

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

BINDING UP BROKEN HEARTS.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 6TH, 1908,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 19th, 1874.

“He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted.”—Isaiah lxi, 1.*

THESE are some of the words of the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God, the Messiah, which he read in the synagogue at Nazareth, and then said, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

One of the worst calamities that can happen to anyone is to have his spirit broken. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?” All the water in the sea will not hurt the vessel one thousandth part as much as that which comes into it. When trouble gets into the heart, every other trouble seems to be magnified, and it is hard to bear up against even the ordinary trials of daily life. Save us, O God, if possible, from the terrible affliction of being entirely broken down in life's battle!

Yet, very closely allied to this great calamity is one of the greatest spiritual blessings, namely, a spiritually broken heart, broken on account of sin; and, sometimes, the brokenness of spirit which arises from physical sorrow, mental anxiety, or temporal trouble leads up to the contrition of heart which is most acceptable to God. Oftentimes, he sanctifies a lower form of affliction, and makes it conducive to the higher form of brokenness of spirit. I am not going to give you any descriptions of spiritual brokenness of heart; I want rather to address myself to broken hearts of any sort and of every sort. There is no particular description of broken hearts given in the text, but simply Christ's declaration, “He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted.” There is no descriptive epithet limiting the declaration to the *spiritually* broken-hearted; and what is not in the text I will not put into it. I am the more glad not to make these distinctions and discriminations, because

* Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon this text, is No. 1,604 in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (a double number), “Heart-disease Curable.”

they would only lead the troubled ones to look within to see whether their hearts were spiritually broken, and that is just where I do not want them to look; but I want them to look away from themselves to Jesus Christ the Healer of broken hearts. Descriptions of spiritual experience and character are sometimes useful, but I fear that, quite as often, they turn the poor sinner's eye upon himself, whereas his hope lies in his eye being turned towards him who was uplifted upon the cross. To look at self is likely to humble us; but when that humbling has already taken place, then is the time for the Lord's command, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

I. So, making no distinction, but speaking to all the broken-hearted, my first remark is that **GOD HAS PRACTICALLY REMEMBERED THE BROKEN-HEARTED, FOR HE HAS SENT A SAVIOUR TO HEAL THEM.**

This simple remark ought to be a great comfort to those who are broken in spirit and desponding, *because they are generally very apt to say, "No one cares for us.* Now that we are in trouble, everybody avoids us. They were merry enough with us in our merriment, but they have no sympathy with us in our sorrow. They could dance with us in our days of joy, but they will not go with us to the grave of our hopes to weep there. They are like the swallows that are with us in summer, and forsake us in winter; and like the leaves that are green and plentiful when the sun is with us, and that fade and wither when winter is approaching." Still, my broken-hearted friend, suppose that all men forsake or forget thee; God does not. His eye sees thee, his heart feels for thee, and his hand is able to deliver thee. Thou art not friendless, nor wilt thou be till the God of all consolation dies, and that can never be.

Christ's declaration should cheer the broken-hearted, again, *because they often conclude that their case is beyond all help.* "Ah!" says one, "even if I had a friend, he could not help me, for my case is beyond all succour. If I had fifty friends, they would not know how to minister to such mental disease as mine; I am too far gone for relief." But hearken, my broken-hearted friend. Thou dar'st not say that anything is too hard for the Lord; though thy despair would make thee go a long way, yet it would not make thee go so far as to say that God cannot help thee. He it is that turneth the night into morning, that stilleth the roaring of the sea, that putteth a bit into the mouth of the tempest; then what can he not do? Thou canst not be in so forlorn a condition that God cannot help thee. To omnipotence nothing can be a difficulty, much less an impossibility. So, then, let me whisper in thine ear that there is still hope for thee, for thou hast a true Friend, who is both able and willing to help thee.

This ought still further to comfort the poor desponding one *because he often concludes that certainly God is against him.* "I should not be in this sad state of mind," says one, "if I were not abhorred by the Most High. He hath set me as a target for his arrows, and he shoots at me, and grievously doth he wound me. He hath filled my cup with sorrow mingled with gall, and put it

to my mouth that I may drink it to the dregs. God hath utterly abhorred me, and cast me away from his presence." It is not so; if it were, then might the great bell toll out thy knell; but my text says that the Lord hath sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to bind up the broken-hearted. He is no enemy to thee, or he would not have sent his Son to heal thee. Do you not remember what *Manoah's* wife said to him? Her husband said to her, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God;" but she was wiser, so she answered, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these." So say we to thee, poor broken-hearted one! If the Lord meant to destroy thee, why did he send his Son to heal the broken-hearted, and to what end is the gospel sent, and why art thou here to be tenderly wooed, and assured that the Lord has deep designs of love toward just such troubled souls as thou art? I believe that thou wilt yet dance for joy of heart, that thou wilt yet take down thy harp from the willows, and, like *Miriam* with her timbrel, that thou wilt yet rejoice over the Egyptians whom thou hast feared, but whom thou shalt see no more for ever.

II. There is much consolation, also, in the second truth which we find in the text, which is that **GOD HAS SENT A SUITABLE HELPER FOR BROKEN-HEARTED PEOPLE.** Christ says, "He hath sent *ME* to bind up the broken-hearted."

See, then, dear troubled one, what a suitable Helper God hath sent to thee, for *He hath sent thee One who is well acquainted with sorrow of all kinds.* There are some people who cannot comfort others, even though they try to do so, because they never had any troubles themselves. It is a difficult thing for a man who has had a life of uninterrupted prosperity to sympathize with another whose path has been exceedingly rough; even though that successful man should try to sympathize, he does it very awkwardly. He is like a person, who never was trained as a nurse, yet who tries to make up a pillow for a sick man. Such people always make hard lumps in our pillows, especially if they have not themselves been ill. But when you have suffered from the very complaint with which your friend is afflicted, it is wonderful what sympathy that gives you with him. "Stuff and nonsense!" says a strong man to some poor suffering one; "you are too nervous; try and exert yourself." That is often one of the most cruel things that can be said to the sufferer. But if the man has been through a similar experience, he uses another tone of voice altogether. He knows that, even if it is nonsense to the strong, it is not so to the weak, and he so adapts his remarks that he cheers where the other only inflicts additional pain. Broken-hearted one, Jesus Christ knows all thy troubles, for similar troubles were his portion. Thorns are found in thy pillow, and sharper thorns pierced his blessed brow. More than this, he knows your temptations as well as your sorrows, and the temptations which are peculiar to your sorrow, and which very often cause great sin.

Best of all, *as the Healer of broken hearts, God has chosen One whose own heart was broken.* I think it is conclusively proved that Jesus died of a broken heart; the most careful investigation of the symptoms preceding his death appears to lead to that conclusion. He could say, with an emphasis that was not possible even with David, "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness." The broken-hearted Saviour is the Healer of broken-hearted sinners. Christ will not suffer sorrow to abide in his presence without attempting to relieve it; you must have noticed how often he used to say, when here upon earth, "Be of good cheer,"* or, "Be of good comfort." He could not pass by a sorrow-stricken heart; he must stand still, and put forth his power to heal it. And he is the same now as he was then; he still careth for those who have broken hearts and contrite spirits; and even in our common, ordinary sorrows he sympathizes with us.

Let me also tell you, O ye broken-hearted ones, that *God has sent One to heal your hearts who has already healed multitudes of others.* We like an experienced doctor. I knew a very clever surgeon who could not, for a long while, get many patients because he looked so young. People like a man of experience for the healing of the body, and experience is just as valuable for the healing of the soul. Jesus Christ has bound up millions of broken hearts, so he knows how to heal yours; he knows precisely where the malady is, and what remedy to apply.

The Lord has also sent *One who will not be discouraged or get irritated in his work of comforting you.* Sometimes, when we try to comfort a mourner, and he will not be comforted, we get impatient, and do more hurt than good. There is many a man, who has gone with the best intentions to try and cheer a mind diseased, who has inflicted fresh wounds through his own impatience with the patient; but Jesus Christ "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." He bears and forbears, and is as gentle as a nurse with the children under her charge, and far more so. He will drive your sin out of you, and then he will take your sorrow away from you, or else give you the grace to enable you to bear it. There never was anyone else who was like Jesus as the Healer of the broken-hearted. There are some people whom other people always like to trust, and it is a very serious matter to be a man in whom other folk believe a good deal, because your heart has to become a kind of common receiving office for the troubles of all who are round about you; and the heart of Jesus is like this on the largest possible scale. If you could see him here, in bodily presence, you would say, "That is the One to whom I can tell all my troubles." You know how it is recorded of him that he "healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." You may always come to Jesus; he will always be willing to hear your sad

* One of the volumes in "Spurgeon's Shilling Series" is entitled "*Be of Good Cheer: the Saviour's Comforting Exhortation enlarged upon.*" By C. H. Spurgeon. (Passmore and Alabaster.)

story, always be able to solve your difficulties, and always be able to relieve your distresses. This ought to comfort you, but I cannot make it do so. I am not sent to bind up the broken-hearted in the same sense in which Christ was; I am sent to be an instrument in his hand; but he must do the work, for he only can do it.

III. This fact brings me to the third reflection from the text, which is, that **THIS SUITABLE HELPER IS COMMISSIONED BY GOD HIMSELF "TO BIND UP THE BROKEN-HEARTED."**

He is not sent to tell you how your heart got broken, and to scold you about it, like the schoolmaster, who saw the boy drowning, and lectured him upon his imprudence in getting out of his depth. There are many who act like that. If a man is very poor, they say, "Ah, you always were extravagant;" or, "You should not have gone into that speculation. You should not have put your hand to that bill to oblige your friend; you must pay for your folly now." There are many who are quite able to tell you that you ought not to have fallen into the pit, but I think that their homilies had better be saved up till we have helped you to get out of the pit. The apostle James tells us that God "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not," and it is a blessing for the broken-hearted that Jesus heals them freely, and does not upbraid them for their sin and folly.

Notice, also, that *Christ is not sent to bring to broken hearts remedies that we are to apply*. If a man has a bad wound, and there is an ointment that will heal his wound, he has to put it on; but suppose the wound is in some part that he cannot reach, he says, "Here is the ointment, but what is the good of it? How can I put it on?" He has broken his arm, and it is to be strapped up. "There is the strapping," says he; "but how am I to strap my arm up? I need somebody to do it for me." I remember once being with an old sea captain, who was in trouble of mind, and I was telling him of the promises of God, and he said, "Yes, those promises are something like the great posts, by the side of the river, to which you can moor your vessel. You have got a rope, with a loop to it, but the job is to get it over the post. It will hold your vessel if you can, but," said he, "*I cannot get the loop over the post*. There are the promises, but I cannot get a hold of them." We are so weak and feeble that the Lord Jesus has not merely come to bring the ointment, but he has come "to bind up the broken-hearted." I think that one of the grandest passages in the whole Word of God is Psalm cxlvii. 3,4: "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names." Does it not seem to be a great stoop from marshalling the stars to bending down over poor broken hearts, and closing up their wounds? Yet God delights as much in displaying his grace as in displaying his power. So you see, dear broken-hearted ones, that Jesus Christ has come to bind up the broken in heart, that is, to bring to you the consolations of his grace, and to apply them to you; and for this purpose we read, in the verse in which our text is found, that the Spirit of the Lord God is upon him, because it

is the Spirit of God who applies the Word to the heart, and therefore the Spirit is put upon the Lord Jesus Christ that, when he speaks, the Word may be with power. So, dear friends, we have a Saviour sent, upon whom the Spirit of God has been poured out, and who therefore speaks effectually,—not to ears that are closed, for he opens the ear, and conveys the truth through the ear right into the soul, and so makes us know the blessing and power of it.

I will not enlarge further upon this very important point except to say that, when the Lord Jesus binds up the broken-hearted, he does it so gloriously that the more trouble there was before, the more joy there is afterwards. Perhaps there are no people in the world so happy as those who were once most sad. Find me those who have the most joy, and I think you will find that they are those who have been brought up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, whose feet are now upon a rock, and whose goings are established, and in whose mouths a new song has been put, “even praise unto our God.”

IV. My fourth remark is, that THE LINIMENTS WHICH JESUS USES ARE SUCH AS SUIT EACH BROKEN-HEARTED ONE. I will take each case briefly.

There are some broken hearts that are *the hearts of saints who have fallen into gross sin*, as David did. God save me, God save you, my brothers, God save you, my sisters, from ever being suffered to sin a great sin against the living God! But if we ever do so sin, we shall be of all men most miserable, for having sinned against divine love and mercy, and so much of it, and against divine light, and that light so clear and abundant. There may have come into this place, to-night, someone who is a child of God, but who has been suddenly overthrown by a great temptation, to which he has yielded. Brother, I know that you do not excuse yourself, and that you do not want me to make an excuse for you. Sin is an exceedingly bitter thing, and you may have to taste the bitterness of it as long as you live; but, for all that, do not despair. The Lord may sorely chasten you, but he will not give you over to death. The Lord Jesus knows how to set your broken bones, and you may now pray, as David did in the 51st Psalm, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” The usual liniment that the Lord Jesus applies to such a broken heart as that is this, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.” He assures the penitent soul that, notwithstanding all its faults and follies, he loves it still with an everlasting love that will not give it up. This is a blessed balm to a heart that is wounded through having fallen into great sin.

There are others, who have not gone into any one gross sin, but they have done what is perhaps worse; *they have gradually backslidden until they have come to neglect divine things altogether*. They are not easy about it, for the Spirit of God has made them realize the misery of the state into which they have fallen. Some

of you used to live in the country, where you were members of little village churches, and very earnest in the Lord's service; but you have come to this wicked London, and you find that your neighbours do not go to a place of worship, so many of you seldom attend the house of God. There are good women who have ungodly husbands, and to please those husbands they have, by degrees, got weaned away from outward ordinances, and though there is a little love to God still left in them, so that they cannot quite give up private prayer, and the reading of the Word, they have fallen very low. I do not wonder, when the Holy Spirit convinces them of their sinful state, that they got broken hearts. They ought to have broken hearts, and to repent bitterly for having so grieved the Lord, and backslidden from his ways. But if I am now addressing any backslider, let me remind him or her that the Lord Jesus has been sent "to bind up the broken-hearted." Return to your first love, poor backslider, for it was better with you then than it is now.

There are other broken hearts besides these; there are sinners who never were converted, but who have *broken hearts on account of a sense of sin*. They never were, consciously, children of God, but they are now awakened to see their danger and their lost condition. I wish that all in this congregation, who are not converted, had broken hearts; it would be worth while to stay up all night to preach to a congregation of broken-down sinners. When the Lord has broken their hearts, it is an easy task to preach the gospel to them; it is like feeding people who have healthy appetites. They are not very particular about the carving, or the pattern of the plates on which their dinners are brought to them; and they are not squeamish about the food that is set before them; for "to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." O you great sinners, Jesus Christ knows how to pardon you! He knows how to lay home to your hearts such texts as these,—“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;”—“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;”—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” even thou, O thou greatest of sinners!

There are, also, *broken hearts that are caused by great trouble*. I have known men, who have been living simply to make money, but there has come a sudden panic, or a turn in the market, and they have lost everything. Now, if there is such a man here, I charge you my friend, before the living God, not to despair, for Christ still lives "to bind up the broken-hearted." If you will but trust in Jesus, the day will come when you will bless God for permitting you to become a bankrupt, and you will say, "When I was rich, I lived for this world alone; but I was brought down to poverty, and then I looked to Christ as my Saviour, and in him I have found untold riches that will be mine for ever." It would be a great mercy for some rich people if they had their gods of gold all broken, and were made to look to the living God, and put their trust in him.

Further, *some hearts are broken through severe bereavements.* "Ah!" says one, "I shall never be able to look up again, for I have lost the husband whom I loved with all my heart; and my dear child is gone too." "Ah!" says another, "the darling of my heart has been taken from me; all my earthly hopes have been buried beneath the sod. I shall never rejoice any more." Will you not? There is One who heals just such broken hearts as yours, for he once wept at a graveside, and comforted the mourners there, and he will let you see that even your bereavement shall be for your good. Whoever they may have been whom you have lost, the Lord is teaching you that these losses are meant to bring you nearer to himself, that you may find all your heart's love centred upon the only One who deserves to have it all. Oftentimes, the Lord Jesus Christ loves his people so much that he gets jealous of them; and when they love others more than they ought, he takes away those whom they thus love so that he may have all their hearts for himself, and we ought to think it a high honour that Christ should think so much of us as to want to have the whole of our hearts for himself.

Besides that, *there are some broken hearts that are broken through poverty and oppression.* Women work very hard for a very small wage, and what they get seems as if it would hardly keep body and soul together; they have to stitch, stitch, stitch, from morning to night, till their brain whirls with their constant toil amid the daily pinch of poverty. Well, dear friend, the Lord knows how to make you spiritually rich, and to give you such fulness of joy in your soul that you shall be contented even in your poverty, and sing God's praises even though you are clothed in rags.

Perhaps I am speaking to one whose brokenness of heart consists in being *utterly forsaken and forlorn, through a false step taken in life.* Strange people come into this Tabernacle, and strangely does God guide my words to them. I sometimes feel as if my hair must stand on end when I am told, after a service, of remarks which I have made, which have laid bare the secrets of men's hearts, and made them see their own history as clearly as though a prophet spake to them, though I am no prophet nor the son of a prophet. There may be someone here, who has come to London to try to hide away in this crowded city. The young man never wants to be seen at his home again; he says, "I only hope I may be forgotten by everybody; I would get to the ends of the earth if I could." Go back, my dear young friend! Go back to your father and mother, and make glad their aching hearts, for there is hope for you yet. You are brought down very low, but you will get up yet, you will be a man yet; and, what is better, you will be a Christian, and you will serve the Lord. There is hope for you, for there is One who can heal your broken heart. And thou, poor fallen woman, wherever thou mayest be, though nobody gives thee a good word, and though all pass by thee in the streets for very shame, there is One who binds up even harlots' broken hearts, and has mercy upon them. Therefore, be not driven utterly to despair. Above all, do not lay violent hands upon thyself, for I am sent as

a messenger from God to declare to thee that Christ healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. O sons of misery, you need not be any longer in misery! Your sins are the roots of your sorrows; so, if you do but go to Jesus to have your sins forgiven, your sorrows will quickly vanish. There will still be burdens for you to bear; but if you are forgiven, they will sit lightly upon your shoulders, and then turn to wings which will help you to mount to your God. Even though you have made a covenant with death, and a league with hell, the Lord saith, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." Though you are in Giant Despair's deepest dungeon, Jesus will cut the bars of iron in sunder, and set the prisoners at liberty. Only believe in him, the Son of man, your Brother, and yet the Son of the Highest. Fall at his feet, for they were pierced for you. Look up to his almighty hands, for they were once nailed to the cross for you. Bring your poor broken heart to the heart that was once pierced by the soldier's spear, and find sweetest rest in Jesus. I know what despair means; I knew something of its bitterness in my early days, when I was under conviction of sin; but since the day when I saw the star of Bethlehem amidst the black darkness and tempest of my soul, and especially since I looked to the Christ of Calvary, all has been well with me. So I say to you poor waifs and strays upon the dark and stormy sea of life, look ye up, for there shines "the bright and morning Star." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the very chief of them. Look to him, poor storm-tossed mariner, and he will guide you safely to the port of peace. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. D. Spurgeon.

EZEKIEL XXXVII.

Verse 1. *The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD,*

God's servants learn nothing until they have an experience similar to that of Ezekiel. They must be led by the Spirit of the Lord, and they must have their eyes and mouths opened by him, and then they can both see the vision, and tell the vision to others.

1. *And set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones.*

Like a huge grave, or charnel-house, or battle-field where the slain had not been buried. No servant of God would go without being sent to such a place, yet it was needful that Ezekiel should be there in order that he might understand and speak the message of God.

2. *And caused me to pass by them round about:*

He had to make a thorough survey of this grim and ghastly charnel-house.

2. *And, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry.*

They had lain there so long that the wind had dried up the juices of the marrow-bones, and they were turned to dust.