A Broken Spirit

By Derek Prince

This is Derek Prince with a word for you from the Word.

"You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." (Psalm 51:16–17 NIV)

What is David the psalmist telling us there? Surely he's telling us that first and foremost God is not interested in externals. Sacrifice and offerings are not necessarily things that God does not want, but they are things that He does not want first and foremost. And if that's all there is in our lives – the external practices of religion – then God takes no pleasure in them. He looks below the surface; He looks to the heart; He looks to the motives; He looks to the attitude.

And it says that the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: "A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." Those are strange words to our ears today. What does it mean that God desires a broken spirit? Does He want to crush us? Does He want to beat us down? Does He want to humiliate us? No, I'm sure that's not it. What is a broken spirit? I think it's a spirit that has come totally to the end of itself. All independence, all self-will and all self-righteousness have been purged out. We've come to the place where we have no hope but in God; we've come to the end of our own resources. We have no claims upon God, we simply turn to Him for His mercy and His faithfulness, not trusting our own merits, but clinging only to God.