I was chosen for the task. “What about Laura or Suzy or Lance?” That was my attempt to suggest the inequity of *me* being burdened and them unburdened. To me, fairness would require that my siblings also be burdened.

These “what about” responses are often used in an attempt to avoid hard work or personal responsibility. When I instructed my children to help me pick beans in our garden, it was not surprising to hear the “What about?” line employed. (We reap what we sow.)

Having attained the status of a grandparent, I have three generations worth of experience in observing and practicing the human tendency to deflect calls for action or points of emphasis by using distracting techniques and technicalities. These methods are employed by adults as well as children.

This has been happening from the beginning of sin. We all know the response of Adam when God confronted him about his eating of the forbidden fruit. “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate,” (Gen. 3:12) is a classic attempt to shift blame. What about Eve? What about the fact that *God* gave her to Adam? Surely we can see that such maneuvers are lame attempts to avoid focusing on the point being made. Granted, there were others to be blamed (Eve and Satan), but that reality did not diminish Adam’s sin.

Consider the tragic account of King David’s adultery with Bathsheba and the subsequent cover-up that resulted in an innocent, fiercely loyal, mighty man of David being killed in battle according to plans delivered by his own hand (2 Sam. 11). While this is a scandalous low in the reign of David which precipitated all kinds of trouble for the remainder of his life, we are nevertheless impressed with the sincerity of his repentance after being confronted by the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 12) and as powerfully expressed in Psalm 51. Yet, imagine if David’s response to Nathan’s “You are the man!” (vs. 7) was “What about Bathsheba’s bathing on a rooftop?” While readers of the account may differ on whether or not Bathsheba was complicit in the affair, it is impressive that David did *not* attempt to deflect from the powerful point made by Nathan’s parable of the lamb. This is an example of why David was called a man after God’s own heart (cf. 1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). May we all respond so humbly when confronted with our own sins, whatever they may be and regardless of the sins of others.

Recall the post-resurrection conversation which Jesus had with Peter when He asked him if he loved Him. It seems that Peter got a little impatient with being asked at all, let alone three times (Jn. 21:15-17). It was after this that Jesus proceeded to inform Peter of the manner in which he would die and then said, “Follow me” (v. 18,19). You *do* recall Peter’s reactive reply. Referring to another who was following them (“the disciple whom Jesus loved”), Peter said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?” Jesus replied, “What is that to you?” In other words, Peter’s deflecting question was immaterial to the point being made, and so Jesus reiterated “You follow Me” (vv. 20-22).

There is much to be learned from these examples and many applications that could be made. Allow me to make just a few, and I challenge you to not respond to them with “What about _____.” First, a point of clarification—I am *not* saying that others should not be held accountable for their part in sinful problems. My point is simply that God is looking for humble and contrite hearts who don’t distract and deflect from their obligations or sins. Yes, this certainly applies in all directions and to all sides of an issue. However, we can’t control the response of others. We can only control our own replies.

So, if your son is guilty of behaving like Shechem, don’t defensively say, “What about Dinah?” And if your sister is guilty of behaving like Dinah, don’t justify your vengeance with “What about Shechem treating our sister like a harlot?” (Genesis 34). Defensive deflecting and distracting from making applications to ourselves or our own friends and family in a matter is not helpful to repentance and rectifying the issue at hand.

So, how would *you* feel if your daughter/sister was the victim of a sexual predator and your cry for justice was met by others with “What about men? They are victims too.”? While that observation is certainly true, as a reply to your legitimate, specific plea, it is a statement that does not logically follow (*non sequitur*) and thus has the effect of deflecting or distracting and thus minimizing your present primary concern. It would undoubtedly anger you.

Similarly, when people shout that “black lives matter” in the context of a cry against perceived racial injustice, the retort of “What about me? All lives matter,” sounds like a deflecting dismissal of the specific plea being made. Since most of us who are deficient in melatonin are in total agreement with the truth of the phrase, and, in context, the phrase is *not* being used to mean that *only* black lives matter, then the better response is not to deflect but affirm. Black lives *do* matter because black lives are made in the image of God (cf. Gen. 9:6; Acts 17:26).

Now, I am not naive to the political agendas that are behind many of the organizers of protesters (on the left and right) calling for what they believe to be justice on a variety of issues. We are not ignorant of Satan’s divisive devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Just as we have seen violent opportunists attach themselves to otherwise peaceful protests, we

know that political opportunists (on the left and right) will likewise invent and/or attach themselves to phrases like “black lives matter” or “make America great again.”

So, instead of taking sides among worldly parties and being so easily “tossed to and fro and carried about” by the politicians and media, we must affirm the truth in love (Eph. 4:14,15). Therefore, let us not be dismissive of true statements with “what about” rhetoric. Let us rise above the fleshly fray in solidarity with Jesus Christ alone because, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

“He Restrained Them Not”

By John Iverson

Do you think juvenile delinquency is an evil that is peculiar to our day? If so, then you would do well to read your Bible, particularly such passages as are found in the book of First Samuel.

Eli was judge in Israel and a priest of the living God. When he grew old, instead of his children being a source of joy to that religious leader of olden days, they caused him much heartache and grief. After Eli had heard of the almost unimaginable sins which his sons committed--as recorded in First Samuel 2:22--he said unto them, “Why do ye such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all this people...it is no good report that I hear. Ye make the Lord's people to transgress” (1 Samuel 2:23, 24).

What a tragedy! The sons of this “man of God” were a stumbling block to the Lord's people! However, the sons (though vile and wicked indeed) were not altogether to blame, for we are told in First Samuel 3:13, “For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” Eli did not “curb” his children. He apparently just let them have their way. Perhaps he had the idea that “boys will be boys.” Yes, but those boys grew up to be men — “vile men”!

This case alone should be enough to convince us parents that placing restrictions upon our children is needful if we expect them to grow up to be useful citizens and individuals whose manner of life will be worthy of “the gospel of Christ.”

Fathers and mothers, think on these things!

