

COMPANY OF THE FORGIVEN (1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17) 09/21/14  
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, KS PASTOR LEE HENDON

I STAND BEFORE YOU AS A BROKEN VESSEL - A FEW ASSORTED CRACKS HERE & THERE - CHIPS ABOUT TO FALL OUT. DON'T LET MY CHURCHY APPEARANCE FOOL YOU. I AM TILTED A LITTLE TO THE SIDE NOT ABLE TO STAND UPRIGHT. I HAVE EVEN A GAPPING WHOLE IN MY SIDE - CAN NO LONGER BE USED AS A VESSEL - NOT WATER TIGHT - TARNISHED WITH NICKS & BRUISES OVER TIME. WOULD HATE TO SEE MYSELF IN A MIRROR. UGLY, OF NO VALUE IS HOW I AM RIGHT NOW & I HAVE EVEN BEEN WORSE IN TIMES PAST. SUCH SELF-HONESTY COMES HARD TO EXPRESS.

SOME PEOPLE HAVE DELIGHTED & EVEN BEEN EAGER TO POINT OUT MY SORRY STATE OF BROKENNESS - EVEN SOME FROM THIS PLACE. A BROKEN VESSEL - I AM - IT TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE - AS I LOOK OUT OVER THE SANCTUARY I SEE MANY OTHER BROKEN VESSELS. OH SURE WE CAN TRY TO HIDE OUR BROKEN-NESS WITH PRETTY CLOTHES & FAKE SMILES - NICE MANNERISMS - SING A LOVELY SONG OR TWO - EVEN GET SOME COUNSELING & SAY SOME PRAYERS. BUT BROKEN VESSELS NONE THE LESS. NO ONE WOULD PAY US EVEN A GLANCE AT A LOCAL GARAGE SALE OR FLEA MARKET. WE HAVE BEEN TOSSED ASIDE - THE DUMP IS OUR NEXT STOPPING PLACE - TO BE GROUND UNDER WITH ALL THE REST OF THE TRASH.

YOU WOULD THINK OUR OWNER WOULD TAKE MORE PRIDE IN HIS COLLECTION OF VESSELS! SURELY THE MASTER WOULD TAKE TIME & SPARE NO EXPENSE IN OUR REPAIR - OUR BROKEN STATE IS A REFLECTION ON THE ONE WHO COLLECTS US - RIGHT? WE ARE OF NO VALUE TO OUR COLLECTOR JUST AS WE ARE. WHAT A SORRY STATE OF VESSELS ARE WE!

ONE DAY THE MASTER CAME INTO THE ROOM - LOOKED STRAIGHT AT ME - GENTLY PICKED ME UP - LOOKED ME OVER CRACK TO CRANNY - EVEN SOME MUD ON MY SIDE. THEN HE PROUDLY SAID TO WHOM EVER MIGHT HEAR, "I AM PARTICULARLY FOND OF THIS ONE," AS I WAS PLACED ON A TOP SHELF. THEN ANOTHER & ANOTHER - ALL DAY & NIGHT LONG - FELT LIKE AN ETERNITY - WITH EACH BROKEN VESSEL, "I AM PARTICULARLY FOND OF THIS ONE." PLACED 'EM ON A TOP SHELF - FOR AS FAR AS YOU COULD SEE - THERE WERE ONLY TOP SHELVES & ROOM FOR MORE & MORE BROKEN VESSELS.

I COULD FEEL THAT I WAS IN A HOLY PLACE - MADE HOLY BY THE ONE WHO IS PARTICULARLY FOND OF EVERY BROKEN VESSEL. I DID NOT SEE EVEN ONE PERFECT VESSEL IN ETERNITY'S ROOM - PRESENT COMPANY INCLUDED. WHAT AMAZES ME IS THAT WE CAN OFTEN TIMES BECOME JUDGMENTAL & CONDEMNING OF ONE ANOTHER'S BROKENNESS WHEN WE ARE BROKEN OURSELVES - EACH ONE OF US. IN DOING SO WE PRETEND TO BE BETTER THAN ONE ANOTHER WHEN ALL ALONG WE ARE THE SAME IN ETERNITY'S ROOM WITH THE MASTER. HE IS PARTICULARLY FOND OF EACH ONE OF US JUST THE WAY WE ARE RIGHT NOW. WE LIKE TO PRETEND THAT OUR TYPE OF BROKENNESS IS BETTER THAN ANOTHER'S - BUT NOT SO TO THE MASTER. OUR PRETEND GAMES BORE ME & YOU BUT WE PLAY THEM NONE THE LESS. THE HOLY ONE DOES NOT EVEN BOTHER TO NOTICE OUR BROKEN PRETEND GAMES. PLACES US EACH

SIDE BY SIDE ON THE TOP SHELF JUST THE SAME.

ST. JOHN PUT IT LIKE THIS IN 1 JOHN 1:8, "IF WE SAY WE HAVE NO SIN, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES & THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US." YEP, ST. JOHN WAS TALKING ABOUT BROKEN VESSELS - LIKE YOU & ME & DON'T EVEN BEGIN TO PRETEND WE ARE OTHERWISE. SUCH PRETEND GAMES UNDERMINE FELLOWSHIP & CHRISTIAN LOVE.

ST. PAUL WROTE TO AN ASPIRING MINISTER, TIMOTHY, THAT OUR BROKENNESS IS A GIVEN - TIMOTHY WAS DEALING WITH HIS OWN ISSUES OF BROKENNESS. IT IS ENCOURAGING WHAT ST. PAUL WROTE OF HIS OWN BROKENNESS: HE BLASPHEMED GOD, PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS, MAN OF VIOLENCE, ETC. IN HIS REMORSE HE WAILED, "JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS. AND I AM THE FOREMOST OF SINNERS!" WHICH IS NOT A LIST A PERSON WOULD ASPIRE TO LEAD. PAUL WAS THE MOST BROKEN OF ALL BROKEN VESSELS. GOD GENTLY TOOK PAUL IN HIS HANDS TO SAY, "I AM PARTICULARLY FOND OF YOU, PAUL," TO THEN PLACE HIM ON A TOP SHELF TO LEAD INTO ETERNITY.

WE SIMPLY CANNOT OUST SIN GOD'S HOLY DESIRE TO LOVE & SAVE US BROKEN VESSELS. ST. JOHN WROTE, "IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL & JUST, AND WILL FORGIVE OUR SINS & CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS." WE MUST NOT TRY TO HIDE OUR BROKENNESS FROM GOD BUT COME CLEAN WITH GOD SO THAT GOD CAN TRULY HELP US - SAVE US - COME TO JESUS.

GOD IS SO VERY EAGER TO HELP US EVEN WHEN WE DO NOT CONFESS OUR BROKENNESS BUT GOD WILL NOT IMPOSE GOD'S SELF UPON US. WHEN I WAS A CHILD & WAS CAUGHT WITH MY HAND IN THE PROVERBIAL COOKIE JAR I WOULD PROTEST WITH, "I DIDN'T DO IT!" COME ON, NOW, I KNOW YOU HAVE BEEN THERE TOO. PROTEST & DENY AS MUCH AS WE WANT TO - WE KNOW WE ARE BROKEN & NEED THE TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND. THIS IS REALLY EXCITING STUFF! WE ARE THE COMPANY OF THE FORGIVEN!

CARRYING ANY GUILT?

HOLDING ANY GRUDGES?

FOSTERING ANY BITTERNESS?

GRUDGES, GUILT, BITTERNESS, BLAME & SHAME FESTER UP & WILL MAKE A PERSON SICK - SICK - SICK - SICK (SPIRITUALLY & PHYSICALLY.) IT IS FOR US TO LIVE & REALIZE THAT WHATEVER OUR INFRACTIONS MAY BE - NO MATTER THE BROKENNESS - WELL - IT NO LONGER HAS POWER OVER US - FORGIVEN - BY GONES! **WHAT GOD HAS FORGIVEN - WE ARE NOT TO REMEMBER.** DO NOT BLAME & SHAME ON ONE ANOTHER. PAUL WROTE IN EPHESIANS 4:32, "YOU BE KIND ONE TO ANOTHER, TENDER-HEARTED, FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, EVEN AS GOD FOR CHRIST'S SAKE HAS FORGIVEN YOU." WE ARE NOT TO TAKE GOD'S FORGIVENESS & GRACE FOR OUR LIVES LIGHTLY.

THE BIBLE TEACHES US THERE IS SOMEONE WHO MAKES A LIST OF OUR SINS AGAINST US - THIS SOMEONE IS CALLED THE *SLANDERER*, THE DEVIL. WHOSE COMPANY ARE YOU KEEPING?

IN THE COMPANY OF THE FORGIVEN, WE ARE JUBILANT. WE REALIZE SATAN & HIS ARMY CANNOT ACCUSE US. NO ONE CAN ACCUSE US! FINGERS

MAY POINT, PEOPLE MAY STARE & VOICES BE RAISED AGAINST US BUT THEY  
GLANCE OFF LIKE ARROWS HITTING AN INVISIBLE FORCE FIELD OF  
FORGIVENESS. NO MORE DIRTY DISH-WATER. NO MORE PENANCE. NO MORE  
NAGGING DO-GOODERS ABOUT THIS WRONG DOING OR THE OTHER, NO MORE  
COVER-UPS NECESSARY. GOD REACHES INTO THE TRASH HEAP TO PULL US OUT  
- GOD IS PARTICULARLY FOND OF EACH OF US IN OUR BROKENNESS. WE ARE  
THE COMPANY OF THE FORGIVEN!