

The Hope of the Cast-down Soul

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, July 17, 1845

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God." Psa. 42:5

There is something singularly tender and pathetic in the enquiry that David here makes of his own soul. He addresses it as the faithful and tender companion of all his joys and all his sorrows—his treasure and his all. For if our soul be happy, we must needs be happy; if our soul be troubled, we must needs be troubled; if our soul be safe, we must needs be safe; if our soul be cast down, we must needs be cast down too. Not that there is any thought or feeling in man distinct from his soul—I mean not that. But David here addresses his soul, as being that which is the most precious part of man, redeemed at an infinite price by the blood of the Lamb; and the prosperity or adversity of which must ever deeply interest him.

In this pathetic and affectionate address to his soul, we may notice two things.

I.—*The question itself—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?"*

II.—*The encouragement that he addresses to his cast down and disquieted soul—"Hope thou in God."*

I.—It is evident from the very form of *the question* that David here puts, that his soul was "cast down." If it were not "cast down, and disquieted in him," the enquiry that he makes as to the cause of its disquietude would be utterly

useless.

But we may take these words as applicable not to David only at the time he put the question, but as suitable also to the family of God who tread in the experience of David.

Let us look, then, at some of the things which cause the souls of God's people to be often "cast down" within them.

1. But, first, what is it to be "*cast down*?" It is to be depressed; to feel our soul bowed down within us; to be sunk low, in a low spot; to be brought off from presumption, false confidence, levity, profanity, pharisaism, and worldliness; and by the work of the Spirit upon us, to be brought into that low place, out of which nothing but the hand of the Lord evidently stretched out and his arm made bare can deliver us.

Now there are many things that cause the souls of God's family to be "cast down" from time to time within them.

1. *The guilt of sin.* If there be anything that casts the soul down more than another, that sinks it into a low spot before the throne of the Most High, it is the guilt of sin lying with weight and power upon the conscience. And when I speak of *guilt*, I do not confine it to the first convictions of sin produced by the law in the application of the spirituality of the commandment to the conscience: but I mean the felt sense of sin, as it pursues us all our journey through, as it perpetually rises up in our heart, polluting the conscience, and striving ever to regain the mastery. This it is that makes the guilt of sin lie with weight upon the soul. I do believe, from soul experience, that one of the greatest, if not the greatest burden and trial to the child of God, is the daily, hourly, minutely, momentarily workings of sin. The adulterous eye, the roving heart, the defiled imagination, the constant

stream of iniquity polluting every word and thought, every feeling and desire, is and must be a burden to the soul, just in proportion as the fear of God lives and works in a man's conscience. And whenever sin gets the mastery over us, though it be but for a short time, (I am not speaking here necessarily of gross sins, or of outward falls; for sin in some shape or other is perpetually striving to rule within where it does not rule without), guilt will as surely follow it as the shadow does the sun. But even where sin does not get the mastery, those whose consciences are tender in God's fear continually feel the workings of pride, hypocrisy, presumption, and self-righteousness; of carnal desires, of filthy lusts, of worldly-mindedness, and of every thing that is hateful and vile in the eyes of a holy God. Nay, do we not continually find how, in spite of all our desires, and all the resolutions we make (which are not wise in making) to the contrary, how instantaneously temptation sets fire to the combustible materials we carry within? and what an awful flame there is at times bursting forth in our carnal mind? These things, I am sure, will bring guilt, shame, and sorrow upon every conscience that is quickened to fear God; and just in proportion to the depth and working of godly fear in a man's soul will be the burden of sin from time to time upon his conscience.

2. Another thing that casts down the souls of God's family is *the unceasing conflict* which they have to maintain between that in them which desires to live under God's leading, and that in them which desires to live after the course of this world. In other words, the conflict betwixt nature and grace, betwixt the spirit and the flesh, will always cast down the soul in proportion to the intensity of the struggle. To be baffled, as we are hourly baffled, in all our attempts to do good; to find the carnality of our hearts perpetually obstructing every desire that rises in our bosom to be

heavenly minded, spiritual, enjoy God's word, feel his presence, and live to his honour and glory; thus to have the tide of carnality and pollution perpetually bearing down every spiritual desire in the heart—must not that cast down the soul that covets nothing so much as to live under a sense of God's presence and favour? And that this conflict should be a perpetual and unceasing one; that we should have so little respite from it; that it should not be merely now and then, but more or less, in proportion to the depth of godly fear, always be going on in our soul—must not this cast down the poor soul that is the subject of it? I am sure it cast me down day after day, and sometimes hour after hour, to feel such an unceasing and perpetual conflict betwixt that in us which is spiritual, heavenly, and holy, and that in us which is earthly, carnal, sensual, and devilish.

3. Another thing which casts down the soul is *the hiding of God's countenance*; the inability to realize his most gracious presence, or feel the manifestations of his most precious favour. How continually the souls of God's people are cast down by reason of their inward darkness! When the Lord is the light of their countenance—when he supports them by his gracious word and Spirit, they are not cast down. But when they cry, and he does not hear; when they pour out their hearts before him, and get no answer; when in spite of all the tears that wet their cheeks, and the convulsive sobs that heave from their bosom, there is no word, no testimony, no sweet inshining, no precious flowing out of his gracious presence and love—must not that make the souls of God's people to be cast down within them?

4. *The temptations* that the Lord's people are so painfully exercised with, is another thing that makes their souls to be often cast down within them. There is in the bosom of the child of God a holy principle—as holy as God is holy, as pure

as God is pure—for it is God's own nature, that is, his communicable nature, as we read, 2 Pet. 1:4, "partakers of the divine nature." This pure nature must ever hate sin, must ever loathe that which is opposed to Christ's image, must always painfully feel the presence and power of everything that is opposed to its spirituality, holiness, and purity.

Now, when a man is assailed with temptations to blasphemy, to curse and swear, to doubt the truth of the Scriptures, to question the very being of God, to disbelieve the Godhead of Jesus, to commit the worst of iniquities, and these temptations are perpetually struggling and striving for the mastery in his heart—must not this cast his soul down? What life, what power, what tenderness, what reality can there be in a man's religion, if he can feel the waves of temptation roll over his soul, and he as hard under them as a rock in the ocean? Is it not just in proportion to the depth of the work of grace upon a man's heart—in proportion to the spirituality and liveliness of the new man of grace, that temptations are painfully and sensibly felt? Filth is no burden to the filthy; it is the clean that feel the disgusting nature of filth. And so spiritually. Sin to the dead sinner is no burden; temptation to those who have but a name to live is no sorrow. But to the "pure in heart" who shall see God, to the spiritually minded, to the partakers of the divine nature, to those in whose bosoms the Lord of life and glory is enthroned to them, just in proportion to the depth of the Spirit's work upon their heart, must temptation ever prove a burden.

Must not then the people of God be perpetually alive more or less, to the power of temptation? Where is temptation? It is in my bosom. Every lust and obscenity, every unclean bird of night, every base and black reptile—do I not carry about in my bosom a cage of these hideous and ravenous creatures? And will these beasts of prey lie torpid and inert in my

bosom? Will not my old corrupt nature work, and that powerfully—desire, and that actively? Will it not rage, and that often abominably within? If I carry, as I do carry in my bosom, a constant fountain of temptation; and if I have also in me a new principle that is born of God, and is conformed, in its measure, to the mind and image of Christ—must I not groan and grieve, being burdened by the temptations that are constantly springing out of my carnal mind? If I have any spiritual feeling, any tenderness of conscience, any divine life in my heart, any longing to bless and praise God, or any desire to fear him—will not my soul groan under temptation just in proportion to the depth of the Spirit's work in my conscience?

5. *The many afflictions that the Lord's people have to pass through*, is another cause of their souls being cast down. And the Lord means these things to cast them down. Afflictions and trials that never cast them down! Call them afflictions! it is but the name. The Lord in sending afflictions means them to do a certain work. We are high; they are sent to bring us low. We are often standing upon the pinnacle of presumption and confidence; and the Lord sends these troubles to put us in our right spot. We are proud; they are meant to humble. We are worldly; they are meant to purge out of us this worldly spirit. We are carnal; they are sent to subdue this carnality. We are often straying from the Lord into bye-paths! they are meant to bring us by wholesome corrections into the strait and narrow path that leads to glory. Afflictions thereof which are not felt; that never exercise a man, and try his spirit—do not call them afflictions: they are not worth the name; to call them so is but hypocrisy and deceit. But if we "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ"—if we are really among the afflicted people of God, we must expect at times to be cast down and burdened by troubles. Now the Lord sends afflictions for a special purpose; and this special

purpose is, to cast down the soul, that he himself may have the honour of raising it up.

Many of the Lord's people are deeply afflicted by *bodily* afflictions; and those who pass through bodily afflictions (I am a living witness to it) know how they depress the spirit and cast down the soul; and how they open the door for Satan to come in, with many doubts and fears, and many distressing trials and exercises. But how good it is to be thus laid low, and kept low! What a check it is to the spirit of levity, frivolity, worldliness, and folly that there is in our carnal mind! What heavy weights and burdens are needed to have this horrible and abominable levity and frivolity kept effectually down! Now a man cannot be very light and trifling who has a suffering body, and is continually depressed in his spirit by the bodily afflictions he passes through; nor can there be much room for lightness and frivolity in a man's soul, when his poor body is racked with disease and pain. The Lord therefore sends these bodily afflictions upon his people, in order to mortify and subdue that wretched spirit of frivolity which is usually so active in them.

Others of the Lord's family are cast down by heavy *temporal* afflictions. The Lord does not see fit that his people should have this world's honours, riches, and prosperity; they could not stand it. Riches, honours, prosperity, an easy path, do not suit the family of God. They puff up with pride, feed the spirit of worldliness, lead a man into bye-paths, and take him away from the company of God's poor exercised family. The Lord, therefore, for the most part exercises his family with temporal afflictions, with poverty, with distressing circumstances, and thus casts them down, and keeps them down that they may not be lifted up and so drawn away by temporal prosperity.

Others of the Lord's family have to pass through heavy

family afflictions and trials. A dear wife is taken off; a beloved husband is torn from a wife's bosom! a child is smitten down with the hand of disease; or else, the children, instead of being comforts, grow up to be burdens and sorrows to their parents. By these afflictions the Lord often casts down the souls of his people.

Others of the Lord's people are cast down by *their evidences being beclouded*; by many anxious doubts and fears as to the reality of the work of grace upon their souls; by seeing and feeling so little of the love of God shed abroad in their hearts; by having the depths of their unbelief and infidelity open up to their view, and being thus made to fear lest "concerning faith they some day may make shipwreck."

Many are the causes (each "heart knoweth its own bitterness") why the souls of the Lord's people are cast down within them; and this is the case, not only now and then, but more or less unceasingly. For they need continually to be put into a low place; they cannot bear much prosperity; they need to be well plagued and exercised, that they may prize divine consolation, and feel that nothing can support and bless them but the hand of God alone.

2. But David puts another question to his soul—not differing much from the first, but still having a slight distinction—"*Why art thou disquieted in me?*" The expression, "*cast down,*" refers more especially to present feeling; but the word, "*disquieted,*" refers more to the anxiety of the soul in looking to the future.

The causes of trouble in the heart of a child of God are often of this two-fold nature. Not merely does *present* sorrow and affliction cast down the soul at the time; but it is disquieted at the prospect of *the future*. This ever will be the tendency

of affliction and sorrow. Could we see the bow in the cloud, and feel assured the sun would soon shine forth, half the trouble would be taken away. But to see the whole atmosphere enwrapped in misty darkness; to view clouds rising upon all sides of the horizon; not to behold one ray of light piercing through the dark gloom—it is this which makes the soul not merely "cast down" for the present, but "*disquieted*" for the future.

Thus when under guilt, there will be disquietude until pardon is sweetly experienced. When under afflictions, there will be disquietude and doubts how the afflictions will terminate. When engaged in conflict with the enemies of our soul's peace, there will be disquietude lest we should be worsted in the battle. When the body is afflicted with pain and disease, disquietude may be felt whether it will end in death. When family afflictions press down the mind, there will be disquietude what the result may be. In a word, whatever be the source of sorrow that casts down the soul, from the present trouble and present affliction there will be almost necessarily many an anxious glance towards the future, many a watching whether the cloud give any symptom of dispersion, many fears lest the thunder-storm, whose roar we hear in the horizon, and the flashes of which we perceive afar off, will not approach nearer and nearer, and burst wholly upon us. So that when the soul is cast down, distressed, and burdened, it is not merely so with what is taking place at the present; but suspicions and disquietudes arise as to what will be the issue, as to what we may expect, and as to what we may fear for the future.

How gracious and merciful was it of the Lord to cause the soul of David thus to be exercised! How kind and tender it was of him to cause him, by the pen of inspiration, to record in the sacred Scriptures his painful experience! We have

reason to bless God for it. Many of the Lord's dear family have had to take this enquiry into their lips, and with a burdened heart, cry aloud, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?"

II.—But we will pass on to *the encouragement* that David proposes to his own soul. It was, as I hinted, the tender and affectionate partner of all his sorrows; and he desired it to be also the tender and affectionate partner of all his joys. "*Hope thou in God.*" He here addresses himself to his own soul, as though he would cheer it onward, as though he would hold forth to it some prospect of relief, as though he would lay the strong arm of consolation beneath it that it might not utterly sink, as though he would encourage it to look for better times, as though he would say, 'My soul, cast not away all thy confidence'—"Hope thou in God."

This will enable us to look a little at the foundation of the encouragement, strength and relief that David proposed to his soul—"Hope thou in God." What is the source—what is the fountain of hope—of all true and spiritual hope—such as David here encourages his soul to look to?

"Hope in God" springs from various causes. We will endeavour to enumerate a few. But observe. There can only be hope in God, just in proportion as we are brought into a state to need it. The Lord throws nothing away in providence; and the Lord will throw nothing away in grace. Those who have deeply scrutinized the works of God as Creator have admired the simplicity and perfection of his creative hand; nothing is given that was not needed, nothing is withheld that could not be spared; no scantiness on the one hand, no waste or profusion on the other. So it is in the kingdom of grace, as in the kingdom of nature—no good withheld from them that walk uprightly, no superfluous good

wildly lavished upon those who do not need it. Thus we must be brought by the Spirit into a state and case to need these encouragements in order that we may have them.

Consolations without afflictions, liftings up without castings down, communications out of Christ's fulness without previous emptyings, are but delusions. The one must be suitable and proportionate to the other. Preparation for God's bounty is indispensable. If that preparation do not take place, blessings suitable cannot come.

1. Thus, one source of hope in God springs out of the *invitations* that the Lord has given in his word to the poor and needy, to the exercised and distressed, to the burdened and sorrowful. For instance, the Lord says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28.) "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:22.) "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.) These invitations, addressed in God's word to certain characters, are applied from time to time by the blessed Spirit with dew and power to the soul, so as to encourage it to hope in God.

You will observe, that the Psalmist here encourages his soul to hope *in God*. Not in God's mercy, not in God's faithfulness, though both these are needed. But, if I may use the expression, he takes his desponding soul beyond the attributes of God to hope in the Person of God himself. So that, in order that there may be this hope in God, springing out of the suitability and preciousness of the invitation addressed to certain characters, there must be in the heart and conscience a personal knowledge of God—and this springing out of his own manifestations to the soul, and the communication to the heart of that precious faith by which the invitations are received into the affections as set forth in

the Scriptures of truth. Now the effect of the suitability and preciousness of the invitations flowing into the heart and conscience is to raise up a hope in God. It may not be a hope that affords strong consolation; it may not be a hope that entirely overcomes despondency. But yet it shall be a hope that shall raise the soul up from the waves. It is something like a buoy at sea, or the life-boat in a storm; it may often be dashed by the waves that beat upon it, yea, so dashed as to be hidden by the foam. But let there be a subsidence of the troubled waters, let the waves and billows cease, then we see the buoy again; that sure mark of the anchor beneath is not sunk, though it may be hidden for a short space from the view. Thus, hope in God springing out of the suitability, sweetness, truth, and preciousness of the invitations, as they flow with power into the conscience, supports the soul under the waves of doubt and despondency, although it may feel the foam often dash over its poor desponding head, and even fear that it may prove a castaway.

2. But there is a "hope in God" springing out of *the past testimonies* that he has given to the soul. And this is what David seems here especially to allude to. He says, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." In the land of Jordan, and the Hermonites, God had appeared conspicuously for David; and the little hill Mizar had been raised up in his heart and conscience by some testimony from God. He looked to that spot, and stood upon it as a foundation for his hope.

Now every intimation of God's favour that we may have received, every token for good that we may have experienced, every glimpse and glance, every believing view of a precious Christ, every feeling of the power of atoning blood in the conscience, and every manifest shedding abroad

of divine love, is a testimony to which the soul may at times look; and if it could always look there, it would not be cast down and disquieted; nor would David need to raise up his soul and encourage it to hope in the Lord from past testimonies: I believe myself that when our testimonies are beclouded, we would look back for comfort to things we have gone through, but darkness rests upon them. It is with us as with Job; when he went forward, he could not behold; and when he went backward, there was darkness still. When the soul is cast down, testimonies are but dimly seen: If I may use so familiar an illustration, it is like passing through a deep cutting in a railway; we cannot see the country on either side, though there it is in all its blooming beauty. So, as we pass through the deep cuttings in the soul, we cannot see our Mizars, our Ebenezers. They are there; the testimonies remain the same: but just in proportion as we sink, do we sink out of their sight. But David would encourage his soul to hope still in God; he would softly remind it of what it had sweetly experienced. This encouraged his poor troubled heart still to hope in God, looking for better times, and trusting that the Lord would shortly appear.

3. But again; "hope in God" will sometimes spring *from a sight of scriptural evidence raised up by the Spirit of God in the heart*. Observe, I draw a distinction between testimonies and evidences. All testimonies are evidences; but all evidences are not testimonies. The fear of God in a tender conscience; the sacrifices which a man has been enabled to make for God and truth; the hungerings and thirstings after Jesus; godly sorrow and contrition of soul; pantings, longings, and cryings after the Lord—these are evidences. But still, though evidences, we cannot rely upon them as we can rely upon testimonies. They are not strong enough to bear the soul up. We can see and admire them in others, and

believe them to be *in their case* gracious marks of the Lord's teaching; but when we look into our own bosoms, we cannot see these evidences as distinctly in ourselves as we see them in others. In others, we see the fear of God unmixed; in our own hearts, we seem often mingled with servile fear. In others, we see tenderness of conscience; but in our own case, we often feel hardness of conscience. We see others looking out of self; we feel our own hearts full of self. We see in others simplicity and sincerity; we feel in ourselves a corrupt and hypocritical nature. We see in others that which clearly bears the mark and stamp of God; we see in ourselves so very much that bears the mark and stamp of Satan, that we cannot read the mark and stamp of the Lord equally clear. So that the very evidences we admire in others, we cannot rest upon in ourselves, especially when these evidences are beclouded, especially when guilt, shame, and fear rise up in our heart, and cast a lowering cloud over these marks of the life of God in the soul.

But there are times when the Lord's people are kept from utter despondency by the possession of these evidences. The pouring out of soul in prayer, though it does not bring deliverance, yet often gives relief. The workings of a tender conscience cannot deliver a man from the feelings of guilt; but the workings of a tender conscience are an evidence of the Lord's having begun and carrying on a work of grace in the heart. The pantings, longings, and thirstings after Christ in his beauty and glory—these are not satisfactory evidences oftentimes to the soul; yet they do at times relieve it from that despondency and despair into which it otherwise would sink. So that there are times and seasons when these evidences are so beclouded as not to appear as evidences; and again there are times and seasons when these evidences are shone upon by the Holy Spirit, and then they stand forth as evidences. I will illustrate my meaning by a simple figure.

You travel in a dark and cloudy day in the country; you see but little of the steeples and towers of the towns and villages; they are all dark and gloomy. You travel through the same country on a bright and sunny day; the whole scene is changed, and adorned with beauty; the tall spires and towers of the towns and villages are lighted up with the golden rays of the sun, and the whole aspect of the landscape is changed. Yet its features are exactly the same on the lowering and gloomy day, as when they are rendered conspicuous by rays of the sun. So spiritually. Hungering and thirsting after God, godly fear, love to Jesus, simplicity, spirituality, heavenly-mindedness—these are all evidences. But there are times and seasons when dark clouds hover over us, when these landmarks in the soul of what God has done for us are enveloped in darkness. They are there, though they are not seen. But when the light and life of the Spirit, and the shinings in of God's countenance illuminate the dark and gloomy heart, then these evidences stand forth, and shine in the blessed light of God's favour and presence, as evidences of the work of grace in the heart, and then the soul is enabled by them to "hope in God."

Now just in proportion to the "hope in God" will be the soul's relief from being cast down and disquieted within. The reason that we are downcast often in our soul is because we cannot exercise this "hope in God." The anchor is still within the veil; the ship rides securely; it is not carried down the tide of sin; it is not borne down the stream of an ungodly world; the vessel is at anchor; and though the waves and billows that dash against its sides may hide the cable that holds the anchor, yet there is a secret power which keeps the ship in her place. The child of God never entirely loses his hope; he never utterly loses his trust in God; his faith never totally deserts him. What else is it that supports his soul from sinking into despair? What keeps him from plunging into the

filth and abominations of his lustful heart? What preserves him from altogether giving up the very profession of religion? What keeps him from open blasphemy and infidelity? Is there not a secret power in his soul, invisible to himself, acting in a mysterious way, and holding him up, so that concerning faith he does not make shipwreck? Perhaps some of you have made a profession many years, and many have been the waves and billows that have passed over your head; and the longer you live, the more will these billows roll. Never expect to be long at ease; and if you are spiritually-minded, you cannot bear the thought of being at ease. I can speak for myself; I would sooner have trials, temptations, troubles, exercises, crosses, and sorrows—feel my soul kept alive by them, and enjoy the presence and favour of God in them, than be at ease in Zion, and settled upon my lees, or have all prosperity, and know no changes nor reverses. But who has raised up your soul amidst these waves and billows? Have you not sometimes been tempted to cast away all your confidence? Have you not sometimes been so cut up by guilt as to think you never could lift up your head before God and his people again? Have you not been so carried away, at times, by some master sin as to fear lest it break out and bring you to open shame? Have you never got weary of religion altogether; and feared a time would shortly come when you would be made manifest as an hypocrite? And have you not waded through many other inward and outward trials which I cannot enumerate? trials which none but a man's own soul can know; for each heart knows its own bitterness—each one is best acquainted with his own sorrows, burdens, and perplexities. We cannot breathe them all into the ears of our best friend. We admit our friend sometimes into the ante-chamber, into the outer court; but who has ever taken his friend into the inner chamber of his heart's secrets? I never have, and never can. There are depths *there* that the eye of man never has looked into;

none but the eye of God is privileged to look into the very ground of the heart. Child of God! is it not so? What then has kept you during all this storm? What has held you up secretly, when you have resolved upon some sin?—when you have contrived it, plotted it, planned it, and in a fit of wild despair at its vile workings in your heart, have felt that you would plunge into the sin to-day, if you jumped into hell to-morrow. What kept you? Was there not a secret power that held you up in this storm?

When doubts and fears and despondency almost made head in your heart, was there not a secret, "Who can tell?" a longing looking to the Lord, though you might be, with poor Jonah, in the very belly of hell, with the weeds wrapped round your head? and though you may have almost despaired of ever coming forth into the light and liberty of God's countenance, what held, what kept you from utter despair? Was there not a secret breathing of your soul Godward? a mysterious laying underneath of the everlasting arms? a sensible going out of your whole soul and spirit into the bosom of Immanuel? Or when you have backslidden—(and who dare say that he has never backslidden in heart, lip, or life? What! No adulterous eye, no roving heart, no filthy idol that has carried you away captive, and cut you up with guilt and shame?)—but when in this backsliding state, what kept you from utterly abandoning the place where God's word is preached, and turning your back upon the Lord's people, and the cause of God and truth? What brought you upon your knees, made you confess your sins, and caused tears of sorrow to roll down your cheeks, and the sobs of contrition to heave from your bosom? What held you up in these storms? Was it not the mysterious, the secret workings and operations of God the Spirit in your conscience, enabling your soul to hope in God; still to look to, lean upon, and pour out your heart before the Lord—to rely upon his

word of promise, and to believe that whatever he might do would be right?

Now, by some of these encouragements would David support the affectionate partner of all his cares and sorrows, as well as of all his joys. He would cheer her up as she travelled the strait and narrow road, breathe into her ear a little encouragement, and not allow her to cast away all her confidence. He would still endeavour to lay his friendly arm underneath her, and support her in the rough and rugged path—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Is the case altogether hopeless? Art thou utterly disconsolate? Is there not a faithful God to go to? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Are the fountains of his grace and love dried up? Is the love of his bosom exhausted and withered?—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" Is there not an ever-living, ever-loving Jesus to go to? Is there no blessed Spirit to support thee? Is there no kind bosom to lean upon? What! art thou like the world, that when they are cast down, the only relief (if relief it can be called) is to sink altogether out of their own feelings? No, my soul: (he would thus seek to encourage the affectionate partner of his sorrows and joys;) No; the case is not desperate with thee; it is not altogether lost and forlorn; while God the Father rests in his love; while the Saviour is in the presence of God for thee; while his blood can plead; while his love can comfort; while his presence can support; while his favour can bless, there is still encouragement for thee. "Why then, art thou cast down?" All these things are working for thy good; peace and joy can only spring out of trials and exercises. The people of God are predestinated to walk in the paths of tribulation: no "strange thing" has happened unto thee; nothing but what is the lot of saints. Have not the family of God trodden these paths before thee? Did not the Son of God travel this dreary road? Was he not made perfect through sufferings? Did he not pour out his heart to God in strong

cries and tears? Then "why art thou cast down, O my soul?" If these things were to destroy thee—if these griefs were to cut thee off without hope or help—if these trials were to crush thee in the dust without remedy—if these temptations were for thy entire destruction—then, my soul, thou mightest be cast down. But when thou hast such sweet encouragements, such gracious support, such abundant promises—such a God, whose truth cannot be impeached, whose mercies cannot fail—such a High Priest of covenant faithfulness and superabounding grace—such a Three-One God to lean upon—"why art thou cast down?" The present is painful; but will not the present pain be made up by future pleasure? The future is dark; but is not the Lord, who has helped hitherto, a present help; and will he not provide for the future? Has he not promised, "As thy day is, thy strength shall be!" Has it not passed from his faithful lips—"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass?" Dost thou not know that the mercies of God fail not—that they are for evermore? Then, "why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" This is thy remedy. I know that thou art disquieted; and I know what thy poor dark, anxious bosom is heaving with. But still "hope in God," for there is no care or restless disquietude for which the Lord is not thy remedy.

How tenderly David—or rather, the Spirit of God in David—encourages his poor soul—"Hope thou in God." The soul's expectation shall not be cut off; Jesus still lives and reigns within the veil. "Hope thou in God." The time will come when "I shall praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God," adds the sweet Psalmist of Israel. "And believing I shall yet praise him; believing he is the health of my countenance; believing he is my covenant God and Father—I will hope in him, and not give it up; but still look unto him, and lean upon his everlasting arms which cannot fail, and his love that endureth for evermore."

Now is not this precisely suitable to the state and case of every child of God here who is cast down and disquieted? Does not the same God live and reign, who lived and reigned when David wrote? Are not his consolations the same? Is not his love the same? Is not his faithfulness the same? O, it will be our mercy if our numerous causes for being cast down, if our numerous sorrows, anxieties, and disquietudes, lead us away from the creature to "hope in God;" and to believe that we shall yet praise him, "who is the health of our countenance and our God."