

JOY AND GLADNESS FOR MOURNING SOULS

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"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." Isaiah 61:3

In speaking this morning upon the testimony of Jesus Christ, of the way in which that testimony is received, and how those who received it set to their seal that God was true, I might have quoted, had they occurred to my mind, these striking words of the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is from his lips that they proceed. This is evident not only from the general bearing of the chapter, but also from the express declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. You will remember that on one occasion, soon after he had entered upon his ministry, he came to Nazareth and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And he opened the book at the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Lk.4:18). Then follows the passage which I have just read. And then sitting down to expound the Scriptures, according to his custom, he added, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Lk.4:21). Now, how could that Scripture be fulfilled in their ears, unless he was the Person whose office it was to comfort all that mourn, and do the whole of that blessed work which is here spoken of?

In looking at these words, I shall, with God's blessing, attempt to show:

I. The *character of the spiritual mourner*, for it is who is here spoken of.

II. The *sweet and blessed promises* which God has given to the spiritual mourner.

III. The *glory* which redounds to God thereby.

In the verse preceding the text we find this expression: "To comfort all that mourn." Now, as if to guard us from viewing these words in too general a sense, the Lord has limited their meaning in the next verse: "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion." The promise, therefore, is not to those who mourn generally, but to those who mourn specially; not to those who are in heaviness and sorrow from mere worldly trouble, but to those characters who, as under the teaching of God, are mourners in Zion. No one can be a mourner in Zion unless he is a partaker of grace, regenerated, and quickened into divine life by the operation of the blessed Spirit on the heart. Wherever, then, grace takes possession of a man's heart, raising up in him a life that never can die, it makes him a spiritual mourner. Until this work is wrought in the soul, it has no place in the promises, no situation marked out for it in the Word of God, nor is it in a suitable state to receive the consolations of the gospel.

But I would not limit the mourners here spoken of to spiritual mourners only; for if I were to draw that very narrow line, how many trials, sufferings and sorrows, I should pass by, and thus almost say that such troubles needed no divine consolations. Therefore, though I limit the mourners to the mourners in Zion, I do not limit Zion's mourning to spiritual mourning, but I take in all those subjects of trial and grief which God alone by his Spirit and grace can comfort in, and support under. As, then, the Lord has promised that he will

comfort all that mourn, every spiritual mourner who has a case of trouble and sorrow, has an interest in this promise. But apart from the varied sources of temporal distress that God's children often so keenly feel, more keenly and deeply than worldly people, as possessing more tender and exquisite feelings, they have troubles peculiar to themselves, which make them emphatic mourners in Zion. These have an inward grief, a heart sore, that makes them go burdened, and that sometimes heavily, all the day long. Wherever there are real convictions of sin, a true wound made in the conscience by the Spirit of God, there will, there must, be mourning. Sin is a thing so vile in itself; an object that God so essentially and eternally hates; a matter that lay with such burdensome weight and power upon Jesus; and was such a source of intense grief and distress to the darling Son of God, when it bowed down his sacred body and soul in the garden of Gethsemane, and pressed him down well-nigh into hell upon the cross, that every saint of God who has it opened up in his conscience by a true spiritual conviction, must become a spiritual mourner.

But apart from the weight of distressing convictions in the first work of grace on the soul when this mourning first begins, look at a child of God all through his course, to the day when he receives his immortal crown; take him all through the wilderness, from the moment that life divine enters his soul till the end of his days when the waves of Jordan are in sight, and he passes through its floods into the realms of bliss, he will be more or less a spiritual mourner on account of the evil that dwelleth in him. Nay, the more that he knows of his heart, the longer he walks in the divine life, and the more that sin is opened up to him as seen in the light of God's countenance, the more will he be a spiritual mourner. Sometimes he will mourn over the evils of his heart, that his lusts and corruptions are so strong, and he so

weak against them; sometimes over the temptations that Satan has laid for his feet, in which he has been entangled, and by which he has been cast down; sometimes over the absence of God, and that he finds so little access to his blessed Majesty. Sometimes he will mourn as feeling how little grace he has; at another time he will grieve over his shortcomings and inability to realise that vital godliness in his soul which is stamped by the approbation of God as coming from himself. Sometimes he will mourn over his backslidings; how he has been tangled in and given way to his lusts; how he has been overcome by his temper; how he has murmured and fretted against God's dealings with him, so as at times to have been almost ready to break forth into cursing, commit suicide, or do something desperate. As these and a thousand other evils are felt in a man's heart, they make him mourn, and as the text speaks, have ashes for his covering. He mourns also over his want of fruitfulness: and that he cannot be, do, or say what he would. He has strong desires to adorn the doctrine of God in all things, to have spirituality of mind and tenderness conscience; and to lead a life of faith, prayer, and watchfulness. But he is obliged to confess with the apostle, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom.7:19). For his mind is often, very often, doing the exact contrary. All these things, combined with Satan's powerful temptations, and his many misgivings on account of the hidings of God's face from him on account of his sins, with his thorough inability to cast off the burdens that press him down, sink him very low. And when he cannot realise any manifestations of God's love, and all is dark and desolate, he seems as if he never knew anything aright, and is ready to cut himself off as a hypocrite or a dead professor. In addition to all this, he may have also to experience persecution for the truth's sake from those, perhaps, near and dear to him; so that it is not one, but many sorrows, that he has to wade through, so as at times to make him, in

his feelings, of all men most miserable.

But the Lord, speaking of this mourner, has given certain definite marks by which he may be more clearly and distinctly known. He speaks, for instance, of "ashes" in connection with this spiritual mourner, for he has promised to give him "beauty for ashes." To understand this allusion, we must see what is the scriptural meaning of that emblem. In ancient times ashes were an outward token of mourning, much as black clothes are so with us. But they convey also a sense of deep humiliation. Job in his affliction sat down among the ashes. Sackcloth and ashes are often coupled in Scripture, as marks of mourning, as Job speaks, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). When Tamar suffered dishonour from her brother, she rent her clothes and put ashes on her head, as an outward mark of mourning for her degradation and humiliation. There is much significancy in the emblem. Ashes are but the burnt remnant and dark residue of what was once bright and fair. Thus ashes, as spoken of in connection with the spiritual mourner, imply that what was once fair and beautiful in his eyes, when consumed in the furnace are but a dark, miserable remnant. The spreading of ashes over the crown of his head seems to imply that the spiritual mourner could not take a place too low, that he would hide his face in the dust, and spread over himself and all his once boasted glory, the present felt humiliation of his soul before God, that he is in his own sight a miserable wretch, a sinner indeed. Another mark which the Lord gives of the spiritual mourner in Zion, is that he is clothed with the spirit of heaviness. There is something very expressive in this figure. Heaviness of heart is compared to a huge cloak or other garment, which not only covers him all round, but rests upon him with a weight that depresses his spirit down to the dust. How many things there are to produce in a believing soul a spirit of heaviness! Some of

God's people seem almost constitutionally disposed to dejection of mind, gloomy sensations and dismal apprehensions, both in providence and in grace. Dark, gloomy clouds continually pass over their mind, and Satan helping forward their distress, holds up before their eyes a thousand evils that may never come to pass, yet are as much dreaded as if they were real, and even more painfully felt. This mental depression clothes them as with a garment which closes in on every side, hampering every movement with its seemingly inextricable folds. These spiritual mourners, then, are the people for whom the Lord has a special regard. These are they whom the Lord Jesus Christ was anointed by the Holy Ghost to comfort.

This brings us to our second point, which is to show:

II. The *sweet and blessed promises* which God has given to the spiritual mourner. He is specially appointed for them that mourn in Zion, and he was anointed for the express purpose of giving unto them "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

All this, be it observed, is of divine appointment. We never can lay too much stress on God's appointments as the great Ruler, Director, and Controller of all things. We must not look on the varied events that are ever taking place in this world as a mere matter of chance, a confused medley, as though these multitudinous circumstances were all thrown like marbles into a bag, and turned out without any order or arrangement. God is a God of order. In the natural world, the world of creation, all is in order. In the spiritual world, the world of grace, all is in order; and in the providential world, the world of providence, all is order too. To our mind, indeed, all often seems disorder. But this arises from our ignorance, and not seeing the whole as one definitely arranged plan.

This God holds in his hands. If you were to see a weaver working at a Jacquard loom, and saw nothing but the threads and cards jumping up in continual motion, you would see nothing but confusion, nor could you form the slightest conception of the pattern which was being worked. But when the whole was completed, and the silk taken off the roller, then you would see a pattern arranged in beautiful order, every thread concurring to form one harmonious design. But all this was known beforehand by the artist who designed the pattern, and every arrangement of the cards was made in strict subserviency to it.

But if this is the case as to Gods appointments in providence, how much more is it true of his glorious designs in grace. Every trial and temptation, affliction and sorrow, are but the result of a definite plan in the eternal mind. Yet to us how often all seems confusion! This confusion is not so much in the things themselves, as in our mind. Job surrounded by trouble cried out, "I am full of confusion" (Job 10:15). Yet we can see in reading his history that all his trials were working toward an appointed end. So every trial, exercise, temptation or affliction, which has ever lain, or ever will lie, in your path if you are a child of God, has been marked out by infinite, unerring wisdom. Is not the commonest road laid out according to a definite plan, and does not the surveyor when he lays it out put every mile-stone in its proper place? So, does not the Lord lay out beforehand the road in which his people should walk? And does he not put a trial here and a sorrow there, an affliction at this turning and a cross at that corner, but each definitely laid in infinite wisdom, to bring the traveller safe home to Zion?

But as the Lord has appointed the mourning, and heaviness, and ashes, so has he appointed the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may administer consolation to the spiritual mourners. And do

you not think that when God in his infinite wisdom chose his own dear Son, he selected one who was fit for the work? Who else was fit for it? For the mourners in Zion have temptations and sorrows which need a support and consolation which the Son of God only can give; no man, no minister, no, not even an angel from heaven without special commission for that purpose, could comfort them, because they need an Almighty deliverer; and their troubles being chiefly spiritual, they need spiritual relief to reach the root of the case, so as to make the remedy adequate to the malady. When God, then, in his infinite wisdom appointed his dear Son to comfort all that mourn, he appointed one able to do the work; not only one whose heart and affections were engaged in it, not only one willing but strong to do it, having in his glorious Person the infinite strength and power of Godhead. Therefore the Lord said, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Psa.89:19). He came, then in God's appointed time, and the Holy Spirit rested on him without measure, and anointed him to preach these good tidings; "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (verse 1). Both his appointment to the office, and the fulfilment of it, are alike of grace. The creature has no standing here, nor do I read a single word about their merit or their good works. They mourn, it is true; but God sees no merit in tears, no merit in mourning, no merit in suffering, no merit in sorrow. Were their eyes a fountain of tears, it could not wash one sin away. If, then, the Lord look with pity on these mourners, it is all of his grace. His eyes are fixed on their trials, and his heart sympathises with their temptations; for he himself in the days of his flesh was similarly tempted, and he has a fellow-feeling with them in all their afflictions, for he too was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa.53:3). But not only does he pity. Pity without help is but cold work. He

therefore helps as well as pities. Thus he gives them beauty for ashes. We have seen them sitting in ashes, mourning over their sins and sorrows, writing bitter things against themselves as seeing within and without little else but misery and death. He comes, then, and by his blessed Spirit speaks a word of pardon or peace home to their heart and conscience. When that word comes with a divine power into their souls, it takes away the ashes; that is, it removes the sense which they have of their ruin and misery, takes away their lamentation and sorrow, and makes their face to shine. This is giving them beauty. But whose beauty? Not their own, but his. But how can he give them his beauty is that communicable? Yes, by giving them a view of himself, according to his promise, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty" (Isa.33:17). When, then, their eyes see the King in his beauty, as they catch a glimpse of his beautiful countenance, that beauty is reflected from his face to theirs. So it was with Moses. He went up the steeps of Sinai burdened and dejected with the sins of the people over whom God had made him head. But when he got there, he communed with God; and seeing his uncreated beauty and glory, it was so reflected upon him, and his face so shone with the glory of God, that the people were not able to look upon him. Therefore we read, Moses took a veil and put it over his face. There was such a contrast between the beauty and glory of his face and the darkness and carnality of their minds, that they could not bear the sight.

Next to the beauty of the Lord, nothing is so beautiful as grace. It is beautiful as being glory begun, glory in the bud. Indeed, until we can see and feel what a beautiful thing grace is in this time state, we have as yet no conception of what glory will be in an eternal state. To admire beauty is natural to us. We naturally admire human beauty, a beautiful countenance, a graceful figure. In fact, the whole creation of

God is full of beauty, from the sun which blazes in the sky to the insect which crawls on the ground. A man can have no eyes who does not see beauty in every formation of God's hand. In fact, in this world there is nothing really misshapened, deformed or ugly, but sin, and what has been produced by sin. But all created beauty falls short of uncreated beauty. I mean thereby, the beauty of grace, the image of Christ in the soul. This is real beauty, what the Scripture calls "the beauty of holiness:" "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning" (Psa.110:3). The people of God are here represented as coming forth from the womb of the morning, bespangled, as it were, with the dew, reflecting in every drop the beauties of holiness from the Sun of Righteousness.

But there is this peculiar feature in spiritual beauty, a person who has it never sees it in himself; nay, he that has most grace sees himself most black, and therefore cannot see the beauty which grace puts upon him. This beauty dwells not outwardly in face or form, but in the inner man of the heart, and consists in the reflection of Christ's suffering image. Of this beauty, humility is the most striking feature, so that the more the Lord comes into a man's soul in the manifestations of his love and grace, and the more comeliness and holiness he sees the more he abhors himself in dust and ashes, and loathes himself in his own sight because of his abominations. But every grace of the Spirit combines to one beautiful whole; and yet how imperfect a reflection is it of the consummate beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, as the bride says, is "white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand" (Song of Sol.5:10).

This, then, is the beauty which he gives for the ashes of humiliation in which the child of God sits; these black ashes,

fit emblem of the burning up of creature righteousness. The Lord takes these away, and puts upon him instead his own uncreated beauty, that glorious garment of imputed righteousness, which he has wrought out, and wherewith he clothes the believing soul; and to this he adds his own image, that new man of grace, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Now, is not this a glorious exchange, to put off ashes and to put on beauty, to put off self and put on Christ, to put off misery and put on mercy, to put off sackcloth and be girded with gladness?

The second thing which the Lord gives is "the oil of joy." There is something very noteworthy in this expression. The Lord not only gives his mourning child joy, but the oil of joy. Joy, mere joy, is not enough when not attended with the oil of joy; it seems too light for a mourning soul. There is something in a believer's heart, a holy wisdom and caution, which rejects lightness, a sacred tenderness of godly feeling, which sees through and rejects whatever wears the appearance of natural excitement. Flashes of natural joy are too shallow, too empty, too superficial for him. He rejects them therefore as flattering and delusive, as rather setting the carnal mind on fire and buoying up the natural spirits than watering and bedewing the soul. A believer may well be suspicious as knowing the value of the article. A tradesman who understands his business is not taken with a glossy surface put upon the goods, but he examines how the whole article has been put together, of what original materials it consists, and how they have been worked up. It is only the ignoramus who is deceived by a smooth surface and a glittering outside. So a child of God, who has been long weighted down by trials and temptations, and has had to prove his religion over and over again from first to last, is not taken with the outside appearance of things; but what he looks at is reality, something solid and abiding, something

heavenly, divine, and spiritual, commended to his conscience as the true gift of God. The joy, therefore, which the Lord gives is "the oil of joy," because it drops with unctuous power into the soul, spreading and communicating its supplying, softening effects to every part, and penetrating down into the very depths of the guilty, burdened conscience.

Do not be deceived with a false joy. Recollect, there is the joy of the hypocrite; and we read of those, "who received the word with joy" (cf. Lk.8:13). Were those right characters? No! For in time of temptation they fell away; they had joy, but not the oil of joy; the husks, but not the kernel of joy. There was no unction, no power, no depths, no reality, no blessedness in their joy; it was a mere flash in the pan, which came and went in a moment. Not such joy as this oil of joy, but that carnal excitement which the ranters often produce among their people by lively tunes, thundering preaching, and exciting their hearers to burst forth into loud exclamations about grace and glory, deluding them into the belief that they have received the pardon of their sins. A carnal preacher may in this way scatter joy by handfuls amongst a congregation, and persons may be so deluded as to think this is "joy and peace in believing" (Rom.15:13). But all this wildfire is a very different thing from the oil of joy. That comes with softness and stillness into the soul as from the lips of Jesus; those lips into which God has poured his grace, for he has anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows (Psa.45:17). Thus we read of the precious ointment which was upon his head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. This was the anointing which was given to Christ by the Holy Ghost when he anointed him to preach good tidings unto the meek, and it is the same anointing, called in the text the "oil of joy," which flows out of Christ into the soul of a believer.

Examine, therefore, your joys. If a person give you change for a sovereign, you look over the shillings to see if there are any bad ones or not. Do the same in your spiritual traffic. If, then, you get anything in hearing the Word, in reading the Scriptures, or in secret prayer that looks like joy, examine it well, whether Satan may not try to put upon you some false coin out of his mint, and see whether it bears the King's image and superscription stamped upon it by heaven's own mint. What is real will always bear examination. But when really favoured and blessed, Satan may still work upon your mind to disbelieve its power and reality, and you may be persuaded at times to call all in question. But when the Lord comes again with a few drops of the same divine unction, you can look back and see from the sweet effects it produces that it was the oil of joy, and not the husks of joy which you enjoyed before. In fact, spiritual mourners can do with nothing less than the oil of joy; and that they may learn to distinguish and value this is the reason why the Lord puts them into so hot a furnace. If they were not spiritual mourners, with ashes on their heads, they might be deceived by anything and everything, but they are too keen sighted to be deceived now. If a man is lying under a half-a-hundredweight it is not the finger of a little child that can take it off. The child may play with the ring, but it cannot lift off the weight. Thus if a soul be really weighted down and burdened by sin and sorrow, temptation and fears, it is not a child playing with the ring that can lift off the heavy load; but it is Christ himself coming with a divine power, who takes the burden off a sinner's conscience, and when he does it he gives him "the oil of joy for mourning."

The third blessing Christ is anointed to give is "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." When we consider how many things there are to burden the conscience and distress

the mind, we see how often a believer is pressed down with the spirit of heaviness. This surrounds him as with a cloak; but when the Lord comes and takes it from him, he clothes him with a change of raiment; and this, making him praise and bless his holy name, is called "the garment of praise."

But time will not admit of our dwelling further upon his point; I pass on therefore to show:

III. The *glory* which redounds to God from this work of the blessed Saviour. Believers thus highly favoured are to be called "trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." God has here compared his people to trees, but trees of a peculiar kind, trees of righteousness. What is there in the figure of a tree that seems to bear upon the experience of a child of God? Is there anything which seems to carry more life in it than a tree?

Look at a tree in spring. How it seems starting into life! How the sap is swelling every bud, and pushing forth every leaf into verdure and beauty! What an emblem of the life of God in the soul received out of Christ's fulness! Thus a child of God resembles a tree in possessing a flow of divine life in his soul. But again, a tree grows from a small beginning, such as an acorn, a cone, a kernel. But it expands till it grows up into the monarch of the wood. So in a child of God there is a growth in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A child of God does not grow like Jonah's gourd, nor start up and become a giant in a day. An oak requires a century to bring it to maturity. Many storms has that oak endured, many piercing east winds have howled through its boughs, many a thick weight of snow has rested upon its branches, many a hail-drop has smitten its leaves, and many rays, too, of the sun have shone upon it. But they have all contributed to its growth, and brought it to its

present maturity. So a child of God has many storms and tempests to endure, as well as to enjoy the warm south wind and genial sun; but all combine to strengthen him, and make him grow up into the knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

Yet how gradual is the growth of a tree! We do not see it grow when always upon the spot, yet if we come back after a few years have run their round, almost our first exclamation is, "How the trees are grown!" So in grace. We cannot usually see whether we grow or not. Nay, in our own feelings we often seem at a standstill; or even, shall I say, we often seem as if we went backwards instead of forwards, were drooping and decaying instead of advancing and flourishing. Yet there is a growth, if we feel more of our deep and desperate sinfulness, and if we see more of the suitability of the Lord Jesus to our every want. If we feel salvation to be wholly of grace, and cast our soul more believingly and unreservedly upon it, there is a growth; and though we may not see it ourselves, others may see it for us and in us.

But a tree has buds, leaves, blossoms, and fruit. So has a Christian. When the sap received out of Christ's fulness flows into his soul, he pushes forth the buds of hope. As these swell and spread, he puts forth the green leaves of a consistent profession. In due time the blossoms of love hang thick upon the branches; and these are followed by the fruits of a consistent, godly life.

But a believer is called in the text, "a tree of righteousness." In three senses is a believer a tree of righteousness. First, by the imputation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is unto him and upon him. Secondly, by the impartation of a holy nature, whereby he is inwardly righteous. And thirdly, by the production of those works of righteousness, which through

Christ Jesus are to the glory of God.

But he is also said to be, "the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified." Man has no hand in the work of God; all he can do is to mar it. You might see, perhaps, a clever and skilful gardener planting a tree. Now, suppose some stupid fellow, thoroughly ignorant of gardening, were to come forward and say, "Let me help you, master; I think I can do it better than you," rudely taking hold of the stem. Would not his fingers be more likely to move the tree from the situation in which the skilful gardener had put it, and altogether spoil the work, than do any real good? A fellow not fit to handle a spade would be very presumptuous were he so to interfere. So in grace. The tree of righteousness is the planting of the Lord. Do not you think the Lord knows how to plant his trees? Does not he know the right soil to put them into, the depth of mould in which to plant them what sort of fence to put round them to keep off the cattle or other injurious animals? Does not the Lord know how many showers of rain they want, and how many days of bright sunshine, to draw them up to beauty and fruitfulness? Is it not, then, an insult to God to consider the help of man necessary, as if God were not sufficient for his own work? Such interference certainly seems to cast contempt upon the God of all grace.

But why all this? Is it not "that he might be glorified?" Yes! The whole is for his own declarative glory. Why was the world called into existence? For the glory of God. Why was Adam created? For the glory of God. Why were you born? For the glory of God. But you say, "Perhaps I may be damned." Even that would be for the glory of God. For though it is a tremendous thought, yet it is perfectly true, that God's justice is glorified in the damnation of sinners. What were his words to Pharaoh? "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth"

(Rom.9:17). If it were not so, God's glory would not be seen in all things. Therefore, even in those who perish in their sins the glory of God's justice is made manifest. Were it otherwise, how could the righteous acquiesce in the ruin of those near and dear to them? The wife in hell, the husband in heaven! or the contrary. The father in the realms of bliss, the child in the abode of misery! Those once united in the tenderest ties torn asunder, never to meet again. An eternity of joy for one, an eternity of despair for the other. Now, how could the righteous acquiesce in this dispensation, unless they saw in it the manifestive glory of God? It would mar the anthems of bliss if they could look down from the battlements of heaven into the weltering abyss of hell, and there see mother, wife, or child damned, and themselves saved, unless they felt a holy acquiescence in the will of God. These are tremendous depths, I admit, and the soul pauses at the brink with solemn feeling; but nature is dumb when the glory of God is seen. Aaron felt this when his sons were struck dead at the altar, and he held his peace; and David, when Absalom was taken from him in the midst of his rebellion. Job felt the same when he lost his children all at one stroke. His words were, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). Until we come here, we are rebellious against God under such afflicting dispensations. It is indeed hard for flesh and blood; it seems to cut the soul to the very centre, and make the flesh quiver as under the sharp knife. Still the soul must submit to all, knowing that God must be glorified.

But the glory of God shines forth especially in the trees of righteousness. This point, certainly, you will admit, if you cannot go with me into the depths I have been speaking of, and are ready to say, "I never can think God can be glorified in the misery of the damned." I do not ask you to think so now. But the time will certainly come, if you are a child of

God, when you will be brought to acknowledge it. But this you will certainly admit: That God will be glorified in the salvation of the elect. All their sorrows, temptations and afflictions, that they pass through in providence and grace, with all their consolations, hopes, and enjoyments, are for this end, that God may be glorified.

Now, is not this everything the soul can desire? In what do you think consists the bliss of angels? That God may be glorified. When God despatches an angel from his presence to cut off a king, afflict a city with pestilence, send war and sword into the corners of the earth, drown mighty armaments, or perform any of those offices which are the work of angels, does he stop and say, "I cannot do it?" He would cease to be an angel directly he paused to execute the will of God. That pause would change him into a fiend of hell, and destroy his nature as an angelic being. Some of our old divines would not allow a man could have a deliverance until brought to glorify God in his own damnation. So convinced were they that until brought to this point a man did not thoroughly feel his lost condition.

Here, then, we close our subject, ascribing with the suffering saints on earth, and the glorified spirits in heaven, praise, honour, and glory to God and the Lamb.