

THE BROKEN HEART RELIEVED:

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

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A

S E R M O N.

PSALM xlii. 11.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God.

MINISTERS are by office the sons both of thunder and consolation; and the great art and secret of preaching consists in dividing the word of truth aright, in giving every one in due season, in rousing the secure, and speaking comfortable words to the uneasy. Our sermons must have balm to heal, as well as be like sharp spears to wound. It is of dangerous consequence to dillicate upon the goodness and promises

of God, to the exclusion of his terrors; and equally pernicious to dwell always upon his justice, without opening the treasures of his love. We must endeavour to intermix these subjects, and address both the fears and hopes of saints and sinners. With this view, I have lately represented the divine desertion and terrors, and chose these words for the support of such as are distracted or uneasy. And it is very happy that the same person, I mean David, should furnish me both with his fears and his hopes; that he who felt the arrows of God stick fast in him, should here encourage himself "in God, as the health of his countenance," and chide his own despairing thoughts under his absence from the sanctuary, and the withdraw of God's gracious presence, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and, why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him." From whence I have a fair occasion to open the springs of hope, under desertion and terror.

First, When tempted to despair of God's mercy, and to sink under the weight of our trials, let us erect our hopes upon the essential goodness of his nature. In his word, "he passeth by, and proclaims himself, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin." Yea, &

eminently doth this perfection belong to God, that our Saviour, who was in the bosom of the Father, and hath revealed him to us, tells us, "there is none good, but one, that is God;" none essentially, none originally, none equally good. And had not these words been written in our Bible, the word of God, we might have read them upon his works, who is good, and doeth good continually. Why then dost thou doubt, O thou of little faith? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why dost thou despair of mercy, surrounded with ten thousand instances of it? Dost thou not see, O my soul, that God is good to all; rich in mercy to all that call upon him. Look abroad, my soul, and read the lectures of his goodness all around thee. Look up to the heavens, and see how it reaches the clouds; see the radiant marks of his goodness in all his starry works; see it in the sun, and consider that but as a shadow of his essential goodness; see it above the firmament, and under the firmament; see it in the deep, and mark how the earth is "full of the riches of it;" see how it "makes the hills rejoice, and the vallies to sing." Ask the beasts, and they shall tell thee; all nature, mute and dumb as it is, silently whispers it, that God is a God of goodness: he is "good to men and to beasts; he is good to the upright and to the unjust. And wilt thou, my soul! except thyself from the influence of his good-

ness? Wilt thou refuse comfort, and let thy hopes sink, when others sing of divine love and mercy? No! my soul, "Hope thou, in God, for I shall yet praise him." If these natural marks and evidences of his kind propensity cannot support thy hopes, look upon the great gift of his *Son*; see how he loved the world, when he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish. Is not this a superlative instance of his love to man? Is it possible he should give a greater? Did he not love his son, and did he not love thee in giving this son to thee. "Hope in God, my soul! he that spared not his own son, how shall he not with him freely give thee all things." If, when "we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved from wrath, through him."

But I am apprehensive, that all we can say of the *goodness* of God will be of no relief to a wounded conscience, unless we can remove the objections from his *justice* and *holiness*. Here the awakened sinner, or the deserted saint, will fix his eye. Here lies the sore; it is this that pains the heart, and holds the eyes waking; this is a continual source of fear and jealousy. "I know God is good; it is not in my power to question a truth, that every where starts up before my eyes.

But these are only marks of his *temporal* goodness, which, with many, extends not beyond the grave. God may pour out his *providential* favours upon many here, upon whom he will pour out the vials of his wrath hereafter: for though he be *good*, he is also *just*. His name is holy and reverend, as it is merciful and gracious. He is a moral governor, as well as a beneficent being; and must have a regard for his own laws. These I have broken, and incurred the severest penalties thereto annexed; yea, have been a very heinous sinner: I see myself vile by nature; I am full of corruption within; and as for my actual sins, they cannot be numbered; they have grown up over my head, a burden too heavy, and must sink me into hell; they are such mountains as no flood of tears can wash down: My *repentance* can be no sufficient *atonement*. O! how can I stand before a *holy* God! what shall I answer when he rises up to judge me!" This will be the natural language of a spirit deeply wounded, I therefore add,

Secondly, That we must support our hopes upon the *perfect* satisfaction of Christ. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul! Hope thou in God. Let Christ be in you the hope of glory. He is the hope set before you," Look upon him as your ransom. What if thy sins, my soul, be as crimson and scarlet;

the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. See how red! see how rich! see how full of cleansing virtue, it is! This red sea shall drown all thine enemies; this fountain shall cover even mountains of guilt. Then lookest to thy tears, that they want washing; but look upon *him*, "who through the eternal spirit, offered himself to God without spot." Consider, my soul! what a divine person he is. "One mighty to save to the uttermost!" Consider the perfection of his obedience, the purity and extent of his righteousness; remember he was made sin for thee; that he gave himself to redeem thee: I hear him cry upon the cross, "*it is finished!*" See him rising from death, and leading captivity captive! See him with the atoning blood at the right hand of God; there he intercedes for thee, my soul! and "him the Father will always hear." I am sure, my soul, thou canst not look upon the *cross* of Christ, and despair of *mercy*. Do not dishonour thy Redeemer so much as to question the sufficiency of his merits. Thou sayest God is *just* and *holy*, and *terrible*; true, he is so: but his *justice* has received satisfaction already. God has honoured his justice upon his own son: "He has thrust the sword into the side of his own fellow: He has bruised him and put him to pain, that by his wounds thou mightest be healed." Why wilt thou turn the point of that sword to thy own breast, after Christ

has received it in his, and quenched the thirst of it with his own blood? The very justice of God is now thy advocate and friend: He would be unjust and unrighteous, should he exact that punishment of thee, my soul, which he has already laid upon his son. He is "now faithful and just to forgive thee all thy sins, and to cleanse thee from all unrighteousness." God has set him forth a propitiation for sin, to declare at this time his righteousness: "that he might be just, and yet the justifier of all that believe." Why wilt thou, my soul! be unjust to thyself, and turn thine own accuser? Who shall lay any thing to thy charge, if God justifies thee? Who is he that condemns if Christ died for thee? Hope then in God, for I shall yet praise him: As great, as many as my sins have been, I have an "Advocate with the Father. Worthy the Lamb, and to him I hope to sing with my kindred souls, who has loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood." Thus may we silence the clamours of conscience, when tempted from the *justice* and *holiness* of God: but still perhaps our fears will be let in, and conscience may suggest such things as these. "It is true, the blood of Christ is a proper atonement for them that are in him: But what is that to me; I fear I have so long slighted and rejected the offer of a Saviour, that it is now too late to come to him: I fear "there remains now no le-

crifice for my sins :” I am afraid to rely upon one whose patience I have tired out. O how sweetly was I invited by him ! how did he stand at the door and knock, but I would not open ; and now, I fear, should I go, I should find the door of mercy shut fast, and the seasons of grace over with me.” Under this temptation I would have recourse,

Thirdly, To the universal generous offers of grace, the unlimited calls of the gospel of Christ. Look into thy Bible, O my soul ! and see how extensive the promises, how generous the invitation is. “ Ho ! every one that thirsteth ; him that cometh unto me, I will no wise cast out.” Why wilt thou, my soul ! make exceptions, where God has made none ? or fix limits to that which has no bounds of itself ? The very *sense* of thy own unworthiness speaks thy qualifications, and teaches thee to apply these *promises* to thyself. Thou art the very *person* whom Christ invites ; “ Come unto me all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you ease. I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. I am sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” All these characters center, my soul, upon thee ! Thou art *sick* ! Thou art *weary* ! Thou art *lost* ! Thou art sensible of these ! Thou therefore art called to Christ. Doth he

call thee, and will he reject thee ? Does he complain that you *will* not come ? and will he refuse thee, when thou *dost* come ? Canst thou question thy Redeemer’s *love*, after he has expressed it in characters of his own blood ? Why was he “ lifted up from the earth,” but to draw *thee* to him ? Why were his sacred arms extended on the cross, but to *embrace* thee ! Or dost thou question the *Father’s* willingness to receive thee ? Thou must *first* tear the parable of the prodigal out of thy Bible. What if thou hast formerly been in “ a far country !” What if thou hast spent all in riotous living ! What if thou hast fed with swine ! yet now thou hast come to thyself, return to thy father’s house, confess thy sins before him, and they shall be mentioned no more. He will not only receive, but *meet* thee afar off. He will receive thee with the utmost marks of affection. He is ready to fall on thy neck and kiss thee. ’Tis with joy and transport he will say, “ This, my son, was *lost*, but is *found* : He will kill the fatted calf, give thee the best robes, put his ring and seal upon thee, and all the angels in heaven shall rejoice over thee,” and strike their golden harps over a new trophy of sovereign grace. This parable, my soul, was *calculated* for thee ; others have found it verified upon them, and why shouldst thou *despair* of mercy ? Why do so many examples stand upon sacred record, of the vilest sinners who have obtain-

ed mercy, upon their conversion, but to encourage *thee*? Look over the catalogue, and do thy *self justice*; and thou canst not say, but some of *these*, were as great reprobates as thyself. Though it be the language of true grace, to call thyself “less than the least of all saints, and the chiefest of sinners;” Admit this were true; suppose the guilt of all the sinners in the world, from its creation to its consummation, *centered* upon thee, yet, upon thy *faith* and *repentance* thou mightst be forgiven. Say not, thou hast blasphemed the *Holy Ghost*, and committed the *unpardonable sin*; for, it is a question, if *that* sin can be committed in our day; or, if it could, thy very *concern* about it, is a demonstration that thou hast not committed it. “I know, my soul, that thou hast not sinned *maliciously* against the *clearest* light;” and these are two ingredients that always must enter into the composition and character of *that* sin. Suffer not the devil then to deceive thee with lying words.

But after all, perhaps, we may say, “that we are indeed willing to submit to the righteousness of Christ; we would willingly have him for our Saviour: But this may proceed from a *wrong* principle, a slavish fear of hell and damnation, not from a *divine* principle of love to God and holiness, for *their own sake*.” But consider, my soul, this is the

usual way of the spirit of God, in its operation upon us. First to impress the terrors of hell upon the conscience; but if these terrors drive thee to Christ, and lay thee at his feet, in the most humble posture, thy faith will *afterwards* work by love, and thy mourning shall be turned into joy. When the Christian begins to grow in thee, all the fruits of the spirit will appear, and love will be the leading principle; it is rarely, and hardly to be expected, that we should receive the spirit of *adoption*, before we have been under the spirit of *bondage* to fear. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul!” What hast thou further to object! Art thou troubled and haunted with wicked and blasphemous thoughts; and do these discourage thee! Why? Remember it is the *compliance*, and not the *temptation*, which makes the criminal. Thy Saviour was once in the wilderness “tempted of the devil;” and though he be now in heaven, he is touched with the feeling of thine infirmities; and in that he himself was tempted, he knows how to succour them that are tempted: Or art thou afraid of the *strength* of thy enemies, and sensible of *thine* own weakness? It is true, you “must wrestle with flesh and blood, principalities and powers;” but remember “the lion of the tribe of Judah who has conquered *for thee*; and if thou wilt but fight a good fight, will make thee more than a conquerour

through his blood and spirit: his grace shall be sufficient for thee, and his strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness." And, say not, after all, that it is *too late*; it is never *so*, while the spirit strive with thee: God has no where revealed any such thing: If thou art now willing he is more willing; and thou mayest find mercy "at the eleventh hour." Besides, the same tempter, who now cries *too late*, but a little while ago told thee, it was *too soon*; In both equally *false*, and only true to his own character; "A liar, and the father of lies. Why art thou then cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God."

T H E E N D.