

John Bunyan on *A Broken Heart*

It is amazing to consider what hold sin has on some men's souls, spirits, will, and affections. It is to them better than heaven, better than God— than the soul, ay, than salvation; as is evident, because, though all these are offered them upon this condition, if they will but leave their sins, yet they will choose rather to abide in them, to stand and fall by them. How sayest thou, sinner? Is not this a truth? How many times hast thou had heaven and salvation offered to thee freely, wouldst thou but break thy league with this great enemy of God? Of God, do I say; if thou wouldst but break this league with this great enemy of thy soul? but couldst never yet be brought unto it; no, neither by threatening nor by promise couldst thou ever yet be brought unto it.

It is said of Ahab he sold himself to work wickedness: and in another place, yea, 'for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves' (1 Kings 21:25; Isa 50:1). But what is this iniquity? Why, a thing of nought; nay, worse than nought a thousand times; but because nought is as we say nought, therefore it goes under that term, where God saith again to the people, 'Ye have sold yourselves for nought' (Isa 52:3). But, I say, what an amazing thing is this, that a rational creature should make no better a bargain; that one that is so wise in all terrene things, should be such a fool in the thing that is most weighty? And yet such a fool he is, and he tells every one that goes by the way that he is such an one, because he will not break his league with sin until his heart is broken for it. Men love darkness rather than light. Ay, they make it manifest they love it, since so great a proffer will not prevail with them to leave it.

Is this a truth, that the man that truly comes to God in order thereto has had his heart broken? then this shows us a reason why some men's hearts are broken; even a reason why God breaks some men's hearts for sin; namely, because he would not have them die in it, but rather come to God that they might be saved? Behold, therefore, in this how God resolved as to the saving of some men's souls! He will have them, he will save them, he will break their hearts, but he will save them; he will kill them, that they may live; he will wound them, that he may heal them. And it seems by our discourse that now there is no way left but this; fair means, as we say, will not do; good words, a glorious gospel, entreatings, beseeching with blood and tears, will not do. Men are resolved to put God to the utmost of it; if he will have them he must fetch them, follow them, catch them, lame them; yea, break their bones, or else he shall not save them.

Some men think an invitation, an outward call, a rational discourse, will do; but they are much deceived, there must a power, an exceeding great and mighty power, attend the Word, or it worketh not effectually to the salvation of the soul. I know these things are enough to leave men without excuse, but yet they are not enough to bring men home to God. Sin has hold of them, they have sold themselves to it; the power of the devil has hold of them, they are his captives at his will; yea, and more than all this, their will is one with sin, and with the devil, to be held captive thereby: and if God gives not contrition, repentance, or a broken heart, for sin, there will not be no not so much as a mind in man to forsake this so horrible a confederacy and plot against his soul (2 Tim 2:24, 25).

Hence men are said to be drawn from these breasts, that come, or that are brought to him (Isa 26:9; John 6:44). Wherefore John might well say, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!' Here is cost bestowed, pains bestowed, labour bestowed, repentance bestowed; yea, and an heart made sore, wounded, broken, and filled with pain and sorrow, in order to the salvation of the soul.

This then may teach us what estimation to set upon a broken heart. A broken heart is such as God esteems, yea, as God counts better than all external service: a broken heart is that which is in order to salvation, in order to thy coming to Christ for life. The world know not what to make of it, nor what to say to one that has a broken heart, and therefore do despise it, and count that man that carries it in his bosom a moping fool, a miserable wretch, an undone soul: 'But a broken and a contrite spirit, O God, thou wilt not despise'; a broken heart takes thine eye, thy heart: thou chooseth it for thy companion, yea, has given thy Son a charge to look well to such a man, and has promised him thy salvation, as has afore been proved.

Sinner, hast thou obtained a broken heart? has God bestowed a contrite spirit upon thee? He has given thee what himself is pleased with; he has given thee a cabinet to hold his grace in; he has given thee a heart that can heartily desire his salvation, an heart after his own heart, that is, such as suits his mind. True, it is painful now, sorrowful now, penitent now, grieved now; now it is broken, now it bleeds, now, now it sobs, now it sighs, now it mourns and crieth unto God. Well, very well; all this is because he hath a mind to make thee laugh; he has made thee sorry on earth that thou mightest rejoice in heaven. 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.—Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh' (Matt 5:4; Luke 6:21)

John Bunyan (1628 – 1688)

The Acceptable Sacrifice or the Excellency of a Broken Heart

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