

JESUS BINDS UP THE BROKEN-HEARTED.

S E R M O N L.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

To bind up the broken-hearted.

IN these words, we have another piece of work which the Father has put in Christ's hand. He hath sent him "to bind up the broken-hearted." In the words there is, 1. The work itself, *to bind up*; Luke hath it *to heal*, chapter iv. 18. He is employed by the Father as the great Physician to bind up sinners, as a surgeon does a broken bone or any other wound, and to heal them. This belongs to his priestly office. We have, 2, The objects of it; "the broken-hearted," such as are sick of sin, who have their hearts broken and cast down within them, on account of sin, and its consequences. This is a sickness which Christ is sent to cure.

From this subject, you may observe the following

DOCTRINE, Our Lord Jesus is appointed of his Father, to be the Physician of broken-hearted sinners, to bind them up, and heal them.

For illustrating this doctrine, we shall consider,

- I. What is that brokenness of heart, which is here meant.
- II. What is it in and about sin which breaks the man's heart, who is thus evangelically broken-hearted.
- III. What sort of a heart a broken heart is.
- IV. How the Lord Christ binds up, and heals the broken-hearted.
- V. Make some improvement.—We are then,
 1. To inquire what is that brokenness of heart which is here meant, and of which the Lord takes so much notice. The broken-hearted is of two kinds.

1. There is a natural one, arising from natural and carnal causes merely, which worketh death, 2. Cor. vii. 10. Thus many who are very whole-hearted in respect of sin, complain that their hearts and spirits are broken by their crosses, afflictions, and ill usage which they meet with in the world. Thus Ahab, Haman, and Nabal, their hearts were broken with their respective crosses. This is nothing but the crack which a proud heart gets by God's providence, when it will not bow, and is very displeasing in God's sight. This Christ will not heal, till it is broken at another rate. There is,

2. A religious broken heart, which arises from religious causes, namely, sin and its consequences. Sin has sunk into the souls of

all Adam's posterity, like a deadly poison. But most men are whole-hearted, though they carry their death about with them, because the poison has not yet begun to work. The thorn of guilt is sticking in their conscience, but they are easy, for it has not yet begun to fester. But when the poison begins to work, the heart is broken with it. Every such breaking of heart is not the sickness unto life which Christ is sent to heal. There is a twofold religious breaking of heart.—*First*, A mere legal one; Jer. xxiii. 29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" When the heart is broken by the mere force of the law, it is broken as a rock in pieces by a hammer, each part remaining hard and rocky still. As it breaks the heart of a malefactor, to hear his doom pronounced that he must be hanged for his crime; so does the law break the heart of a sinner. This breaks the heart for sin, but not from it. Thus the hearts of Cain and Judas were broken, and thus the hearts of the damned shall be broken for ever. Men may die of these wounds, and never be healed. But there is,—*Secondly*, An evangelical one. When not only the law does its part, but the gospel also breaks the sinner's heart; Zech. xii. 10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." This is that kindly heart-breaking for sin, which is an effect of gospel-grace, a sickness of which never one shall die, it is the very malady which in the text Christ is sent to cure. Sin in an ungracious soul, is like poison in a serpent, it is agreeable to their nature, it does not make them sick at all. Though it be indeed with them as a kind of serpent, from whose killing looks men defend themselves, by holding a glass betwixt them and the serpent, which reflects the poison on the serpent himself, and so kills him. Thus, Psalm vii. 16, "The wicked man's mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings shall return upon his own pate." But in those in whom God has a gracious work, sin is like poison in a man, contrary to his nature, and so makes him heart-sick. Thus the true broken-hearted sinner is as sick of sin as ever a man was of poison, which he had unwarily swallowed down, and would by all means be quit of it. We now come,

II. To inquire what it is in and about sin which breaks the man's heart, who is thus evangelically broken-hearted. There is,

1. The guilt of sin, by which he is bound over to the wrath of God. This, which cannot be taken away but by a free pardon, sick-

ens the poor creature at the heart ; Isaiah xxxiii. 24, " And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick ; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." This guilt is their burden, a burden on their backs, on their heads, on their spirits, which makes them to cry out, as in Hosea xiv. 2, " Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." They find the load, and their spirits are broken under it, as a burden which they are not able to bear. There is,

2. The domineering power of sin, or its tyranny, by which they are led captives to it. This is breaking to them that lusts are so strong, and they so weak, that they cannot get the mastery over them as they would ; Rom. vii. 23, 24, " But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" For some time the yoke of sin sat soft on their necks, they walked willingly after its commandments ; but now they are weary of its dominion, averse to submit to its rule, and their hearts are broken under the weight of those iron fetters from which they would now fain be delivered. There is,

3. The contrariety which is in sin to the holy nature and law of God. The commandment is come into the heart, which it is inclined to obey, and so that contrariety is breaking ; Rom. vii. 13, " Was then that which is good made death unto me ? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that which is good ; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." The love of God has so touched the heart, as to produce in him a considering sin to be bitter as death. The soul is wounded and cast down to think of its grieving the Spirit, trampling on the holy law, sinning against mercies, against checks and reproofs ; and accounts itself very miserable in thus requiting the Lord. There is,

4. The indwelling of sin, and its cleaving so close to a person that he cannot shake it off ; Rom. vii. 24, " O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" He sees sin to be in his heart and life, and not only so, but that it is interwoven into his very nature, and not to be totally extirpated till death. He has now a sincere love to holiness, an ardent desire of perfection, Phil. iii. 13, 14 ; an hearty hatred against sin, and an irreconcilable enmity to it ; so that it cannot but be breaking to him, while he sees the unwelcome guest still within his habitation. There is,

5. Sin's mixing itself with all he does, even with his best duties : Rom. vii. 21, " I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is

present with me." In the fairest line which he writes, sin leaves a blot; and on the purest and most sacred of God's holy things to which he puts hand, sin drops its defilement. This is breaking to a holy heart. When he reviews his duties, and sees what deadness, what want of faith and love is in his prayers, hearing, communicating, and the like, what unwatchfulness, untenderness, and ungodliness, in his daily walk, he is loathsome in his own eyes, and sick, heart-sick of his sinful self.

6. Frequent backslidings into sin are very breaking in this case. The Lord complains of breaking by these; Ezek. vi. 9, "I am broken," says he, "with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes which go a-whoring after their idols." And, on the other hand, they are most breaking to the sensible sinner himself; Jer. xxxi. 18, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." O how heavy is it to a gracious heart, to be so often falling back into evils mourned over and resolved against! How near the heart of a sick man must it go, to be so often relapsing, after he has been in a fair way of cure. Nothing is more powerful to make one say of life, I loathe it. There is,

7. Desertions, hidings of the Lord's face, and interruptions of the soul's communion with God. See how breaking these are, Isa. liv. 6, "For the Lord hath called thee, as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God." Sometimes the soul is brought very low by desertions, and ready to give up all for lost: Lam. iii. 18, "And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." This is a bitter root, springing up from sin, and branches forth divers ways, all of them breaking to a sensible soul. There is spiritual deadness, Song v. 2. Influences from heaven are restrained, and so the heart is bound up as with bands of iron and brass. They cannot either believe, love, or mourn acceptably. All that remains is a secret dissatisfaction with their own case, only a sigh or a groan, because they cannot believe, love, or practice, as they know to be required of them, saying, Isa. lxiii. 17, "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and harden our hearts from thy fear?" This is breaking. Next there is, prayers shut out, Lam. iii. 8. "Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer." While a Christian has access to God by prayer, and can pour his complaints into his bosom, whatsoever be his case, he has not so much to complain of. Thus Hannah, after she had done so, went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. This also encourages them to wait upon the Lord,

Micah vii. 7. But when the door of access seems to be shut, and a thick cloud is drawn about the throne, this is breaking: Lam. iii. 44, "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayers should not pass through." This made Zion say, Isa. xlix. 14, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." And Psalm xx. 2, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"—Again, there is wrath apprehended, the terrors of God seizing on the soul. "The arrows of the Almighty," said Job, "are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit, the terrors of God do set themselves against me," chap. vi. 4. This is of all terrors the most terrible, and what heart can remain whole under it? Prov. xviii. 14, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" See how Heman was broken under this. Psalm lxxxviii. 15, "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." It made Job, a grave solid man, of extraordinary piety, cry out in the congregation, as unable to contain himself, chap. xxx. 29, 30, 31, "I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls; my skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep."—Finally, there are temptations dogging the soul, the more vile and horrid these are, the more dreadful. Sometimes the Lord looses Satan's chains, and he is let almost loose on a Christian, 1 Cor. xii. 7. Hence there are fiery darts shot into the heart, extraordinary temptations as to faith or practice, Eph. vi. 16; and these, though repelled, yet coming back as if a siege were laid to the soul, by an army resolved to master the town. And when, withal, one is left often to fall under these, this is most breaking to a gracious soul. There is,

Lastly, To sum up all in a word, a Christian's sinfulness, with the bitter fruits springing from his sin; these are what are breaking to his heart. He is not what God would, nor what he would have himself to be. He is dissatisfied with himself, yet cannot right his case; Rom. vii. 19, "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I." He brings miseries on himself by his sin, and therefore is sadly broken under the thought of his case.—We now proceed,

III. To shew what sort of a heart a broken heart is. As to this we observe,

1. That it is a contrite or bruised heart; Psalm li. 17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Not only broken in pieces like a rock, but broken to powder, and so fit to receive any impression; so the

word signifies. The heart, though before sometimes like an adamant, which mercies could not melt, nor judgments terrify, is now kindly broken and bruised betwixt the upper and nether mill-stone;—the upper mill-stone of the law, a sense of God's wrath against sin; and—the nether mill-stone of the gospel, of divine love, mercy, and favour, manifested in word and providences. If one going to break a hard stone, would lay it firm upon another hard stone, which will not yield underneath it, then, when you strike, it will either not break at all, or if it do, it will not break in shivers; but either lay it hollow, or on a soft bed, and it will break all in shivers. Thus, lay the hard heart upon the hard law, and strike it with the most dreadful threatenings of hell and damnation, it either will not break at all, or at least it will not break small. But lay the hard heart on the bed of the gospel of mercy and love, and then let the hammer of the law strike, the heart will go asunder. Legal preaching, which casts a veil over gospel-grace, is not the way to make good Christians. Joel lays the hearts of his hearers on mercy, then fetches his stroke with the hammer of the law, and cries, chap. ii. 13, "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." But it is the Spirit of the Lord that carries home the stroke, else it will not do. A broken heart is,

2. A pained heart, an aching heart; Acts ii. 37, "When they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Bruising or breaking a living member is not without pain. God wounds the guilty conscience, that the sinner may see and find what an evil and bitter thing sin is; Jer. ii. 19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." The deeper that the wound is, the sorer the heart is broken. It is pained with sorrow; Prov. xv. 13, "By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." A broken heart is a sorrowful heart for sin, for the offence given to God, the dishonour put on him by it, and the evil brought on one's self. Thus the broken-hearted sinner is a mourning sinner, Zech. xii. 10. The spirit of heaviness sits down on the man, till Christ bind up his wound; his joy is turned into lamentation. The heart is pained also with remorse for sin, Acts ii. 37. Every remembrance of his folly gives him a twitch by the scourge of conscience. He calls himself fool and beast for so requiting the Lord. He is heartily displeased with himself on that

account; Job xlii. 6, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He smites on his breast, as worthy to be pierced, Luke xviii. 13; and smites on his thigh, as worthy to be broken for what he has done. Again, it is pained with anxiety and care how to be saved from sin; Acts xvi. 30, "What shall I do to be saved?" It brings a burden of care upon his head, how to get the guilt removed, the power of it broken, and to get it expelled at length. Never was a man more anxious about the cure of a broken leg or arm, than the broken-hearted sinner is to get his soul-wounds healed, and to be free of sin, which is his greatest cross. The heart is pained with longing desires after grace; Psalm cxix. 20, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." The broken-hearted sinner, sensible of his spiritual wants, longs for the supply of them, pants for it as a thirsty man for water; and the delay of answering these desires makes a sick heart; Prov xiii. 12, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." A broken heart is,

3. A shameful heart. The whole heart in sin is impudent; but the broken heart is filled with shame. Ezra said, chap. ix. 6, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." The man hangs down his head before the Lord, as not able to look up, Psalm xl. 12. He sees himself stripped of his beautiful garments, and is ashamed of his spiritual nakedness, and, with the publican, he cannot lift up his eyes. He is fallen into the mire, and is ashamed to come before God in his defilement, Isa. lxiv. 6. His vain expectations from the way of sin are balked, and so he turns back ashamed. His reproach is discovered, he is convicted of the basest ingratitude, and so is filled with shame. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed, Jer. ii. 26.—A broken heart is,

4. A soft and tender heart, for a broken and a hard heart are opposed to each other; Exek. xxxvi. 26, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." When the spirit of the Lord breaks the heart with gospel-grace, he melts it down, and softens it, takes away that stonyness, stiffness, hardness, that cleaves to the heart in its natural state. The broken-hearted sinner, however, will very probably say, Alas! I find my heart a hard heart. To this I answer, to find the hardness of heart, and to be weighted and grieved with it, is a sign of tenderness, even as groaning is a sign of life: 2 Cor. viii. 12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." There is no heart in this world but there is some hardness in it. There may be tears where

there is no broken heart, as in Esau, and there may be a broken and tender heart where tears are not. Try, therefore, the tenderness of your hearts by the following marks. :—

Are your hearts kindly affected with providences? Thou meetest with a mercy, and it is a wonder to thee that the Lord should be so kind to such an unworthy wretch. Thou sayest as Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou has shewed unto thy servant," Gen. xxxii. 10. It melts thy heart into an earnest desire of holiness, knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. Again, thou meetest with rebuke of providence, shewing thee that thou art out of the way, and thou darest not venture farther that way. This is a good sign; Prov. xvii. 10, "A reproof enters more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool." Again, do the threatenings of the Lord's word awe thy heart, not only in respect of gross outbreakings, but in the course of thy daily walk? Isa. lxii. 2, "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Art thou afraid of the Lord's displeasure more than of anything else, and must thou stand at a distance from these things which the world makes light of on that account? This is a sign of a tender heart. This reflection was comfortable to Job, chap. xxxi. 23, "For destruction from God was a terror unto me; and by reason of his highness I could not endure." Now this had a tendency to keep him free from all sin.—Finally, have the Lord's commandments an awful authority on thy conscience, so that thou art tender of offending him, and trampling on them? A hard heart can easily digest an offence against God, but a tender heart respects all his commandments, Psalm cxix. 6. A burnt child dreads the fire; and the sinner whose heart has been broken for sin dreads sin as the greatest evil. There are some who will be very tender at their prayers, it may be that they weep and pray; but then fearful untenderness appears in their ordinary walk. But shew me the person who is in the fear of the Lord all the day long, who is afraid to say or do an ill thing; I say, this is the tender person, though his prayers should be filled from beginning to end with complaints of hardness of heart; not the other; 1 John v. 3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous."—A broken heart is,

5. A rent heart: Joel ii. 13, "And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." The plough of humiliation and repentance is drawn through the heart, which tears up the fallow-ground, and pierces to the very soul. Many a man's heart is rent with remorse, or rather mangled, which is never tho-

roughly rent ; and so their wound goes together again after some time, and they are as before. But the truly broken heart is rent to no purpose, till the plough reach to the root of sin.

Here there may be proposed this question, What is the difference of these rendings ? To this I answer, an unrenewed man's heart may be rent for sin, but it is not rent from it. The heart truly broken is not only rent for, but from sin ; not only affrighted at, but framed into a hatred of it, Ezek. xxxvi. 31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations." The heart is so broken that the reigning love of sin runs out of it, as water out of a cracked vessel, or as filthy matter out of a wound which is laid open. He digs deep, as the wise builder ; the other, like Balaam, who professed a regard to the authority of God, but still loved the wages of iniquity. Again, the rent of the former either closes too soon, as those who quickly fall secure again, getting ease by bribing their consciences ; or it never was closed at all, falling under absolute despair, like Judas. But the other is at length healed, yet not till the great Physician takes the cure in hand. The wound is kept open, and the soul refuseth healing, till the Lord looks down and beholds from heaven, as in Lam. iii. 50. The wound is too deep to be cured, but by his blood and Spirit, yet not so deep, but that some ray of hope is always left ; there is a "who knows but the Lord will yet return?"—The broken heart is,

6. A pliable heart. The hard heart is a heart of stone, unpliant. When the spirit breaks the heart for sin, he makes it a heart of flesh, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Hearts which the grace of God has not touched, are like young horses not used to the saddle, young bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke ; they are unpliant and unmanageable, because they are not yet broken, Jer. xxxi. 18. But if ever any good may be made of that heart of thine, the spirit of God will break it ; however wild and untractable it be, the Spirit will make it pliant. He will make it pliant to the will of his commandments, saying, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ? and what shall we do ?" Acts ii. 37. They had often heard before what they should do, but they would not comply, but now, since their hard heart is broken, they are very pliant. Many a time the sinner's heart gets such a piercing thrust in his sinful course, that one would think, surely he will comply now. Yes, but the heart is not broken yet, therefore the man will not comply, according as Solomon represents it in the case of the drunkard, Prov. xxii. 29, 32, and 34, "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick ; they have beaten me, and I felt it not ;

when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." But if God have any thoughts of love to him, the Spirit of God will take the case in his own hand; and were he as stiff as the devil and his hard heart can make him, he will break him to that rate, that he shall ply as wax ere he have done with him. Witness Saul the persecutor, who was so softened, that he cried, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Acts ix. 6. The heart becomes pliable also to the will of his providence: Psalm li. 4. "That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be cleared when thou judgest." An unrenewed heart is a murmuring one under the hand of God, and will readily choose to sin rather than suffer. But the broken heart will say, give me thy favour, and take from me what thou wilt: Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Sometimes one meets with an affliction, and they cry out they are broken, they are not able to bear it. God sends them a heavier one, they are stricken till they leave off weeping, and withal opens the heart-vein to bleed for sin, and so in some sort they are made to forget their affliction. And it is their great concern to get their soul's disease healed, let God do with them otherwise as he will.—A broken heart is,

Lastly, A humble heart; Isa. lvii. 15, quoted above. The hard heart is a gathered beil; when it is broken, it is discussed. As soon as the heart is broken, under a sense of sin, pride and self-conceit vanish away, and the more broken-hearted that a person is, the less proud. Paul was a proud persecutor, but the Lord laid the pride of his heart, when he broke it, Acts ix. 4, 5. Hezekiah, in his brokenness of heart is very humble: "I shall go softly," said he, "all my years in the bitterness of my soul," Isa. xxxviii. 16. O! if the proud and empty professors of this day had a taste of this broken heart, it would soon lay their gay feathers, let out the ulcers of pride, self-conceit, which are swollen so big in many a poor soul. It would turn the saying, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou," unto "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." It would make them think little of what they have been, of what they are, and of what they have done or suffered; little of what all their attainments, gifts, yea, and graces also, if they have any, are.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON LI.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

To bind up the broken-hearted.

HAVING considered that brokenness of heart which is here meant,—what about sin the heart is broken for,—and described the nature of a broken heart, we go on, as was proposed,

IV. To show how the Lord Christ binds up and heals the broken-hearted.—The great Physician uses two sorts of bands for a broken heart, he binds them up with inner and with outward bands.

1. With inner bands, which go nearest the sore, the pained broken heart. And these are two.—The first inner band is,

Christ's own Spirit, the Spirit of adoption. The hearts of the disciples were sore broken at the news of Jesus leaving them, and it behoved them to bleed a while. But he tells them, he would send a healing band for their broken hearts; John xiv. 16, "And I will pray the Father," said he, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Our Lord breaks his people's hearts by his Spirit, and yet by the same Spirit binds them up again. In the first work he is the Spirit of bondage, and some may be long under his hand this way. Hence we read of some "who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Heb. ii. 15. The Old Testament church had much of this spirit, "I am afflicted," says the psalmist, Psalm lxxxviii. 15, "and ready to die, from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted."—In the next work, he is the Spirit of adoption; Rom. viii. 15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." He comes quickening, sanctifying, reviving, and comforting the soul. Therefore pray with David, Psalm li. 11, 12, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit."—The second inner band is,

Faith in Christ, (the band of the covenant), which he works in the heart by his Spirit. Faith is a healing band, for it knits the soul, Eph. iii. 17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The woman with the bloody issue, when she got a touch of the hem of Christ's garments, was presently made whole. Thus the broken-hearted sinner, when he gets hold of Christ by faith, is bound up with him in one mystical body, virtue comes from him for the soul's

healing. The virtue of his blood takes away guilt; the virtue of his Spirit breaks the power of sin. The apostle prescribes this healing band to the broken-hearted jailor; Acts xvi. 31, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;" and the more faith that there is, the band will be the stronger, and the soul the sooner healed. Much unbelief, and little faith, keep the wounds of the soul long open; Psalm xxvii. 13, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." A broken-hearted sinner staving off and disputing against his believing, is like a child who has a broken leg, doing what he can to tear off the bands with which it must be bound up; but he must admit them, or his leg will never heal: John xi. 40, "Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" Peter walking on the water, was like to break and sink quite, Matth. xiv. 30; the cause was his unbelief, ver. 31, "Jesus said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"—There are also,

2. Outward bands for a broken heart.—These also are two.

The *first* outward band is his own word, especially the promises of the gospel. This band Peter held out to the broken-hearted company; Acts ii. 38, 39, "Repent," said he, "and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This word has a sovereign virtue for healing; Psalm cvii. 20, "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." Our Lord wraps up a promise, in a soft band of love; and he makes them lay it to with their own hands; and the more closely they tie it about their broken hearts with the hand of faith, they will be the sooner whole. Say not, What can a word do? An encouraging word from men will wonderfully raise a carnally-dejected mind; and if so, certainly the Lord's word will heal a broken heart. A promise will be, in this case, like the opening of a box of perfumes to one ready to faint away; Song i. 3, "Because of the savour of thy good ointment, thy name is like ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee."

The *second* outward band is his own seals of the covenant; Acts ii. 38, quoted above. These seals are for our ingrafting into, and having communion with Jesus Christ, and so are most fit means to bind up hearts broken under a sense of sin, when they are partakers of these in faith. Hence many have been healed at such occasions; though indeed the water is not moved at all times, or at least the

broken-hearted sinner does not always step into it. It was an ancient custom, though that will not justify it, to put a white garment on persons when they were baptised. But surely our Lord has taken off the spirit of heaviness, and given the garment of praise to many at sealing ordinances. The eunuch, after he was baptised, went on his way rejoicing. The sorrowful disciples were also made glad, when, after his resurrection, Jesus made himself known to them in the breaking of bread, Luke xxiv. 35. All these bands are the Physician's absolute property. The poor patient has nothing of his own to be a band to his wounds. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; faith is his work; the word and sacraments are his ordinances, and their efficacy is all from him; and thus he heals them. His kindness in this instance, we may take up in these three things:—

(1.) They are justified and pardoned: Job xxxiii. 23, 24, "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." The sting of guilt is taken away, the poison is carried off, by a full and free pardon. Thus the seek man is whole; Isa. xxxiii. 24, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." The blood of Christ, with which by faith the soul is bound up, cleanses the wound, and heals it; 1 John i. 7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

(2.) They are sanctified; 1 Cor. vi. 11, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The Spirit is a sanctifying spirit: faith a sanctifying grace: Acts xv. 9, "And put no difference between us and them, sanctifying their hearts by faith." The sacraments are sanctifying ordinances: 1 Cor. xii. 13, "For by one Spirit, we are all baptised into one body,—and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." By these the power of corruption, as to its reign, is broken; lusts are gradually killed, and grace is made to grow.

Lastly, They are comforted; Job xxxiii. 25, 26, "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth; he shall pray unto God, and he shall be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness." All these bands have a comforting and also a refreshing virtue. They bring the oil of joy sooner or later to the soul. The way of the Physician in this is, "According to thy faith,

so be it unto thee." And thus the broken-hearted eat of the hidden manna, they get the white stone, and in the stone a new name written: Rev. ii. 17.

V. It now remains that we make some improvement of this subject.—It may be improved in uses of information, reproof, consolation, and exhortation.

First, In a use of information.

1. This shews us the love and good-will of God to help poor sinners, especially broken-hearted ones. He has provided a glorious Physician for them, having remembered us in our low estate. O the love of the Father in investing his Son with this office! O the love of the Son in undertaking it! Especially considering what it behoved him to undergo, in order to provide the medicines: his own heart had to be broken, that sinners might be healed. We may learn,

2. The preciousness of our souls, and with all the desperateness of the diseases of sin. Surely it behoved to be a desperate disease, and the patient at the same time very precious in the Lord's sight, for which he employed such a Physician. A physician of less value than an incarnate God, would have been a physician of no value for a broken-hearted sinner. No medicine less than his blood could have been effectual, else the Saviour's heart had never been broken for blood to cure it.—We may see,

3. To whom we must go with our hard hearts. O the reigning plague of hardness of heart this day among all ranks! Ordinances, providences, mercies, judgments, cannot break them. Alas! there is little occasion to speak to broken-hearted sinners this day; it is the least part of our work, to get their hearts healed. We cannot go with whole hearts, as broken. What can we do with them? Carry them to Christ. He who can heal broken hearts, can surely break whole hearts. He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, Acts v. 30. A look of him would do what nothing else can do. When the Lord Jesus looked on Peter, then Peter remembered his sins, and went out, and wept bitterly; Luke xxii. 62. We shall improve this subject,

Secondly, In a use of reproof.—This doctrine reproves and condemns,

1. Those who, when their hearts are any way broken for sin, go not to Christ, but to physicians of no value; Hos. v. 13, "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." The Spirit of the Lord is at work with the hearts of many to break them for sin, who mar all

by their haste to be healed, which carries them to other physicians than Christ, who may palliate the disease, but never can effectually cure it. These are, the law, which is now weak through the flesh; Rom. viii. 3. The law may wound the soul, but can never heal it; Rom. iii. 20, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Yet many go to it for healing, namely, when they go about to pacify their consciences, not by a believing application and sprinkling of Christ's blood, but by their own prayers, vows, repentance, amendment of their ways, and the like. The law indeed may give them a palliative; by these things their consciences may be blinded and bribed, but the disease is still rooted in them, and will break forth again at last, when there is no remedy, if not sooner by the mercy of God, to prevent their final ruin.—Throng of worldly business. When Cain's heart was wounded, and he could not get out the sting which galled his conscience, he went to this physician, he went from the presence of the Lord, and built a city; Gen. iv. 16, 17. To this many run at this day, who, when their consciences begin to stir within them, fill their heads and hands with business, till they get conscience quiet. This palliates the disease by way of diversion, while it will make it only like a gathered dam, which will at length break down the wall, and overwhelm the soul with aggravated sorrows; Isa. xxx. 13, "Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out on a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant."—Jovial company. So Saul, in his distress of mind, instead of calling for his Bible to read on, calls for musicians to play to him. And it is not to be doubted, that many a man's convictions are drowned in the ale-house, hushed to silence at revelling-meetings, these supports of the devil's kingdom people are so fond of; and many good motions are spoiled and laughed away. This palliates the disease by searing the conscience, and making it senseless. But it will awaken again on them like a lion roused up, and rend the caul of those hearts which have been so healed; Hos. xiii. 6, 8. This doctrine reproves,

2. Those who offer themselves physicians to the broken in heart, in opposition to Christ and his method of cure. There are such agents for the devil, who, like the Pharisees, will neither enter in themselves, nor suffer those who would to enter. Like Elymas the sorcerer, they seek to turn away men from the faith; Acts xiii. 8. They no sooner discern any beginning of seriousness in others, but they set themselves to crush it in the bud by their wicked advices, mockings, taunts, and licentious ensnaring examples. To these I may say, as in Acts xiii. 10, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou

child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right way of the Lord?" The blood of the souls of such as perish by these means will lie at the door of such persons, and be required of them.

Lastly, Those are reprov'd, who, as their duty is, dare not go to these physicians of no value, yet do not come to Christ, which is their sin; Psalm lxxvii. 2, "My soul, refused to be comforted." It is unbelief which makes it so, and Satan will do what he can to carry it on, to deter the sinner from the great Physician. But has the Father accepted Christ a physician for broken-hearted sinners? Surely, then, they may come, and welcome; nay, they must come, or else they will never be healed. We shall now improve the subject,

Thirdly, In a use of comfort to those who are truly broken-hearted for sin in a gospel-sense. You have an able Physician, who both can and will cure you, even though Satan may be ready to tell you that your case is past cure. There is great ground of comfort for such. (1.) Your name is in Christ's commission. (2.) You know your disease, and this is a comfortable step to the cure. (3.) Never any died of your disease: Psalm cxlvii. 3, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."—Here, however, may be propos'd this

OBJECTION, My heart has been long broken for sin, and yet there is no appearance of being healed; Jer. xiv. 19, "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we have looked for peace, and there is no good, and for the time of healing, and behold trouble." To this I

ANSWER, Thy soul may be healed of the disease of sin, and thy guilt removed, even the power of sin may be broken, though thy trouble does remain. David's sin was put away; 2 Sam. xii. 13. yet he cries out of broken bones; Psalm li. 8. I would advise you to wait patiently on the great Physician, and in due time he will bind thee up. Limit him not to times and seasons, which are in his own hand; he best knows how to manage his patients. Some he keeps long in trouble, to prevent pride and security, into which they are apt to fall: others he soon cures, to prevent despair or utter despondency, to which they are most liable. It only remains that this subject be improved,

Lastly, In a use of exhortation. This shall be addressed to three sorts of persons.

I would exhort whole and hard-hearted sinners to labour to get broken hearts, hearts kindly broken for sin. To prevail with you

in complying with this exhortation, I offer the following MOTIVES:—

MOT. 1. Consider the evil that there is in hardness of heart. It is very displeasing in the sight of God. Jesus was grieved with the hardness of men's hearts; Mark iii. 5. It grieves his Spirit, and highly provokes him, so that God is ever angry with the hard-hearted sinner. Suppose a man to be under never so great guilt, but his heart is broken on account of it, God is not so displeased with him as with those who, whatever their guilt be, are hard-hearted under it. It fences the heart against receiving any benefit by the means of salvation. Till the hardness be removed, it makes the heart proof against ordinances and providences; Psalm xcv. 8, "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Consider, as it is with the dead tree, even in the spring, all labour is lost upon it; so is it with the hard-hearted sinner. God speaks by his word and Spirit, by mercies and judgments; but nothing makes impression on the hard heart, yea, the most softening means leave it as they found it, or most probably in a worse state. It binds up the heart from all gracious motions; Rom. ii. 4, 5, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." This hardness is an iron band on the will, a stonyness in the heart, a hard freeze on the affections, so that the sinner cannot repent, mourn, or turn from his evil courses. It so nails him down in his wicked way, that he cannot move God-ward, cannot relent of his folly, though his danger be clearly before his eyes. In a word, it is the highway to be given up of God. Natural and acquired hardness lead the way to judicial hardness: Rom. xi. 7, "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." When men harden their hearts against reproofs and warnings, God many a time visits them with a curse, so that they shall never after have power to relent and yield; Hos. iv. 17, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone."

MOT. 2. Consider the excellence of a broken heart. It is very pleasing in the sight of God, and precious; Psalm li. 17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." He looks to such, while he overlooks others; Isa. lxvi. 2. He is near to them, while far from others; Psalm xxxiv. 18. It is the way to get good of all the means of salvation; and it is the root of gracious motions in the soul. However low they lie, God will take them up, and take them

in; Psalm cxlvii. 3, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

MOR. 3. The hardest heart will break at length, if not in a way of mercy, yet in a way of judgment; Prov. xxix. 1, "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Heb. broken, and no healing.) Thy sins are breaking to the Spirit of God; Ezek. vi. 9. Assure thyself that the stone will roll back on thyself sooner or later; if it do not kindly break thee in a way of repentance, it will grind thee to powder in the way of wrath. To such we would give the following directions briefly:—

Believe the threatenings against sin, and apply them; Jonah iii. 5, "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." This belief worketh fear, and fear worketh sorrow. And though this be but legal humiliation, yet this is ordinarily a mean sanctified of God to bring forward the elect sinner to Christ, as it was when Noah builded the ark; Heb. xi. 7. Ponder thy manifold sins, on the one hand, and the rich mercies with which thou hast been visited on the other. This is a proper mean to bring the heart into a broken disposition; Rom. ii. 4, "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." Believe and meditate on the sufferings of Christ for sin. Look how he was broken for it in a way of suffering, till thy heart be broken for it in a way of repentance; Zech. xii. 10, (quoted above).

We address ourselves, in the next place, to broken-hearted sinners. To such we say, Come to Christ as a Physician for binding up and healing your broken hearts. You have sufficient encouragement to put your cases in his hand. It is a part of the work expressly put upon him by the Father, to bind up your wounds.—He has a most tender sympathy for such broken-hearted ones; Isa. lxiii. 9, "In all their affliction, he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old." Therefore let us improve this sympathy; Heb. iv. 15, 16, "For we have not an high priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." He is very near to such, even as dwelling under one roof with them for their welfare; Isa. lxvii. 15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble

spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."—There is a particular relation betwixt him as the Physician, and the broken-hearted as his proper patients; and therefore he has a peculiar care of them; Ezek. xxxiv. 15, 16, "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God; I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, I will feed them with judgment." You see that he will handle the broken-hearted very tenderly; Isa. xl. 11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young; chap. xlii. 3, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."

In the last place, we would exhort those whose broken hearts Christ has healed, to take heed to the preserving your restored health. Indeed every one who seems to be healed, is not healed by the hand of the true Physician; but if your hearts are now eased, and your wounds bound up by the great Physician, you will know it by these three things. 1. You will have an appetite for spiritual food; 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." When one begins to recover in earnest, he recovers his appetite. But such a one, say we, is not well yet, for he has no appetite; so thou art not well if thou dost want the spiritual hunger.—2. Your food will relish with you; Prov. xxvii. 7, "The full soul loatheth the honey-comb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Many have their qualms of conscience which they get over, but still they have no relish for spiritual things, but for the world and their lusts. But if Christ has healed thee, he has corrected thy taste. *Lastly*, You will be beginning to walk in the way of God. "I will run," saith David, "in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart," Psalm cxix. 32. They who return with the dog to the vomit, show that their disease is yet in its strength, though they are not sensible of pain.

Now, if Christ has healed you, to perceive the health of your souls, it is necessary for you to keep a good and regular diet. Beware of these things which formerly cast thee into soul-sickness. Peter went no more back to the high priest's hall, nor Judah to Tamar; Gen. xxxviii. 26. Feed there, and on these things which may tend to the soul's health. "Behold," said Jesus to the impo-

tent man he had healed, "behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." And for this cause observe your Physician's rules in all things.—Walk circumspectly, take notice of every step you make, as one who has had a broken limb healed; Isa. xxxviii. 15, "I shall go softly," said Hezekiah, "all my years, in the bitterness of my soul." And beware of walking in the dark, of going forward there where you cannot discern your way by the light of the Lord's word. Study to increase in love to Christ, zeal for his glory, and hatred of sin. Always keep correspondence with your Physician. Be often at the throne of grace by prayer, and keep up communion with him in the exercise of faith. "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Amen.

JESUS PROCLAIMS LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES.

SERMON LII.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

To proclaim liberty to the captives.

HITHERTO we have had Christ's commission as it respects those who have some good in them, the meek and the broken-hearted. Here is his commission with respect to those who have no good in them, but are utter strangers to him, living in their natural state. He is anointed *to proclaim liberty to the captives*. In which words consider,

1. Man's natural state. It is a state of captivity: they are captives to Satan: 2 Tim. ii. 26, "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captives by him at his will." He is the tyrant whose captives they are, who has carried them away out of the light of God's favour, and holds them fast in his territories, being the god of this world. Consider,

2. Christ's work with respect to them. It is *to proclaim liberty* to them, Luke iv. 18, "To preach deliverance to the captives." These are indeed the same. Luke's word for liberty or deliverance, is properly dismissing or letting away, that is, giving liberty. The words for preaching and proclaiming signify properly to cry, and are used either of preaching or proclaiming. And what is preach-