

## **Beautiful Broken Glass**

**MY TWO SONS AND I TOOK A STROLL A FEW DAYS AGO.** In prior years, we would get out together often and go hiking, fishing, camping, or just looking around. But now that my sons are older, we don't seem to have those opportunities as often as we would like. Therefore, when my sons asked if I'd like to go with them on an outing, I leaped at the opportunity.

**YOU WOULDN'T CALL IT A HIKE, I SUPPOSE.** We simply drove across the mountain to Poplar, North Carolina, parked the car, and began walking down the railroad that parallels the Nolichucky River. It was a wonderful Saturday afternoon to be out; the leaves were close to their peak of autumn colors, and the river was a beautiful sight in itself. We took our time as we walked along, stopping often to look at leaves, throw stones into the river below, and just to "explore".

**WHILE WALKING CLOSE BESIDE THE RIVER, MY OLDEST SON** was struck by the beauty of something I'd often seen, but had never considered as anything special. He found scattered along one stretch of the sandy river bank many pieces of broken glass. There were many different colors to be found; some a beer-bottle brown, others a cola-bottle green, and still others different shades of blue, cream and white.

**WHAT MADE THESE PIECES OF BROKEN GLASS APPEALING** was that their edges were not sharp, but rounded and smooth. Their time spent tumbling down the river had taken the danger out of their brokenness, and could now be safely held in one's hand or pocket. In fact, all of us were soon into the hunt, and my son brought home two bulging pockets full of broken glass.

**MY SKEPTICISM WAS PUT TO REST** when I saw the pile of glass spread out on a paper towel to dry. I had to admit that there was a definite beauty to this very common collection. Where I had before seen only refuse on the river bank, I now saw treasure.

**PERHAPS YOU'RE ALREADY ANTICIPATING THE LESSONS** I will draw from this incident. There are some obvious ones, and I don't have to be a genius to learn from this winsome event. In fact, that's the force behind these devotionals. When you look for truth and wisdom from the Father above, it can be easily found in some of the most commonplace (and overlooked) areas of life.

**DO WE NOT OFTEN EXPERIENCE "BROKENNESS"** in our lives? Problems and disappointments come our way, and leave us wounded beside the river of time. Sometimes the wounds are so deep that we think they are incurable. We feel broken, used up, and worth little, if anything, to anyone. Like the broken pieces of glass on the sandy river bank, we feel it is only a matter of time until we are washed downstream, never again to be a part of anyone's life in a desirable or worthwhile way. Call it despair or depression; as we grow older, there is more and more temptation to feel this way about ourselves.

**WOULD IT NOT BE UPLIFTING TO KNOW** that Someone still finds us attractive, desirable? That He thinks we are more than refuse waiting to be washed away, but are beautiful in our own ways? Wouldn't this help us in our times of greatest despair?

**I'VE JUST DESCRIBED THE FEELINGS OF JESUS CHRIST** toward you. You may not now feel that you are broken. But the time will come that you will know such despair. It may be at a time of tragedy or rejection; perhaps it will come in the form of mid-life crisis when you begin to wonder whatever happened to those dreams you once had. But all of us come to those times when we wonder, "What good am I? Who needs me any more?"

JESUS' FEELING TOWARD US DURING THOSE TIMES is expressed in Matthew 12:. In quoting from the prophet Isaiah, Matthew pointed out this fact about Jesus: "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench . . ." There is in this statement a very moving depiction of Jesus' view of people that the world no longer regards as valuable.

WE'VE SEEN REJECTION ALL AROUND US, and have perhaps even experienced it ourselves. The corporate world tosses people out with callous disregard, seemingly unappreciative of the contributions those people have made. A husband walks out on his wife of many years, and appears to close the door forever on their relationship. Parents sometimes see their children leave home, and the passing of years sees a growing neglect of that once-strong filial bond. The edges of the shards of glass are sharp, and they sometimes cut deeply.

JESUS, HOWEVER, WILL TENDERLY NURTURE THE BRUISED REED, and will take care to do no more damage to it. A smoking flax is nearly extinguished, like a candle that has just lost its flame to the wind; but Jesus will not pinch out the last spark of fire. He will gently fan it until the flame burns brightly once more. The picture in Matthew 12: is of a gentle and tender Savior. He has seen brokenness and rejection before, and He knows how to handle the sharp edges.

ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL STATEMENT OF THIS FACT can be found in Isaiah 61:3. Part of the mission of the Messiah, Isaiah affirmed, was to rescue and rehabilitate those who feel useless and of no value. His mission would be "to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." What a wonderful, hope-filled passage that is!

THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO TO CHANGE OUR FRAGILE NATURE. Life is filled with swift currents that often dash us against the boulders in the stream. Brokenness is a part of the human experience. But doesn't it help to know that the Redeemer does not cast us aside because we are broken? Our value to Him does not depend on our being "all together", in one piece. To the contrary, He specializes in restoring the broken, and helping it to find peace, meaning, and self-worth once again.

THAT PILE OF BROKEN GLASS REMINDS ME that time will smooth off the rough edges, and I will yet be attractive to the One Who made me, Who continues to love me with an undying, unchanging love. In fact, He is out looking for me even as I lie on that sandy river bank waiting for time to sweep me away.

PRAISE GOD THAT HE STILL FINDS ME TO BE VALUABLE! Because He believes in me, I am slowly recovering a healthy self-esteem. Because He finds me appealing, I am drawn to Him, and I give myself to Him in gratitude. MAY WE HELP YOU FIND THIS WONDERFUL SAVIOR? Do you need this reassurance that God still finds you valuable, special? We'd love to help in any ways that we can. Please let us hear from you soon, by phone, by mail, by E-mail, or in person. We'd love to be of service! All scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New King James Version (Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1990).

"H.E.M.-Lines" is produced by the Central Church of Christ, 2722 Oakland Avenue, Johnson City, Tennessee, 37601, and is written by Tim Hall, minister. It is sent free of charge every Thursday to all who request it.