

The Dejected Believer's Soliloquy. a Discourse Occasioned by the Decease of Mrs. Ann Button.

by John Gill

The sermon encourages believers to hope in God despite dejection and disquietude, and to express strong faith in the Lord through praise and thanksgiving.

Scripture: Job 6:21, Job 22:29, Psalm 40:11, Psalm 84:2, Psalm 115:3, Isaiah 45:2, Matthew 11:28, Romans 7:23, Ephesians 1:3-4, 1 Peter 2:11

Topics: "Overcoming Despair", "Hope in God"

Description

John Gill preaches on the theme of the dejected believer's struggle with despair, drawing from Psalm 40:11. He reflects on the Psalmist's longing for God's presence amidst trials and afflictions, emphasizing the importance of self-encouragement and hope in God. Gill highlights that believers often face dejection due to sin, Satan's temptations, and the hiddenness of God, yet they are called to remember God's past faithfulness and to praise Him for His grace and mercy. He encourages the congregation to maintain faith and hope, assuring them that they will yet praise God, who is the health of their countenance and their God. The sermon serves as a reminder of the eternal hope and comfort found in God, especially in times of distress.

Transcript

THE DEJECTED BELIEVER'S

SOLILOQUY.

A Discourse, occasioned In, the Decease of Mrs. Ann Button.

PSALM 40:11

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.

The Psalmist (who, it is highly probable, was David), when he wrote this Psalm, seems to have been at a distance from the house of God. This was the cause of his distress and disquietude. He longed to return

thither, that he might appear before God in his sanctuary; enjoy his presence, and hold communion with him. This panting of his soul after God in his house, he signifies by, and compares unto, the panting of the hart after the water-brooks, when pursued in hunting: which greatly resembles the case in which he then was.

What is here figuratively expressed, is more plainly asserted by him elsewhere, when he says; That his soul longed, and even fainted, for the courts of the Lord; and his flesh, and his heart, cried out for the living God. (Ps. 84:2) What made his distress the greater, was, his remembering with what good company he had frequently went up to the house of God; and what spiritual pleasure he had enjoyed when there. This was a cause of uneasiness unto his mind. However, he encourages himself in his God, and stirs up his soul to hope in the Lord, that he would bring him back again, and that he should see his ark, and his habitation.

For this purpose, he calls to mind some past experiences of divine goodness to him, when he was in a state of exile. I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar: places where, it may be, he had met with God, where he had enjoyed the divine presence, or had been indulged with some remarkable favour. We find, likewise, that at this time many afflictions attended him: which he compared to floods of water, to depths, and to the waves of the sea.

Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. By which he intends various afflictions that he met with from his family, and from his friends; from within, and from without. Nor is it unusual, in Scripture, to express afflictions, and trying dispensations of Providence, by waves. So Heman, the Ezrahite, says, that God had afflicted him with all his waves: Psalm 87:7, with one affliction after another, which came rolling upon him as the waves of the sea.

But God hath graciously promised, that he will be with his people, when they pass through the waters, meaning afflictions; and that they shall not overwhelm them. This faith the Psalmist had, that God would command his loving kindness to him. For thus he speaks; Yet the Lord will command his loving kindness in the day time. He was well persuaded, that though he was afflicted of the Lord, yet he would not utterly, nor at all take away his loving kindness from him but would, in due time, command some manifestations of his love to him, that should support, carry him through, and in due time deliver him out of all his trials.

He speaks also of the afflictions, distresses, and oppressions, that he met with from men. I will say unto God, my rock, why hast thou forgotten me; why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me: while they say daily unto me, where is thy God? Where is thy God, that thou hast so much talked of; in whom thou has put thy trust, and who hath promised thee his protection? Where is he now? and where is thy confidence in him?

This was cutting to him; like a sword in his bones. It was no unusual thing for the enemies of God's church and people, to insult over them in such language as this, when they were in distress, and there was not an immediate appearance on their behalf. Wherefore should the Heathen say, where is now their God? Our God is in the heavens, and he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. (Ps. 115:3) After this, follows the soliloquy in my text, or the Psalmist's address to his own soul.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, on account of those various trials? What reason is there for it? Why shouldst thou give way to any degree of despondency? hope thou in God for protection and deliverance, which will be granted in due time. Whilst he is thus encouraging his hope in the Lord, his faith grows strong; For I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance,

and my God. Faith never shines brighter than when it is exercised in trying dispensations.

The experiences of God's people, in all ages, are much the same. As, in water, face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man: the heart of one saint unto another. What was the experience of David, in those early times, is the experience of the people of God in latter ages, and in ours; both with respect to trials, and with respect to the exercise of faith and hope.--From these words I shall observe the following things: I. That the saints often are, as David was, under dejection, and disquietude of soul, though they have not all that reason for it which they imagine: and, sooner or later, are sensible of it; and, therefore, expostulate with themselves, as he did; Why art thou disquieted?

Why art thou Cast down? II. That true believers in the Lord, as David did, are helped to encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and to excite themselves, to hope in the Lord for strength to support them under their trials, for power to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies; and to wait for his gracious presence with them, and his kind appearances for them. hope thou in God. And, III. That they are enabled, at such times as these, to express strong faith in the Lord; For I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

I. The saints are often, as David was, under soul dejections and disquietude: for which they have not all the reason they imagine; and therefore are helped, sooner or later, to expostulate with themselves thus, Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Saints, in all ages, have had their castings down, and their liftings up. So it seems Job had. Ye see my casting down and are afraid: (Job 6:21) And says one of his friends, in another place, When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, there is lifting up: (Job 22:29) and so it is with the people of God.

They have those returning seasons, one after another. A casting down, and a lifting up: a lifting up, and a casting down; and so they go on whilst they are in this imperfect state. Various are the causes of this dejection and disquietude of soul, to which the saints are subject in this life. Sin is the principal one, especially in-dwelling sin. So the apostle found it, and so do all the saints. It hinders them from doing the good that they would, and it puts them upon doing the evil that they would not.

To will is present with me (says the apostle), but how to perform that which is good, I find not. What was the reason of it? It was sin that dwelt in him. For says he, When I would do good, evil is present with me, to hinder me from doing the good that I would perform, and put me upon the evil that I would not do. Now this occasions disquietude in God's people. There are two principles in them; sin and grace, flesh and spirit. And these are represented as if they were two persons whose desires and affections are contrary to each other.

The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh lusteth against the spirit; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (Gal. 5:17) This is a cause of great disquietude in the minds of regenerate persons. Sin wars against the soul; and wherever there is war, there is, more or less, disquietude: it cannot be without it. There is a war, an intestine war, in the heart of God's people. Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. (1 Peter 2:11) I see a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. (Rom. 7:23) What is to be seen in the Shulamite, but as it were the company of two armies, flesh and spirit, sin and grace, warring one against another?

It is sin that breaks the peace of God's people, and interrupts their communion with God. Sometimes there is no rest in their bones, because of their sin. They roar, as David says, because of the disquietness of

their heart. They groan, being burdened with a body of sin and death. This interrupts their communion with God. Their iniquities separate between God and them. Though the union between them and God cannot be dissolved, the bond of which is his everlasting and unchangeable love; yet sin separates with respect to communion.

It causes God to hide his face from them, and this occasions disquietude. The same in-dwelling sin, by its powerful operations and effects, fills the soul of a believer, oftentimes, with many fears, with regard to his state. Without, are fightings; within, are fears. On account of in-dwelling sin, the soul oftentimes is ready to fear, that the root of the matter is not in him; that the truth of grace is not in his soul; that the good work of grace is not begun; that he is only an hypocrite, and is not really born again; or if he was, why is it thus with him?

He cannot think that he belongs to Christ: that he hath an interest in him; if he were Christ's and Christ were his, the flesh with the affections and lusts, would be crucified. He fears that he hath no part, nor lot, in the matter; that he shall one day perish by means of this, and the other, strong corruption, and that he shall come short of eternal glory. Hence our Lord says, Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Thus it appears that in-dwelling sin is the cause of disquietude in the people of God; though there is not that reason for disquietude and dejection of soul, as they imagine.

For there is forgiveness with God. The blood of Jesus Christ hath been shed for the remission of sin, He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins. He hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed: and though sin rages, it shall not reign. Sin shall not have dominion over you.

The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin; and there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.--Why, then, art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, on account of indwelling sin? Another cause of dejection and disquietude, is Satan. He casts down the people of God. He disturbs their minds, by his solicitations, his accusations, and his temptations. By solicitations to sin. He hath great power over the minds of men, and can put things into their hearts; as he put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray his Lord, and filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira, to lie against the Holy Ghost; yea, he had great power over the people of God themselves.

They have a corrupt nature, that he can work upon, and stir up. He found nothing in the pure and holy Jesus to work upon; but he finds enough in the hearts of believers, He can stir up the lusts of their minds, as he prevailed over David, by stirring up his pride to number the people of Israel; which brought great distress upon both him and his subjects.--The often disquiets the minds of the Lord's people by his accusations, He is called the accuser of the brethren. He goes about, to and fro, throughout the earth, and takes notice of what is done amiss; and then accuses for it, as he did holy Job.

Thus he acted towards Joshua the high priest. He, though a good man, had fallen foully into sin. Satan sets his case in a sad light indeed; represents him as clothed with filthy garments, and then stands at his right hand to resist him and accuse him. And it would have gone hard with him, had it not been for the Angel of the covenant, the Mediator between God and man, who took his part, and rebuked Satan, saying; The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?

Then he ordered his filthy garments to be taken from him, and him to be clothed with change of raiment, saying; I have caused thine iniquities to pass from thee. Satan dejects the minds of God's people by his

temptations. He is, on account of this, styled the Tempter. As such, he attacked our Lord Jesus Christ himself: and though he could find nothing to work upon in him (as before observed), yet he gave him trouble. He harassed his pure and holy nature; insomuch that it is said, he suffered being tempted: suffered at the hands of Satan.

Now, if the pure and holy Jesus suffered through the temptations of Satan, it is no wonder that his members should suffer, or that they should be dejected and disquieted by his temptations, as Peter was, when Satan desired to sift him as wheat. This being in some degree granted, the tempter shook him so that he awfully fell.--The apostle Paul, though he did not fall by the temptation of Satan as Peter did, was greatly buffeted by him, and reduced to deep distress; insomuch that he cried unto God thrice that it might depart from him; and the answer he had was, my grace is sufficient for thee.

Satan's temptations are compared to fiery darts: and they are very poisonous, and occasion a great deal of grief and sorrow, where they fasten. But, notwithstanding all this, the saints have not so much reason as they imagine, to be dejected, or disquieted, because of them. For Christ hath Satan under his restraint; nor can he give believers the least disturbance, except by our Lord's permission. He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may, but not whom he will, devour: and ere long, he shall be bruised under the feet of the Lord's people.

The hidings of God's face are another cause of dejection and disquietude. Thou hidest thy face, and I am troubled, says David, This was the reason of that distress in which Heman the Ezrahite was. God had forsaken him and hid his face from him; for his language is, Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favorable no more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? But there is not that reason for distress and disquietude, on this account, as they imagine.

Sion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me. But what says the Lord himself? Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? She may; it is possible there may be here and there an instance of this kind. But it is added, yet will I not forget thee; behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Though God hide his face for a while; yet he appears again: though in wrath, for a moment, he hide his face; yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy upon his people, and gather them afterward into nearer communion with him.

Afflictions are another cause of disquietude. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. None of these are joyous, but grievous: and some of them extremely so. The Christian, in certain instances, is ready to say with the church There is no sorrow like unto my sorrow. But yet there is not that reason for disquietude, as is apprehended; for afflictions work together for the good of God's people: their spiritual and eternal good. They are light afflictions, which are but for a moment, and work for the saints, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

God will in due time, deliver his people out of all their afflictions. He will not suffer them to be tempted, or afflicted, above what they are able to bear: but will, with the temptation, or affliction, make way for an escape out of them. There are many oppressions and distresses that the saints meet with from men of the world, who persecute and reproach them. And it seems this was one part of David's trouble, as the context shews, For those that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution: must be abused, reproached and insulted by the men of the world.

But then, what reason is therefore so much disquietude on that account? Rather, they should think themselves happy that they are reproached for Christ's sake; and esteem that reproach better than all the treasures in Egypt.--But I shall proceed, II. To observe, that the children of God are enabled to do as the Psalmist David did, encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and excite themselves to hope in the Lord notwithstanding these distresses. Hope thou in God. Hope in God, for the forgiveness of sin; for there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared.

Hope in God, for deliverance out of the hands of every enemy; and for support under every trial. Wait for the Lord, in his gracious appearances, He will appear again. The vision is for an appointed time: wait for it; it will come, it will not tarry. Hope thou in God. Hope in the mercy of God. Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy; and with him there is plenteous redemption. The Lord taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy. His eye is upon them.

His eye, not only of providence, but of love and mercy is upon them that fear him, and that hope in his mercy. Hope in the power of God. His hand is not shortened that it cannot save. He is able to do more than thou art able to ask or think. Hope in his power, to protect and deliver thee out of the hand of all thine oppressors. Hope in the Lord to fulfil the great and precious promises which he hath made. This was the support of Abraham, when he believed in hope, against hope; for he believed, that God was able to perform his promise.

Hope thou in the faithfulness of God; for God is faithful that hath promised; never suffering any of those good things to fall to the ground, which he hath promised unto his people. He never suffers his faithfulness to fail. He who hath begun the good work, notwithstanding what sin and Satan may do, will perform it until the day of Christ. He will sanctify them throughout, in body, soul, and spirit. Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it. Hope then in his faithfulness.

Hope in the Word of God. The Psalmist says, I have hoped in thy word. In God's word of promise, in which he causes his people to trust. And there is good reason to hope in the word of the Lord, the word of promise; since all his promises are yea and amen, in Christ Jesus: that is, performed in due time. His word of promise is confirmed by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, the heirs of promise, might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.

Hope in the essential Word of God, in the Lord Jesus Christ; who in the times of the Old Testament, was the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in time of trouble. Hope in him, who is in the New Testament described as our Hope, as the hope of glory. Hope then in God.--But I proceed to consider, III. That act of faith, which the Psalmist here so strongly expresses. Notwithstanding all he had met with, which had occasioned distress, and disquietude, he declares, I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

This is remarkable; and herein lies the glory of faith, as it breaks forth in the midst of so much disquietude and distress. Yet shall I praise him. I know I shall praise him. I shall have reason, and leisure, and opportunity to praise him both here and hereafter. Yet shall I praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. An instance this, worthy the imitation of all the Lord's people. O that we all could say, that we shall yet praise him, however it may now be with us! praise him in this life, and praise him in the life to come.

They that dwell in the house of God shall be still praising him. They shall praise and continue to praise him. The Palmist says, I will give thanks unto the Lord, as long as I live; I will sing praise unto my God, while I have any being. Happy souls that are enabled so to do! Yet shall I praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. Praise him for every temporal, and for every spiritual mercy. For every temporal mercy. God is the father of mercies; the author and giver of all our temporal mercies.

And we are to call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to bless the Lord, and forget not all his benefits: not any of them; no, not the least of his temporal favours. For we are not worthy of these; they are much above our deserts, and yet are communicated to us every day of our lives. His mercies are new every morning, and great is his faithfulness. The saint sees reason to praise the Lord at all times: every day of his life; every morning he rises, and all the day long, for the numerous blessings which are communicated to him: but especially, he sees reason to praise the Lord for spiritual mercies.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly things, in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1:3, 4) That is, let the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised: for that is the sense of the phrase. Let him be praised, because he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ. These blessings relate to the spiritual part of man, and to his spiritual welfare.

All spiritual blessings, are new covenant blessings, and the sure mercies of David. Particularly a believer, when he is in a proper frame of soul, sees reason to praise the Lord for electing and redeeming grace; for effectual calling; and for every other blessing of grace. He sees reason to praise the Lord for electing grace. For, if the apostle thought himself bound to give thanks to God, because he had chosen the Thessalonians, saying, We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord; because God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, to the obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I say, if he saw reason to praise the Lord on that account, no doubt but he saw still more reason to praise the Lord for choosing himself. And so every believer should say, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; who hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy, and without blame before him, in love. There are many things that the name of God is to be praised for; but scarce any thing to be named, that is more worthy of praise than this.

When the disciples of our Lord were so highly elated because the devils were subject to them, he said, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven; or, in other words, that they were chosen and ordained to eternal life. Rejoice in this; for it is the source of all the blessings of grace all are dispensed according to it. Blessed with all spiritual blessings according as he hath chosen us in him. This seems to be the rule according to which God dispenses all his other blessings of grace.

This stands at the head of them, and insures all the rest. Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. The election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded. They have obtained, what? All the blessings of grace, life, righteousness, and salvation. They have obtained all the graces of the Spirit; particularly faith, which is the free gift of his grace but it flows from election; and therefore it is called the faith of God's elect.

As many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed. Eternal happiness is insured upon this footing. For the purposes of God, according to election, stand sure; not upon works, but upon him that calleth. The

foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. Their eternal glory stands firm upon this ground. As the saints are by it afore prepared for glory; so eternal happiness, or the everlasting kingdom, is afore prepared for them. Saints, in the view of this, have reason to praise the Lord that he hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world.

O, says the believing soul, hath God chosen me! hath he chosen me out of the mass of mankind! Hath he chosen me, to grace here, and to eternal glory hereafter! what reason have I to praise the Lord!--I shall yet praise him, for this blessing of electing grace. Praise him also for redeeming grace; for that is the next blessing of grace, as it stands in Ephesians. Election first, then redemption. In whom we have redemption through his blood. This is a blessing of grace they have reason to praise the Lord for: and therefore David calls upon his soul, and all within him, to praise the Lord, because he had redeemed his life from destruction.

He adores and admires this instance of the grace of God. O, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; and his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. They praise him for such a Redeemer as Christ is; the horn of salvation that God hath raised up, in the house of his servant David. The mighty Saviour; able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him. They praise him for such a redemption, as that which he hath wrought out for them; for it is a full and complete redemption from sin, Satan, the world, and hell: from this and the other enemy.

An eternal redemption: for Christ hath, by his blood, obtained eternal redemption for us, and saves his people with an everlasting salvation. Therefore they see reason to praise God on this account. They see reason to do it now. O, give thanks unto the Lord, for he hath remembered us in our low estate; when we were helpless and hopeless. Praise him because he hath done this; for his mercy endureth for ever. And they will praise his name for this to all eternity; when they shall have their harps in their hands, and tune to the song of redeeming grace; that song, which none but the redeemed of the Lamb can sing.

Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings, and priests, unto God and his Father, to him be glory for ever and ever. They will for ever sing this song: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, I shall yet praise him, for redeeming grace. So likewise they shall praise his name for effectual calling grace. God's end in calling his people by his grace; forming Christ in them, and in the implanting a principle of grace in them, is, that they might praise him.

This people have I formed for myself I have formed them for myself in regeneration; they shall shew forth my praise. (Isa. 43:21) Saints, called by grace, see reason to praise the Lord, who hath called them out of worse than Egyptian darkness into his marvellous light. They see reason to praise him who hath called them out of a state of bondage and slavery, into the liberty of the sons of God: who hath called them out of the world, to communion with himself, who hath called them, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began: who hath called them to a participation of the blessings of grace here, and eternal happiness hereafter.

Yet shall I praise him, for effectual calling grace, that hath called me, poor, vile sinner as I was; when I was (as the rest of mankind are) going on in a course of sin and rebellion; yet he called me, and not another! Called me, and yet took no notice of another. Called me, when running the strong career of sin; running headlong into ruin.--Called me by his grace Yet shall I praise him: praise the Lord for justifying grace.

Justification proceeds from the free grace of God.

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The matter of it is Christ's righteousness; and that is imputed, without works, freely, by the grace of God. The righteousness of Christ is a free gift; a gift by grace. The soul that receives it, receives an abundance of grace; and therefore sees great reason to praise the Lord. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God. For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.

I shall yet praise the Lord for a justifying righteousness. So for pardon of sin. Free forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Christ, is another blessing the believer sees reason to praise God for now, and will do to all eternity. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. A sinner, sensible of this great blessing, will call upon his soul, and all that is within him, to bless the Lord because he hath forgiven him all his iniquity. "I (he will say) that was a sinner, the worst and chief of sinners, yet even I obtained mercy; and therefore am under the greatest obligations to praise the Lord."

Praise him for adopting grace; for being made a child of God, and an heir of eternal glory. A believer praises God, that though he was a child of wrath, as others, yet he is made a child of God, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. Saints praise the Lord for regenerating grace, which is an evidence of adopting grace. For this the apostle expresses his praise and thanks (1 Peter 1:3.) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven.

It is owing to the same grace, that those who are adopted, and born again, are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and persevere in grace and holiness unto the end. When they come into the other world, these songs shall be all renewed, and sung to a better tune, and in a more perfect manner. Yet shall I praise him, for electing, redeeming, calling, justifying, pardoning grace; for regenerating and persevering grace. The saints will then praise him, that he hath brought them through all the troubles of this life, safe to his kingdom and glory.

O, how will they praise his name then, in the most exalted strains! Just as Israel, when they had got through the Red Sea, and out of the hands of their enemies, and saw them dead upon the sea shore. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying; I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he hath thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

So the saints, when they have got through this world into the other state, will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. The ransomed of the Lord will return to Sion with songs, and sing them in the best manner. Yet will I praise the Lord, and particularly for what follows: because he is the health of my countenance, and my God. God is the author and giver of health as of natural, so of spiritual health. Men are naturally diseased with sin. Sin is an hereditary disease, and it is universal.

It affects all human nature, and every individual of it. All the powers of the soul, and all the members of the body are affected by it. It is an incurable disease, except by the grace of God, and the blood of Christ: but by them all the maladies of the soul are healed. God heals the backslidings of his people, and loves them freely. This healing is by pardoning their transgressions. Hence the two following clauses are put together,

as explanatory one of the other. Who healeth all thy diseases, who forgiveth all thine iniquities.

Hence the inhabitants of Sion shall no more say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity. They shall be in good health, and so have no reason to complain of sickness. The apostle John wishes for Gaius, that his body might prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered. Then may the soul be said to be in good health, when it hath not only spiritual food to eat; but a keen appetite to feed upon that food. As a man may be thought to be in good health, when he hath food to eat, and feeds upon it heartily; so, in a spiritual sense, when the believer hath food to eat, the pure doctrines of the gospel, feeds upon them, and finds them the joy and rejoicing of his heart: when as a new born babe, he desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby; he is in good health, in a spiritual sense.

So, when the graces of the Spirit are in exercise; when he abounds in hope, and in love to God, and his people, he is in good health. But this is all from the Lord. When a believer grows in the grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ: when, being planted in the house of the Lord, he flourishes in the courts of his God, and is fruitful in every good word and work, his soul is in good health. All this fruitfulness is of God. He is that green fir-tree, whence all his fruit is found; and so hath reason to praise the Lord on this account.

Yet shall I praise him, who is the health of my countenance. The countenance is, in a great measure, the index of health; though it is not always a sure one. A person may have a good countenance, or look healthful, and yet may have diseases and complaints, For the most part, however, a man's health may be discerned in his countenance. A sickness may be observed by the paleness and wanness of the countenance; so good health may be discerned by the ruddiness and freshness of the countenance.

Now what is the saint's countenance? It is Faith: which looks to Christ; and he is pleased when people do so. Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. What was that comely countenance, but faith and a look of faith to him? The church (to whom Christ then addressed himself), under a sense of her own unworthiness, and conscious of her own sinfulness, was so bashful, that she held down her head, or turned it aside. Therefore Christ encouraged her to look him full in the face; Let me see thy countenance.

Very agreeable is this to Jesus, who is ravished with one of the eyes of his saints, with one chain of their neck: that is, with the grace of faith, and the exercise of it. Never does a poor believer look more comely in the sight of Christ, than when he looks him full in the face; looks at his person, blood, and righteousness. Now, as is the countenance of a believer, so is his health. As is his faith, so is every other grace. As is his faith, so is his evangelical repentance.

If faith be in exercise, evangelical repentance will be so. These go together, both as doctrines and graces. When faith is in exercise, then you will find the believer ingenuously confessing his sin, mourning over it in a gospel way, and taking shame to himself: confounded, and not opening his mouth, because that God is pacified towards him, for all that he hath done. Repentance is never so full, so free, so genuine, as when faith is in its greatest exercise upon the pardoning grace of God, flowing through the blood of Jesus.

As faith is, so is hope for faith is the substance of things hoped for. If a man be strong in believing, he abounds in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost; if he can see his interest in Christ, and in the Lord, as his portion, then he hopes in him. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. And as faith is, so is love: for faith works by love. To them that believe, Christ is precious. Faith works by love, to his word, ordinances, and people. As a man's faith is, so is his joy; hence we read of the joy of

faith.

The more he believes, the more he is filled with joy, unspeakable, and full of glory. Yet shall I praise him for the health of my countenance. You will observe, that in the 6th verse of this Psalm, it is his countenance; that is, the countenance of God, of the health of his countenance. The same word is used there, as here, denoting, that it is the countenance of God, or the light of his countenance, that is the health of his people. And this is quite agreeable to the experience of the saints in all ages.

Hearken unto David; Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance: thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. Nothing so rejoices the hearts of God's people, as the light of his countenance. The light of Jehovah's countenance is like the latter rain, or the dew upon the mown grass, very refreshing and comforting. There is another thing which the Psalmist mentions as a reason why he should praise the Lord, namely, because he was his God, I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

A delightful idea this! For what can be a greater happiness, than to have God for our God! The Psalmist, when he had reckoned up many temporal blessings of which men were possessed, says, happy are the people that are its such a case; yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord! People may be thought happy who abound in temporal enjoyments; but he is the truly happy man, whose God is the Lord. This is the substance of the covenant, I will be to them a God. This includes the favour of God, his care, protection, and preservation of his people; the communion he grants unto them here, and the happiness they shall enjoy with him to all eternity.

All are included in this grand Principal blessing; I will be their God. And this covenant interest always continues. He is so till death, at death, and after death; he is so in time, and to all eternity. As in the ultimate state and glory, when he shall be all in all; so in the New Jerusalem state, previous to that, and introductory to it, when the tabernacle of God shall be with men, he will say, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. What hath such an one to fear?

If God be his God, what may he not expect here and hereafter? All supplies of grace now, and eternal glory hereafter. He therefore hath abundant reason to say, I will yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. Thus have I endeavoured to say some few things upon this message of Scripture, as time would allow, and, as appeared, agreeable to the state of our deceased friend; she having received, it seems, much consolation from it. What I shall say concerning her, will be but short.

It pleased God to call her, by his grace, some years ago and it seems, that the following words were the first passage of Scripture that gave her soul liberty. I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sander the bars of iron. (Isa. 45:2) From which she gathered, that all difficulties and discouragements, that lay in the way of her salvation should be removed; and her soul brought to a comfortable liberty; to nearness to God, communion with him, and the enjoyment of eternal glory hereafter.

Her standing in this church of Christ, hath been but short. She was a member elsewhere some years before and appears to have been an honourable member, behaving suitably to the profession she made. In her late illness, which issued in death, she had, as her castings down, so her liftings up. Her faith was directed to a precious Redeemer, to look unto him, and him alone, for eternal salvation. These words were of singular use unto her, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; he also shall be my salvation.

"He only (said she) and there is none but him. that is, or can be my salvation." Toward the close of her life, she signified, that she was going, like Esther, into the presence of the King; and, if I perish, I perish there. And when it was observed to her, that the golden sceptre would be held forth: "Yea, (said she) and I shall touch it." Signifying, that she expected a favourable admission, and a kind reception into the presence of the King of Kings, to be for ever with him.

In other words, that she should yet praise him, who was the health of her countenance, and her God. Now the principal use we are to make of what hath been said, is, to encourage our souls in the exercise of faith and hope, under all the distresses and difficulties of this life. Though we may meet with many things to disquiet us, yet let us not indulge despondency. On the contrary, let us hope in God: in the mercy, the power, the wisdom, and the faithfulness of God; believing, that we shall yet praise him, both in this life, and the other world, to all eternity.

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