

The Brokenhearted

Psalm 147: 2-4; Luke 4: 18.

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Table of Contents

1. THE BROKENHEARTED SINNER (Luke 7: 36-38.).....	1
2. THE BROKENHEARTED SAINT (Luke 22: 54-62.).....	2
3. THE BROKENHEARTED WIDOW (Luke 7: 11-15).....	3
4. THE BROKENHEARTED SAVIOUR (Luke 19: 41-48).....	4

In the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Luke we have the touching record of the Lord's entrance upon His public ministry in this world of sin and sorrow; and we learn, from His own lips, the character of His ministry. Quoting Isaiah's prophecy concerning Himself, He says, "The spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted."

The world is full of broken hearts. It may endeavour to cover up its sorrow with a mirth and laughter but, says the preacher, in the book of Proverbs, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful" (Prov. 14: 13). Underneath all the outward gaiety of the world there are secret sorrows and broken hearts.

Turning to the word of God, we discover for our comfort that God is not indifferent to these broken hearts. The Psalmist tells us that God is One that "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Moreover, the Psalmist immediately adds, "He telleth the number of the stars, He calleth them all by names. Great is our Lord" (Ps. 147: 2-5). The number of the stars is too great for us to tell; the sorrow of a broken heart too deep for us to fathom; but God can count the stars in heaven and heal the broken hearts on earth. In the greatness of His love He gave His only begotten Son to come into this world to heal the brokenhearted.

When we look at Jesus, we at last see One perfect Man who came into this world to seek broken hearts. The devil, indeed, sought to turn Him from His quest, by offering Him all the kingdoms of this world and their glory. But, refusing the world, its honours, and its riches, He chose to become a poor Man seeking brokenhearted men in order to dry their tears, and heal their wounds.

As we trace His path through this valley of tears, in search of broken hearts, we see Him, in the Gospel of Luke, healing the heart of a brokenhearted sinner; binding up the wounds of a brokenhearted saint, and drying the tears of a brokenhearted widow. Moreover, we learn that such was the wickedness and hardness of man's heart that at last His heart was broken. We broke the heart of the One who came to heal our broken hearts.

Thus we discover that hearts are broken by the sins of the sinner, by the failures of the saints, by the death of our loved ones, and above all, by unrequited love.

1. THE BROKENHEARTED SINNER (Luke 7: 36-38.)

In the touching scene that took place in Simon the Pharisee's house we are permitted to gaze upon that most wonderful sight — a meeting between the Saviour and the sinner. A poor woman who

was known in the city as a sinner — and therefore we may conclude a fallen woman — had heard of Jesus. She had heard the people saying that Jesus was, "A Friend of publicans and sinners." She had probably heard, from His own lips, that gracious invitation, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Weary of her terrible life, with a conscience burdened with her sins, without a friend in the world, she hears of Jesus, the Son of God. She hears that He is the Friend of sinners and that He bids her come.

Driven by her need, and drawn by His grace, she comes to Jesus; and in this fine scene we are permitted to see the result of a sinner coming to the Saviour. She felt that, at all cost, she must get into the presence of this wonderful Saviour. So she enters the Pharisee's house and goes straight to the feet of Jesus. At first no word is spoken, but two things happen, for we read, "She stood at His feet behind Him weeping," and she "kissed His feet." Those tears tell of a heart that is broken; those kisses of a heart that is won.

What was it that broke her heart? What was it that won her heart? Was it not that she saw her life, with all its sins, in the presence of His heart with all its love and grace? She discovered that His grace was greater than her sins, and that though He knew the worst about her, yet He loved her, and did not drive her away or utter one word of reproach. She could hold out against the scorn of men, and the sneers of the Pharisee, but such love as this broke her heart. It is not the badness of man, but the goodness of God that leads to repentance (Rom. 2: 4).

Having broken her heart by His grace He binds up her heart with His words of love, for, He says, "Thy sins are forgiven . . . thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Vv. 48-50).

The way of this brokenhearted woman is still the way of blessing for any poor sinner.

First we are made conscious of our sins and need.

Secondly, God in His grace brings us the good news of the only One who can meet our need. We hear of the Saviour who came into the world to save sinners, who has given Himself a ransom for all, and offered Himself without spot to God, and so satisfied God by His mighty work on the cross, that God can proclaim forgiveness to a world of sinners, and invite whosoever will to believe in Jesus.

Thirdly we learn, that believing in Him we may know on the authority of God's word that our sins are forgiven and our souls saved (Acts 11: 20, 21; Acts 10: 43).

Blessed moment when having learned our need and heard of Jesus we believe and turn to Him, to find ourselves alone in His presence, conscious of our sins but realising that, in spite of knowing all our sins, He loves us. Such love will break our hearts and win them for ever.

2. THE BROKENHEARTED SAINT (Luke 22: 54-62.)

We have looked at a brokenhearted sinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee; now we are permitted to see a brokenhearted backslider in the house of the high priest. We may truly have our sins forgiven, and love the Lord with all the ardour and sincerity of the Apostle Peter, and yet, but for the grace of the Lord, we may, like the Apostle, break down and deny the Lord. Through storm and sunshine this devoted servant had followed hard after his Master during the years of His wonderful ministry; but there comes a day when he "followed afar off." Walking at a distance from his Master he is soon found in the company of the enemies of his Master. So we read that when the enemies of the Lord "had kindled a fire," and "were set down together," that "Peter sat down among them." Sitting among the Lord's enemies it is not long before he enters into temptation. It seemed, indeed, only a

small temptation for it comes from "a certain maid." Alas! away from the Lord, in bad association, a very little thing is sufficient to trip us up. The maid may be weak enough, but she has poor Peter at an advantage for she saw him "as he sat by the fire." All she says is, "This man was also with Him." Peter scents danger, so without hesitation, the man who in his self-confidence had said, "I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death," flatly denies the Lord, saying, "Woman, I know Him not."

Three times he denies the Lord, and then, according to the words of the Lord "The cock crew." Peter has denied the Lord; but has the Lord's heart changed toward Peter? Blessed be His Name, His love is an unchanging love; "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." So it came to pass, that at the very moment when Peter turned from the Lord, the Lord turned to Peter, for we read, "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." We may grieve His heart but we cannot change His love. We may be sure that that look was a look of infinite love that seemed to say to Peter, "You have denied Me, Peter, you have said that you do not know Me, but in spite of all your denials I love you."

What was the effect of that look? It broke the heart of the poor backsliding Peter; for we read, "Peter went out, and wept bitterly." Like the fallen sinner of Luke 7, the backsliding saint of Luke 22, sees his sins in the light of the Lord's love; and the love that rose above his sins broke his heart.

We know, too, on the resurrection day, the tender way love took to heal this brokenhearted man and drive away his tears. So in all our backslidings, He restores our souls, by breaking our hearts and winning our hearts with His unchanging love.

3. THE BROKENHEARTED WIDOW (Luke 7: 11-15)

The story of the brokenhearted widow reminds us that over the fairest scenes of this world there lies the dark shadow of death. Nain means "pleasant," and the situation of the city was beautiful, but death was there. Then for our comfort we learn that into this world of death the Lord of life had come, and not alone with power to raise the dead, but with the love and sympathy that can feel for us in our sorrows, dry our tears, and heal the brokenhearted. So "it came to pass" that Jesus went into the city of Nain, and "His disciples went with Him and much people." This company with the Lord of life in the midst, meets another company with a dead body in the midst; for, as the Lord came nigh to the city, "a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her." How beautiful is the way the Lord takes to heal her broken heart. Moved with compassion, He first dries her tears, and then removes the cause of her sorrow. Had we the power we should probably have first raised the dead, and then said to the woman, "Weep no more." But Jesus takes another way — a better way — that makes the story so full of comfort for us all. He first says to the brokenhearted mother, "Weep not," and then He raises the dead. Thus the woman would have been able to say, "In my great sorrow He came so near to me, that He wiped away my tears. He not only took me out of my sorrowful circumstances, but He walked beside me in them." Thus He shows by His compassion and sympathy that He can wipe away our tears, before He raises our dead. This suits our case, for Jesus is gone, and He does not yet raise our loved ones when taken from us, but He speaks comfort to our broken hearts, and dries our tears, while we wait for the day when He will raise our loved ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus. His compassions go before His mercies. We have the comfort of His love while we wait for the display of His resurrection power. Then indeed, that word will be fulfilled, "God shall wipe away all tears . . . and there shall be no more death."

A few short years and all is o'er,

Your sorrow, pain, will soon pass by
Then lean in faith on God's dear Son,
He'll wipe the tear from every eye.

4. THE BROKENHEARTED SAVIOUR (Luke 19: 41-48)

We have seen that our sins, and our backslidings, seen in the light of His love can break our hearts, and that death can cast its shadow over the fairest scene and break our hearts. But in this touching scene on the Mount of Olives we see a yet deeper sorrow — the sorrow of unrequited love. We at times may have our hearts broken by unrequited love, but, even as the Saviour's love rises above all other loves, so, when His love is flung back in His face, He feels, in measure beyond all others, the sorrow of unrequited love. The depth of His sorrow can only be measured by the height of His love.

So we read, "When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it." His love had been lavished on these poor people, but they only rewarded Him evil for good, and hatred for His love (Ps. 109: 5). When He told them that He had come to heal the brokenhearted, they were "filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city" (Luke 4). When He forgave sins, they charged Him with blasphemy (Luke 5). When He healed a poor cripple, they were filled with madness (Luke 6). When He received poor sinners, and ate with them, they said He was a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber (Luke 7). When He goes to raise a dead girl, they laugh Him to scorn (Luke 8); and when He delivers a man from the devil they say, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the chief of devils" (Luke 11).

They opened their mouths against Him, they spoke against Him with a lying tongue, and fought against Him without cause, and for His love they were His enemies (Ps. 109: 2-5). Nevertheless, man's heartless treatment drew forth no expression of indignation from Christ, no bitter and revengeful word fell from His lips. When He was reviled, He reviled not again, and when He suffered He threatened not. The hardness of our hearts only called forth a sorrow that found expression in His tears. We broke His heart at last, for He could say, "I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me." And having broken His heart we sought to "slay the broken in heart" (Ps. 109: 16, 22). So we read "the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him." What a scene! Outside the city, the heartbroken Saviour weeping over sinners: inside, hardened sinners seeking to destroy the Saviour — seeking to shed the blood of the One who shed His tears over them.

In yet a little while there will be a glorious answer to those tears for very soon He will be surrounded by a great host of brokenhearted sinners saved by grace and backsliding saints restored by grace, in a scene where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Then, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied."

I cannot tell how silently He suffered,
As with His peace He graced this place of tears,
Or how His heart upon the cross was broken,
The crown of pain to three-and-thirty years.
But this I know, He heals the brokenhearted,
And stays our sin and calms our lurking fear,

And lifts the burden from the heavy laden,
For yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world is here.