

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE CAUSE AND CURE OF A WOUNDED SPIRIT.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 6TH, 1896,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, April 16th, 1885.

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"—Proverbs xviii. 14.

EVERY man, sooner or later, has some kind of infirmity to bear. It may be that his constitution from the very first will be inclined to certain diseases and pains, or possibly he may, in passing through life, suffer from accident or decline of health. He may not, however, have any infirmity of the body, he may enjoy the great blessing of health; but he may have what is even worse, an infirmity of mind. There will be something about each man's infirmity which he would alter if he could; or if he should not have any infirmity of body or of mind, he will have a cross to carry of some kind,—in his relatives, in his business, or in certain of his circumstances. This world is not the Garden of Eden, and you cannot make it to be so. It is like that garden in this respect,—that the serpent is in it, and the trail of the serpent is over everything here. It is said that there is a skeleton in some closet or other of everybody's house. I will not say so much as that; but I am persuaded that there is no man in this world but has trial in some form or other, unless it be those whom God permits to have their portion in this life because they will have no portion of bliss in the life that is to come. There are some such people who appear to have no afflictions and trials; but as the apostle reminds us, "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all (the true seed of the Lord) are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons;" and none of us would wish to have that terrible name truthfully applied to us. I should greatly prefer to come into the condition of the apostle when he said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

I say again, that every man will have to bear an infirmity of some sort or other. To bear that infirmity is not difficult when the spirit

is sound and strong: "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity."

I. Let me, therefore, first of all, try to answer the question,—
WHAT IS THAT SOUND SPIRIT WHICH WILL SUSTAIN A MAN'S INFIRMITIES?

Such a spirit may be found, in a minor degree, in merely natural men. Among the Stoics, there were men who bore pain and poverty and reproach without evincing the slightest feeling. Among the Romans, in their heroic days, there was one named Scœvola, who thrust his right hand into the fire, and suffered it to be burnt off, in order to let the foreign tyrant know that there were Romans who did not care for pain. We have read wonderful stories of the patience and stern endurance of even natural men, for our text is true in that sense, "the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity." Whatever it was that was placed upon some men, they seemed as if they carried it without a care or without a thought, so brave was their heart within them; yet, if we knew more of these people, we should find that there were some points in which their natural strength failed them; for it must be so, the creature at its best estate is altogether vanity. David truly said, "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this: that power belongeth unto God;" and the strength of mind by which Christian men are able to bear their infirmities is of a higher kind than that which comes from either stoicism, or from natural sternness, or from obedience to any of the precepts of human philosophy.

The spirit which will best bear infirmities is, first of all, *a gracious spirit wrought in us by the Spirit of God*. If thou wouldst bear thy trouble without complaining, if thou wouldst sustain thy burden without fainting, if though wouldst mount on wings as eagles, if thou wouldst run without weariness, and walk without fainting, thou must have the life of God within thee, thou must be born again, thou must be in living union with him who is the Strong One, and who, by the life which he implants within thee, can give thee of his own strength. I do not believe that anything but that which is divine will stand the wear and tear of this world's temptations, and of this world's trials and troubles.

"Mere mortal power shall fade and die,
And youthful vigour cease;"

but they that trust in the Lord, and derive their power from him, shall press forward even to victory. So then, first, if you would sustain your infirmity, you must have a gracious spirit, that is, a spirit renewed by grace divine.

Further, I think that a sound spirit which can sustain infirmity will be *a spirit cleansed in the precious blood of Christ*. "Conscience does make cowards of us all;" and it is only when conscience is pacified by the application of the blood of sprinkling that we are able to sustain our infirmities. The restful child of God will say, "What matters it if I am consumptive? What matters it if I have a broken leg? My sin is forgiven me, and I am on my way to heaven; what matters anything else? Have you not sometimes felt that, if you had to spend the rest of your life in a dungeon, and to live on bread and water, or to lie there,

as John Bunyan would have said, till the moss grew on your eyelids, yet, as long as you were sure that you were cleansed from sin by the precious blood of Christ, you could bear it all. For, after all, what are any pains and sufferings that the whips and scourges of this mortal life can lay upon us, compared with the terrors that have to be endured when sin is discerned by an awakened conscience, and the wrath of God lies heavily upon us? Believe me when I say that I would rather suffer such physical pangs as may belong to hell itself than I would endure the wrath of God in my spirit; for there is nothing that can touch the very marrow of our being like a sense of divine anger when it comes upon the soul, when God seems to dip his arrows in the lake of fire, and then shoot them at us till they wound the very apple of our eye, and our whole being seems to be a mass of pain and misery. Oh, this is dreadful! But, once delivered from all fear of the righteous vengeance of God, and I can sing, with Dr. Watts,—

“ If sin be pardon’d, I’m secure;
 Death hath no sting beside;
 The law gives sin its damning power;
 But Christ, my ransom, died.”

Take sin away, and give me a spirit washed in the fountain filled with blood, and I can patiently go through anything and everything, the Lord being my Helper.

The kind of spirit, then, that a man needs to sustain his infirmity, is one which has been renewed by the Holy Ghost, and washed in the precious blood of Jesus.

Next, it is a *spirit which exercises itself daily unto a growing confidence in God*. The spirit that is to sustain infirmity is not a spirit of doubt and fear and mistrust. There is no power about such a spirit as that; it is like a body without bone, or sinew, or muscle. Strength lieth in believing. He who can trust can work, he who can trust can suffer. The spirit that can sustain a man in his infirmity is the spirit that can say, “ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; come what may, I will not doubt my God, for his word is strong and steadfast. Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” O dear sirs, I am sure that, if God calls you to do business in great waters, you will want the great bower anchor with you, you will not feel safe without it. When the Lord calls you to battle with your spiritual foes, you will feel the necessity of having upon you the whole armour of God, and above all you will need to take the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the enemy.

So, beloved, our spirit must be a renewed spirit, a blood-washed spirit, and a believing spirit, if we are to sustain our infirmity.

I must also add my belief that no spirit can so well endure sickness, loss, trial, sorrow, as a *perfectly-consecrated spirit*. The man who is free from all secondary motives, who lives only for God’s glory, says, if he is sick, “ How can I glorify God upon my bed?” If he is in health, he cries, “ How can I glorify God in my vigour?” If he is rich, he asks, “ How can I glorify God with the possessions which he has put under my stewardship?” If he is poor, he says, “ There must be

some advantage about my poverty; how can I best use it to the glory of God?" He looks to see, not how he can comfort himself, but how he can most successfully fight his Master's battles. A soldier who is in the fight must not enter into business on his own account. Paul wrote to Timothy, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier;" and the true soldier of the cross just says, "Up hill and down dale, wet or dry, in honour or dishonour, all I have to do is to lift on high the banner of my Lord, and strike down the foe; and, if needful, even lay down my own life for his sake." The perfectly-consecrated spirit will enable a man to sustain his infirmity; but a selfish spirit will weaken him, so that he will begin to complain of this and to lament that, and will not be made "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

So much, then, about the sound spirit that can sustain infirmity; may the Lord give it to every one of us! How many of us have it? "Oh!" says one, "I think I am all right; I have a sane mind in a sane body." Ah! yes, but there is another part of you that needs sanity: you need spiritual health, and there are times that will come to you who have nothing to depend upon but your bodily and mental vigour, and then you will find you want something more. There will come a trial that will touch you in a very tender spot, and you will cry out, "Oh! what is it that I want?" You will find that there was an unguarded place in your harness, and the arrow of the adversary has pierced you to the soul. You must be born again even for the bearing of your present infirmity; even for struggling through this life, you must have a new heart and a right spirit, or else sometime or other you will find yourself overthrown. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" What wilt thou do then if thou hast not that divinely-given spirit which will sustain thine infirmity? When the death-sweat is on thy brow, thou wilt need a better handkerchief than was ever made by human hands; and if the Lord thy God be not at thy side then, to wipe the scalding tears from thine eyes, what wilt thou do? What wilt thou do?

II. But now I have to answer a second question,—WHAT IS A WOUNDED SPIRIT? "A wounded spirit who can bear?" It cannot bear its own infirmity, so it becomes a load to itself, and the question is not, "What can it bear?" but, "Who can bear it?" "A wounded spirit who can bear?"

What, then, is a wounded spirit? Well, I have known some who have talked about having a wounded spirit, but the wound has been, after all, a *very slight affair compared with the wounds that I mean*. One has been disappointed in love. That is very sad; but still it is a trial that can be endured. We have no right to love the creature so much as to make it our god or our idol. I have known some who have been disappointed in the object of their ambition; and, in consequence, they have had a wounded spirit. But who are you that you should not be disappointed, and what are you that you should have every-

thing according to your mind? Surely, if the Lord were to deal with you according to your sins, you would have something to bear far worse than your present disappointment. As to those trials of which a person says, "Nobody ever suffered as I have done, nobody was ever treated as I have been," such statements are altogether wrong. There are many others who have passed through equal or even greater trials. Do not, therefore, allow these things to fret you, and to destroy your peace. Be not like the Spartan boy, who put the fox into his bosom, and carried it there though it was gnawing at his flesh, and eating right into his heart. There are some people who are so unwise as to make earthly objects their supreme delight, and those objects become like foxes that gnaw to their soul's destruction. I will only say this about such wounded hearts as these; there is a good deal of sin mingled with the sorrow, and a great deal of pride, a great deal of creature-worship and of idolatry there. Depend upon it, if you make an idol, and God loves you, he will break it. A Quaker lady once stood up to speak in a little meeting, and all that she said was, "Verily, I perceive that children are idols." She did not know why she said it; but there was a mother there, who had been wearing black for years after her child had been taken away; she had never forgiven her God for what he had done. Now this is an evil that is to be rebuked. I dare not comfort those whose spirits are wounded in this fashion. If they carry even their mourning too far, we must say to them, "Dear friend, is not this rebellion against God? May not this be petulance instead of patience? May there not be very much here which is not at all according to the mind of Christ?" We may sorrow, and be grieved when we lose our loved ones, for we are men; but we must moderate our sorrow, and bow our will to the will of the Lord, for are we not also men of God?

I will not dwell further upon that point, but there are *some forms of a wounded spirit which are serious*, and yet they are not quite what I am going afterwards to speak about. Some have a wounded spirit through the cruelty of men, the unkindness of children, the ingratitude of those whom they have helped, and for whom they have had such affection that they would almost have been willing to sacrifice their own lives. It is a terrible wounding when he who should have been your friend becomes your foe, and when, like your Lord, you also have your Judas Iscariot. It is not easy to bear misrepresentation and falsehood, to have your purest motives misjudged, and to be thought to be only seeking something for yourself when you have a pure desire for the good of others. This is a very painful kind of wounded spirit, but it must not be allowed to be carried too far. We should cry to God to help us bear this trial; for, after all, who are we that we should not be despised? Who are we that we should not be belied? He is the wise man who expects this kind of trial; and, expecting it, is not disappointed when it comes. "How"—asked one of a person who had lived through the terrible French Revolution when almost all notable men were put to death,—"how was it that you escaped?" He answered, "I made myself of no reputation, and nobody ever spoke of me, so I escaped." And I believe that, in this world, the happiest lot does not belong to those of us who are

always being talked about, but to those who do not know anybody, and whom nobody knows; they can steal through the world very quietly. So do not be broken-hearted if men try to wound your spirit. When, thirty years ago, they abused me to the utmost, I felt that I need not care what they said, for I could hardly do anything worse than they said I had done. When you once get used to this kind of treatment,—and you may as well do so, for you will have plenty of it if you follow Christ,—it will not trouble you, and you will be able to bear your infirmity without being much wounded by the unkindness of men.

There are others who have been very grievously wounded by sorrow. They have had affliction upon affliction, loss after loss, bereavement after bereavement. And we ought to feel these things; indeed, it is by feeling them that we get the good out of them. Still, every Christian man should cry to God for strength to bear repeated losses and bereavements if they are his portion, and he should endeavour, in the strength of God, not to succumb, whatever his trials may be. If we do yield to temptation, and begin to complain of God for permitting such things to come upon us, we shall only be kicking against the pricks, and so wound ourselves all the more. Let us be submissive to the hand that wields the rod of correction, and then very soon that rod will be taken from off our backs.

There are some who have been greatly wounded, no doubt, through sickness. A wounded spirit may be the result of diseases which seriously shake the nervous system. Let us be very tender with brethren and sisters who get into that condition. I have heard some say, rather unkindly, "Sister So-and-so is so nervous, we can hardly speak in her presence." Yes, but talking like that will not help her; there are many persons who have had this trying kind of nervousness greatly aggravated by the unkindness or thoughtlessness of friends. It is a real disease, it is not imaginary. Imagination, no doubt, contributes to it, and increases it; but, still, there is a reality about it. There are some forms of physical disorder in which a person lying in bed feels great pain through another person simply walking across the room. "Oh!" you say, "that is mere imagination." Well, you may think so, if you like; but if you are ever in that painful condition,—as I have been many a time,—I will warrant that you will not talk in that fashion again. "But we cannot take notice of such fancies," says one. I suppose that you would like to run a steam-roller across the room, just for the sake of strengthening their nerves! But if you had the spirit of Christ, you would want to walk across the room as though your feet were flakes of snow; you would not wish to cause the poor sufferer any additional pain. I beg you, never grieve those upon whom the hand of God is lying in the form of depression of spirit, but be very tender and gentle with them. You need not encourage them in their sadness; but, at the same time, let there be no roughness in dealing with them; they have many very sore places, and the hand that touches them should be soft as down.

Yet do I not wish to speak of that kind of wounded spirit alone, for that is rather the business of the physician than of the divine. Still, it well illustrates the latter part of our text, "a wounded spirit who

can bear?" But this is the kind of wounded spirit I mean. *When a soul is under a deep and terrible sense of sin*,—when conviction flashes into the mind with lightning swiftness and force, and the man says, "I am guilty,"—when the notion of what guilt is first comes clearly home to him, and he sees that God must be as certainly just as he is good, then he discovers that he has angered infinite love, that he has provoked almighty grace, and that he has made his best Friend to be, necessarily, his most terrible Foe. A man in such a condition as that will have a wounded spirit such as none can bear. Then you may pipe to him, but he will not dance; you may try to charm him with your amusements, or to please him with your oratory, but you cannot give him peace or rest. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" You know that there was one of old who said, "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life," and there was another, Judas, who actually did strangle himself under an awful sense of his guilt in betraying his Lord. Oh! I do trust that no one of you will act as he did, for that were to damn yourself irretrievably; but I do not wonder that you cry out, "Oh, that I could hide myself in the dust to escape from the terrors of a sense of divine wrath!" "A wounded spirit who can bear?"

Sometimes, the spirit is wounded *by the fierce temptations of Satan*. I hope that you do not all understand what this means; but there are some who do. Satan tempts them to doubt, tempts them to sin, tempts them to blasphemy. Some dear friends whom I know, who are among the purest-minded of mortals, and whose lives are models of everything that is devout and right, are worried by the great adversary from morning to night, scarcely ever waking in the night without some vile suggestion of Satan, or some horrible howling in their ears, "You are lost; you are lost; you are shut out from mercy for ever." They are tempted even to curse God and die; and that temptation brings a wounded spirit, such as they scarcely know how to bear. Who can bear it? God save you from it, if you have fallen under its terrible power!

A wounded spirit may also come through *desertion by God*. The believer has not walked carefully, he has fallen into sin, and God has hidden his face from him. Ah, my friends, whenever you trifle with sin, I wish you could feel as some of God's true people have done when they have been restored after a great fall! A burnt child dreads the fire, and so does a true child of God who has ever played with sin; he has been brought back to his Lord, but he has gone the rest of his life with an aching heart and limping limbs, and many a time, in wintry weather, he has felt that his broken bones start and cry out against him with the memory of his past sins. "Deliver me," says David, "from the sins of my youth;" and so may some of God's best servants say in their old age; and some who once were very bright stars, but who have been for a while eclipsed, will never be able to escape from a certain sense of darkness which is still upon them. "I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul," may he say who has once grievously sinned against God after light and knowledge. Therefore, beloved, be very careful that you do not backslide; for if you do, you will have a wounded spirit which you will not know how to bear.

I believe, however, that some of God's children have a *wounded spirit entirely through mistake*. I am always afraid of those who get certain wild notions into their heads, ideas that are not true, I mean; they are very happy while they hold those high notions, and they look down with contempt upon others of God's people who do not go kite-flying or balloon-sailing as they do. I think to myself, sometimes,—how will they come down, when their precious balloon bursts? I have often wished them well down on the level again. I have seen them believe this, and believe that, which they were not warranted by the Scriptures to believe; and they have affected exalted ideas of their own attainments. Their position was something wonderful; they were far up in the sky, looking down upon all the saints below! Yes, dear friends, that is all very pretty, and very fine, undoubtedly; but *when you come down again*, then you will begin to condemn yourself for things that you need not condemn, and you will be distressed and miserable in your spirit because of a disappointment which you need never have had if you had walked humbly with your God. For my own part, I can truly say that none of the novelties of this present evil age have any sort of charm for me; I am content still to abide in the old way, myself ever a poor, needy, helpless sinner, finding everything I need in Christ. If you ever hear me beginning to talk about what a fine fellow I am, and how perfect I am getting, you just say, "He's off his head." Please put me in an asylum directly, for I must have lost my reason before I could have believed this modern nonsense. I feel sure that I, for one, shall not suffer any disappointment in this direction, for I shall keep just where Jack the huckster kept, and say with him,—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Yet I am very fearful for others, for whom there awaits a terrible time of bondage when they once come back to the place where it would have been better for them to have stopped. If I were to set up to be a prince of the realm, and begin to spend at the rate of fifty thousand pounds a year, I am afraid that, in a very few days, I should have the sheriff's officer down upon me, and I should not be able to pay a penny in the pound of my debts. I think I would much rather go on in my own quiet way, and keep within my own means, than do anything of that kind. There are, nowadays, many spiritual spendthrifts, who are pretending to spend money that does not exist, and they will very soon find a sense of their poverty forced upon them, and their want will come like an armed man, demanding their surrender.

So much, then, upon the words, "a wounded spirit who can bear?"

III. My time has almost fled; but I want to answer a third question—HOW ARE WE TO AVOID A WOUNDED SPIRIT SO FAR AS IT IS EVIL?

I answer, first, if you are happy in the Lord, and full of joy and confidence, avoid a wounded spirit *by never offending your conscience*. Labour with all your might to be true to the light that God has given you, to be true to your understanding of God's Word, and to follow the Lord with all your heart. When Mr. Bunyan describes Christian as meeting with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation, and fighting

that terrible battle which he so graphically describes, he tells us that the pilgrim remembered then some of the slips that he had made when he was going down into the valley. While he was fighting with Apollyon, he was remembering in his own heart the slips that he had previously made. Nothing will come to you in a time of sorrow, and pain, and brokenness of spirit, so sharply as a sense of sins of omission or sins of commission. When the light of God's presence is gone from you, you will begin sadly to say, "Why did I do this? Why did I not do that?" Therefore, dear friends, endeavour as much as lieth in you so to live in the time of your joy that, if there ever should come times of depression, you may not have to remember neglected duties or wilful wickedness.

Again, if you would avoid a wounded spirit, *get a clear view of the gospel*. There are numbers of Christian people who have seen the gospel just as that half-opened eye of the blind man saw "men as trees walking." They do not yet know the difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. They do not know how a Christian stands in Christ. Get them to spell that glorious word grace, if they can; ask them to say it like this,—"*free grace*." They will probably say to you, "Oh! *free grace*,—that is tautology." Never mind; give it to them, tautology or not. Spell it in your own soul,—free, rich, sovereign grace; and know that you, a guilty, lost sinner, are saved as a sinner, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that in due time he died for the ungodly, and that your standing is not in yourself or in your own attainments, but wholly and entirely in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will often prevent your getting a wounded spirit if you understand the difference between things that do really differ, and do not mix them up as so many do.

Again, you will avoid a wounded spirit *by living very near to God*. The sheep that gets bitten by the wolf is the one that does not keep near the shepherd. Ah! and I have known sheep to get bitten by the dog, and the dog did not mean them any hurt though he did bite them. It has often happened that, when I have been preaching, there has been somebody dreadfully hurt. Yes, even the Good Shepherd's dog bites sometimes; but if you had kept near the Shepherd, his dog would not have bitten you, for neither the dog nor the wolf will bite those that are near him. Let your cry be,—

"Oh, for a closer walk with God!"

Then will come "a calm and heavenly frame"; but if you get away from holy living, and close communion with God, you may expect to get a wounded spirit.

So much, then, for the prevention which is better than a cure. God help us all to make good use of it!

IV. But, lastly, suppose our spirit is wounded, How is IT TO BE HEALED?

Do you need that I should tell you that *there is only One who can heal a wounded spirit*? "By his stripes we are healed." If you would be healed of the bleeding wounds of your heart, flee away to Christ. You did so once; do it again. Come to Christ now, though you may

have come to him a hundred times before. Come now just as you are, without one plea, but that his blood was shed for you. Come to him. There is no peace for a soul that does not do this, and you must have peace if you will but come simply as you are, and trust yourself with Christ.

If, however, your wounded spirit should not get peace at once, *try to remove any mistakes which may be causing you unnecessary sorrow.* Study your Bible more. Listen to plain preaching of the gospel. Let this be to you the mark of true gospel preaching,—where Christ is everything, and the creature is nothing; where it is salvation all of grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit applying to the soul the precious blood of Jesus. Try to get a clear view of *the* gospel, and many a doubt and fear will fly away when knowledge takes the place of ignorance.

Endeavour also to *get a clear view of your own trouble.* We are never frightened so much by what we know as by what we do not know. The boy thinks, as he sees something white, "That is a ghost," and that is why he is frightened. He does not know what a ghost is; he supposes that it is something mysterious, and he is superstitious, so he is frightened by the object before him. If he would go right up to it, he would see that it is a cow, and he would not be frightened any more. Half the fears in the world have no real ground, and if we could but induce troubled persons dispassionately to look at their fears, their fears would vanish. Write it down in black and white if you can, and let some friend read it. Perhaps, if you read it yourself, you will laugh at it. I believe that, oftentimes, with regard to the most grievous afflictions that we have in our mind, if they fretted somebody else, we should say, "I cannot think how that person can be so stupid." We almost know that we are ourselves stupid, but we do not like to confess it. I would therefore urge the wounded spirit to look at its wound; it is of no use to cover it over, and to say, "Oh, it is an awful wound!" Perhaps, if you would just have it thoroughly examined, the surgeon would say to you, "Oh, it is only a flesh wound; it will soon be all right again!" And so, your drooping spirits would revive, and your wounded self would begin to heal.

One thing, however, I would say to one who has a really wounded heart. *Remember Christ's sympathy with you.* O thou who art tossed with tempest, and not comforted, thy Lord's vessel is in the storm with thee! Yea, He is in the vessel with thee. There is not a pang that rends the believer's heart but he has felt it first. He drinks out of the cup with you. Is it very bitter? He has had a cup full of it for every drop that you taste. This ought to comfort you. I know of no better remedy for the heart's trouble in a Christian than to feel, "My Master himself takes no better portion than that which he gives to me."

Also let me recommend, as a choice remedy for a wounded spirit, *an enlarged view of the love of God.* I wish that some of you who have a wounded spirit would give God credit for being as kind as you are yourself. You would not suffer your child to endure a needless pain if you could remove it; neither does God afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men. He would not allow you to be cast down, but

would cheer and comfort you, if it was good for you. His delight is that you should be happy and joyful. Do not think that you may not take the comfort which he has set before you in his Word; he has put it there on purpose for you. Dare to take it, and think well of God, and it shall be well with your soul.

If this should not cure the evil, *remember the great brevity of all your afflictions, after all.* What if you should be a child of God who has even to go to bed in the dark? You will wake up in the eternal daylight. What if, for the time being, you are in heaviness? There is a needs-be that you should be in heaviness through manifold temptation, and you will come out of it. You are not the first child of God who has been depressed or troubled. Ay, among the noblest men and women who ever lived, there has been much of this kind of thing. I noticed in the life of Sir Isaac Newton,—probably the greatest mind that God ever made apart from his own dear Son,—the great Sir Isaac Newton, the master and teacher of the truest philosophy, during the middle part of his life was in great distress and deep depression. Robert Boyle again, whose name is well known to those who read works of depth of thought, at one time said that he counted life to be a very heavy burden to him. And there was that sweet, charming spirit of the poet Cowper. You all know that, throughout his life, he was like a flower that blooms in the shade; yet he exhaled the sweetest perfume of holy piety and poetry. Do not, therefore, think that you are quite alone in your sorrow. Bow your head, and bear it, if it cannot be removed; for but a little while and every cloud shall be swept away, and you, in the cloudless sunlight, shall behold your God. Meanwhile, his strength is sufficient for you. He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear; and if you cannot bear your infirmity because of your wounded spirit, he will bear for you both yourself and your infirmity. “O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.” “Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in your Christ.” Go away, you Hannah of a sorrowful spirit, and be no more sad. The Lord grant his comforts to you, for his Son Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MARK IX. 30—40.

Verses 30—32. *And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.*

Here is the ruling passion of Christ which was ever prominent throughout his life; though he has just won a glorious victory over Satan, he does not stay to congratulate himself upon it, but his heart is still away to the cross where he is to suffer. He is thinking of his dying for his people, and longing until he shall have paid the ransom price for their redemption, and set them free. Oh, the heights and depths of the love of Christ! See how steadfastly he sets his face to go unto Jerusalem where he must die. Let us imitate him; let us think as much of his passion now it is over as he thought of it ere it was come.

33, 34. *And he came to Capernaum : and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way ? But they held their peace : for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.*

It was a dreadful descent from communing with Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration to meeting the furious demon at the hill-foot ; but this looks like a far greater descent, from the self-sacrifice of the Divine Master to the petty jealousies and self-seeking of his chosen servants. Oh, sometimes, it makes our hearts sick when we have been almost lost in rapturous meditation, when we have been taken up well-nigh to heaven in communion with the Lord, and then we have had to attend to some paltry squabble between two brothers or two sisters ! It does seem such a terrible come-down, yet our Lord and Master does not disdain thus to come down, for in tenderness he deals with these diseases of the sheep like a good shepherd.

35—37. *And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child and set him in the midst of them : and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me : and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.*

Perhaps they were jealous of Peter ; possibly they were even more jealous of James and John. So the Lord gently pacifies them ; he does not impatiently say, "I cannot enter into your disputes, I cannot be worried with you." Oh, no ! but he just sits down, and talks with them. I like that picture ; it is almost as grand as the group of Christ and his disciples at the supper table in the upper room. "He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." That is the way they come to be first, by being willing to be last of all, and the servant of all. This is the only way to get to the front of Christ's army ; he who would be chief, must always be aiming at the rear rank, willing to do the most humble service, and to be the lowest menial in his Master's service. Only in this way can we rise. In Christ's kingdom, the way to go up is to go down. Sink self, and you shall surely rise.

38. *And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us : and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.*

He did it, I daresay, in love to his Master ; but not in the love of his Master. He did it, no doubt, with the desire to honour his Master, but he did not honour his Master by what he did.

39, 40. *But Jesus said, Forbid him not : for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.*

Thus the Master had to talk to his poor disciples after having conversed with Moses and Elias. Again, I say, what a come-down it was from fellowship with the great law-giver of Israel, and with the mighty prophet of fire, to talk with these childish men who had fallen out among themselves, and fallen out with other people ! O blessed Master, we may fain hope that thou wilt commune with us as thou didst commune with them ! We may also trust that some poor sinner, even though the devil may be in him, may catch thine eye of pity and love, and that thou mayest heal him.