

The Spirit's Work in Ministers (2): Broken Heartedness

1. Broken Heartedness is essential for salvation

Ps. 51:17

'Although no believers neglect to seek forgiveness of sin, those who truly pray know they do not offer a tenth of the sacrifice of a broken heart of which David speaks ... We should seek forgiveness not only for our sin but also that we do not feel so [broken hearted] as we ought to.' Calvin¹

Isa. 57:15

'The main thing observable is the necessity and excellency of the broken and humble soul. It is the only receptacle of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you will have Christ and grace to dwell in you, you must get humble spirits. So, the Doctrine in general from hence is this: The soul must be broken and humbled, before the Lord Jesus Christ can, or will, dwell therein, and before faith can be wrought therein. There must be contrition, before there will be an inhabitation of Christ in the soul. As men, especially great men, will have their houses aired, before they come to dwell there; so this contrition is the airing, or sweeping of the soul, so that it may be inhabited' Thomas Hooker²

'A broken heart is the handiwork of God, a sacrifice of his own preparing; a material fitted for himself. By breaking of the heart he openeth it, and makes it a receptacle for the graces of his Spirit; that is the cabinet, when unlocked, where God lays up the jewels of the gospel; there he puts his fear; 'I will put my fear in their hearts'; there he writes his law; 'I will write my law in their heart'; there he puts his Spirit: 'I will put my Spirit within you' (Jer. 31:31–33; 32:39–41, Ezek. 36:26–27). The heart, I say, God chooses for his cabinet: there he hides his treasure.' John Bunyan³

2. Reasons Broken Heartedness is resisted

2.1 Think explaining/teaching the Bible adequate

'Some men think an invitation, an outward call, a rational discourse, will do; but they are much deceived. There must be a power, an exceeding great and mighty power, attending the Word, or it worketh not effectually to the salvation of the soul.' John Bunyan⁴

2.2 Think good behaviour adequate

'A man's goodness is that which blinds him most' John Bunyan⁵

'The mere civil Professor, that would sleep in a comfortable coat: he could be content to have heaven, and mercy, and he hopes he is in the right way; but this melting of the soul; this bruising of the heart, is more than he thinks God requires, or more than God would look for. So he

¹ Calvin, *Inst.* 3.20.16.

² Thomas Hooker, *The Broken Heart* in 'The Soules implantation into the Naturall Olive,' p. 3-4.

³ John Bunyan, *The Acceptable Sacrifice*, Banner of Truth, p. 58.

⁴ John Bunyan, *The Acceptable Sacrifice*, Banner of Truth, p. 70.

⁵ John Bunyan, *The Acceptable Sacrifice*, Banner of Truth, p. 78.

invents a new way, and a short cut to heaven that God never revealed. He thinks some melancholy man may be troubled, depressed and perplexed; but that is not what God actually requires from people. Therefore, after a sleepy kind of profession, without vital life, or power, or soundness, 'They spend their days in ease, and in a moment go down to hell' (Job 21:13). There is a world of poor sinners thus deluded.' Thomas Hooker⁶

Ps. 51:1-3

Jer. 6:14

2.3 Think negative emotions pathetic

'The great men and excellent leaders of the world are not able to see and approve this brokenness of heart in others. They count it a womanish and weak kind of disposition. They make a mockery of such humility of heart. When God hath wounded, and humbled a poor sinner, they tread upon him, and tease him with desperate disgraces, reproaches, and discouragements. I need not quote their language in this case, I wish we were freed from them.' Thomas Hooker⁷

2.4 Think sin only concerns actions

'Many are sorry for actual transgressions, because they do oft bring them to shame before men; but few are sorry for the defects that sin has made in nature, because they see not those defects themselves. A man cannot be sorry for the sinful defects of nature, till he sees they have rendered him contemptible to God; nor is it any thing but a sight of God that can make him truly see what he is, and so be heartily sorry for being so. Now 'mine eye seeth thee,' saith Job, now 'I abhor myself.' 'Woe is me, for I am undone,' saith the prophet, 'for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord.' And it was this that made Daniel say his 'comeliness was turned in him into corruption'; for he had now the vision of the Holy One (Job 42:6, Isa. 6:1-5, Dan. 10:8). Visions of God break the heart, because, by the sight the soul then has of his perfections, it sees its own infinite and unspeakable disproportion, because of the vileness of its nature.' John Bunyan⁸

3. God uses the Broken Hearted

'Gracious affections flow out of a broken heart... All gracious affections that are a sweet odour to Christ, and that fill the soul of a Christian with a heavenly sweetness and fragrantcy, are broken-hearted affections. A truly Christian love, either to God or men, is a humble broken-hearted love.' Jonathan Edwards⁹

⁶ Thomas Hooker, *The Broken Heart* in 'The Soules implantation into the Naturall Olive,' p. 16.

⁷ Thomas Hooker, *The Broken Heart* in 'The Soules implantation into the Naturall Olive,' p. 18. I have rendered the old English of all quotes Thomas Hooker into modern English. In this instance, the phrase 'The great men and excellent leaders' is my modernising of the original: 'The brave spirits, and boone Gallants of the world.'

⁸ John Bunyan, *The Acceptable Sacrifice*, Banner of Truth, p. 34.

⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*, Banner of Truth, p. 266.

“The Lord is near the broken-hearted.” Psalm 34:18

The God of the Bible, is the God of the broken-hearted. The world cares little for the broken hearts. Indeed, people often break hearts by their cruelty, their falseness, their injustice, their coldness - and then carry on as heedlessly as if they had trodden only on a worm! But God cares. Broken-heartedness attracts Him. The perfume of grief on earth draws Him down from heaven.

God is the God of those who fail. Not that He loves those who stumble and fall, better than those who walk tall without stumbling; but He helps them more. The weak believers get more of His grace than those who are strong believers. There is a special divine promise, which says, "My divine power is made perfect in weakness." When we are conscious of our own insufficiency, then we are ready to receive of the divine sufficiency. Thus our very weakness is an element of strength. Our weakness is an empty cup which God fills with His own strength. You may think that your weakness unfits you for noble, strong, beautiful living or for sweet, gentle, helpful serving. You wish you could get free of it. It seems to burden you - an ugly spiritual deformity. But really it is something which - if you give it to Christ - He can transform into a blessing, a source of His power. The friend by your side, whom you envy because he seems so much stronger than you are, does not get so much of Christ's strength as you do. You are weaker than him but your weakness draws to you divine power, and makes you strong. "He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds." Psalm 147:3' J. R. Miller¹⁰

4. Be Broken Hearted not just over one's own sins, but also for the Lost

‘Many think they can love our generation and float on a comfortable mattress. If you love God and love men and have compassion for them, you will pay a real price psychologically. So many people seem to think that if the Holy Spirit is working, then the work is easy. Do not believe it! As the Holy Spirit works, a man is consumed. This is the record of the revivals; it is the record of those places in which God has really done something. It is not easy!

As I stand and try to give out a message to the world at the café tables and in the universities, publicly and privately - it costs a price. Often there is discouragement. Many times I say, 'I can't go up the hill once more. I can't do it again?' And what is God's answer? Well, first it is important to know that God does not scold a man when his tiredness comes from his battles and his tears from compassion.’ Francis Schaeffer¹¹

Mat. 23:37

Acts 20:31

2 Tim. 1:4

5. The Distinctive Prayer of a Regenerate heart – Contrition

Ps. 51

¹⁰ J. R. Miller, *Beatitude for the Unsuccessful* (1892).

¹¹ Francis Schaeffer, *Death in the City*, p. 59.