

THE
WORKS
OF
THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

LATE RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF
ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH-HAW,
LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.

CONTAINING
AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, &c., LETTERS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS, CARDIPHONIA, DISCOURSES
INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT,
SERMONS PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF OLNEY,
A REVIEW OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, OLNEY HYMNS, POEMS,
MESSIAH, OCCASIONAL SERMONS, AND TRACTS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED
MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, &c.
BY THE REV. R. CECIL, A. M.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

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MESSIAH

OR FIFTY EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE SERIES OF

SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES

WHICH FORM THE SUBJECT OF HANDEL'S CELEBRATED

ORATORIO

OF THAT NAME,

PREACHED IN THE YEARS 1784 AND 1785,

IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

LOMBARD STREET,

LONDON.

—————Ah!

Tantamne rem, tam negligenter, agere! TER.

Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this!—DEUT. xxxii. 29.

TO THE
PARISHIONERS OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,
AND
ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW,
LONDON,
THESE SERMONS
ON THE
MESSIAH
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY THE
AUTHOR,
TO REMAIN AS A TESTIMONY OF HIS RESPECT
FOR THEIR PERSONS,
AND HIS SOLICITUDE FOR THEIR WELFARE,
WHEN HIS PRESENT RELATION
TO THEM, AS THEIR MINISTER,
SHALL BE DISSOLVED.

SERMON XIX.

MESSIAH SUFFERING AND WOUNDED FOR US.

Surely he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows.—He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. ISAIAH, liii. 4, 5.

WHEN our Lord was transfigured, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and conversed with him. Had we been informed of the interview only, we should probably have desired to know the subject of their conversation, as we might reasonably suppose it turned upon very interesting and important topics. The scripture makes little provision for the indulgence of our curiosity, but omits nothing that is necessary for our instruction; and we learn thus much from it, that they discoursed, not upon the trifling things which the world accounts great, such as the rise and fall of empires; but they spake of the sufferings of Jesus, and of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem, Luke ix. 31. They spake of his Exodus (as the Greek word is), his departure out of this life, the issue and completion of his engagement for sinners; that is, his crucifixion and death. This is the grand theme of heaven and heaven-born souls. We lately considered the cruel insults Messiah submitted to, from the servants in the High Priest's hall, and from the Roman soldiers. The passage I have now read leads our meditations to the foot of the cross. May the Holy Spirit realize the scene to our hearts! The cross of Christ displays the divine perfections with peculiar glory. Here the name of God is revealed, as a just God and a Saviour. Here the believer contemplates in one view, the unspeakable evil of sin, and the unsearchable riches of mercy. This gives him the most affecting sense of the misery which he has deserved, while at the same time he receives the fullest assurance that there is forgiveness with God, and discovers a sure foundation whereon he may build his hope of eternal life, without fear of disappointment. From the moment the apostle Paul was enlightened to understand this mystery of redeeming love, he accounted his former gain but loss; his former supposed wisdom no better than folly; and became determined to know nothing (1 Cor. ii. 2; Gal. vi. 14), to depend upon nothing, to glory in nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

A representation of the Redeemer's sufferings, capable of exciting tears and moving the passions, may be made by the powers of oratory; and similar emotions have often been produced by a romance or a tragedy, though the subject is known beforehand to be entirely a fiction. But light in the understanding is necessary to convince and influence the heart. Unless the mind be deeply penetrated with the causes which rendered Messiah's death necessary, the most pathetic description of the fact will leave the will and affections unchanged. I hope many of my auditory can assign these causes. You have felt

yourselves personally concerned in an event which took place long before your birth; and if you are asked, Why was Jesus mocked, buffeted, and spit upon? and why were his enemies permitted to nail him to the cross? You can answer, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,”—and you can likewise say, “By his stripes we are healed.”

The words lead us to consider the *cause* and the *effect*.

I. The cause of the Redeemer's sufferings, implied in the word *our*. He bore the griefs and sorrows which were our desert. Such is the language, the confession, the grateful acknowledgment of all who believe in his name. They who are delivered by grace from the spirit and power of this evil world, and who live by his death, and likewise they who see they must perish unless saved by him, are authorized to consider him as mindful of them, and making provision for them in the day of his trouble. They who were actually healed by looking at the brazen serpent, according to God's appointment, had a sufficient proof in themselves, that it was erected and placed in view of the camp (Num. xxi. 9.) on their account. He bore our griefs.—It does not follow that sinners must have been crucified, if the Saviour had not been crucified on their behalf. But as this was a painful and terrible punishment, it may teach us, that without his interposition we were justly liable to extremity of misery in the present life. That we who have offended God should enjoy health, peace, or satisfaction for a single hour; that we do not draw every breath in the most excruciating pain; that we derive any comfort from creatures; that we are not a burden and a terror to ourselves, and mutually to each other; that our state while upon earth, is in any respect, better than an image of hell,—must wholly be ascribed to him. A sinner, as such, is under the curse of the law; and this curse includes every species of misery that can affect us, either in mind, body, or estate. But he was appointed from the beginning, to sustain and exhaust the curse for us. And therefore the earth though so long inhabited by wretches in a state of bold rebellion against their Maker, is filled with the fruits and evidences of his long-suffering patience and mercy. Therefore he still affords us rain and fruitful seasons (Acts xiv. 17), indulges us with a variety of temporal blessings, and gives us power to take comfort in them. This consideration greatly enhances the value of temporal good things to his people. They receive them as from his hand, as tokens of his love and pledges of his favour, sanctified to their use by his blood and promise. Cheered by such thoughts as these, his poor people often enjoy their plain fare with a pleasure, of which the expensive and dissipated sensualist has no conception. And how does it add to the relish of all earthly comforts, to think, while we are using them, that

There's not a gift his hand bestows,
But cost his heart a groan!

So, likewise, the remembrance of what he bore for them alleviates the pressure of all their sufferings, and affords them a ground whereon they may rejoice, yea glory, in tribulation also, Rom. v. 3.

But his crucifixion, and the whole of his sufferings from wicked men, cannot give us a just idea of what he endured for us. Grievous as they were, considered in themselves, they were light, if compared with the agonies of his soul. These extorted the blood from his body (Luke xxiii. 44.) before the hand of man touched him. And when he uttered his most dolorous cry upon the cross, it was not for the anguish of his bodily wounds, but his soul felt for a season a separation from the presence and comforts of God. Therefore he said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Matth. xxvii. 46. It is true his holy nature was not capable of some part of the impenitent sinner's portion. Remorse of conscience, the stings of the never-dying worm, and the horrors and rage of despair, could not touch him, who had no personal sin, and whose love and faith were always perfect: But a sword pierced his soul: and it pleased the Father not only to permit him to be bruised by the cruelty of his enemies, but to bruise him himself, Is. liii. 10.

The ground of all this was laid in his voluntary substitution of himself from before the foundation of the world, to obey and suffer in behalf of his people. This point will offer more directly from the passage we are next to consider. At present let us briefly notice the expressions before us.

1. He was wounded.—This word which signifies *pierced* or *stabbed*, refers to his crucifixion. This punishment being unknown to the Jews, till they were brought under the Roman power, they had, therefore, no express name for, in their language. Yet it is plainly described by the psalmist, who, speaking, by the spirit of prophecy, in the person of Messiah, says, "They pierced my hands and my feet," Psal. xxii. 16. And it was typified under the law of Moses (Deut. xxi. 23; Gal. iii. 13; 1 Cor. v. 7; John iii. 14), by the curse annexed to hanging upon a tree, which was the nearest death to this; by the paschal lamb, which was roasted; and by the brazen serpent. It was a fit death for a sinner, painful and ignominious. How circumstantial were the prophecies, how apposite the types, how exactly was all fulfilled, and how wonderful was it that the Jews should be led to depart from their own customs and purposes, in order to their accomplishment, though they intended nothing less! But it was the determined counsel and appointment of God (Acts, ii. 23), who over-rules all the designs of men, and all that to us appears contingent, to the purposes of his own will and glory.

2. He was bruised.—If we distinguish wounded from bruised, the latter may be referred to the sorrows of his soul, for it is expressly said, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him:" that distress broke his heart, filled him with dismay, caused him to be sore amazed and very heavy, and to say to his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," Matth. xxvi. 38. No words can

be more selected and emphatical, than those which the evangelists use in describing his consternation in the garden of Gethsemane How can this his dejection and terror be accounted for by those who deny that his sufferings and death were a proper atonement of sin; and who suppose, that when he had given to men a perfect rule of life, and commended it to them by his own example, he died, merely to confirm the truth of his doctrine, and to encourage his followers to faithfulness under sufferings! Many of his followers, who were thus witnesses for the truth, and patterns of faithfulness to us, have met death in its most terrible forms with composure, yea, with pleasure, yea, with transports of joy. But is the disciple above his Lord? If Christians have triumphed in such circumstances, why did Christ tremble? Not surely because their courage and constancy were greater than his. The causes were entirely different. The martyrs were given up to them who only could kill the body; but Jesus suffered immediately from the hand of God. One stroke of his mighty hand can bruise the spirit of man more sensibly than the united power of all creatures. Jesus died. They that believe in him, are said to sleep in him, 1 Thess. iv. 14. To them death comes disarmed of its sting, wearing a friendly aspect, and bringing a welcome message of dismissal from every evil. But the death of Jesus was death indeed, death in all its horrors, the death which sinners had deserved to suffer as transgressors of the law.

3. The chastisement or the punishment of our peace was upon him, that chastisement or punishment on the account of which sinners obtain peace with God.—It properly signifies here, a punishment for instruction or example. Punishments are inflicted, either for the correction of an offender, or for the prevention of evil, or for example to others. The two former reasons could not apply to our Lord. He had committed no evil, he was perfect before, and in suffering. But standing in the place of sinners, and engaged to expiate their offences, he was made a public example of the misery and distress which sin demerited. Thus justice was vindicated in the exercise of mercy, and sinners believing in his name are exempted from punishment, for his sake, in a way which affords not the least encouragement or extenuation to sin. And thus our peace is procured.

II. The effect of his sufferings for sins not his own. He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded and bruised for us, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we may be healed. The Hebrew word here, and the Greek word which the apostle Peter uses in his quotation of this passage (1 Pet. iii. 24), which we render *stripes*, is properly the mark which stripes or wounds leave upon the body, or as we say, scars. The scars in his hands, feet, and side, and perhaps other marks of his many wounds, remained after his resurrection. And John saw him in vision, before the throne, as a lamb that had been slain. All these expressions and representations, I apprehend, are designed to intimate to us, that though the death of Messiah is an

event long since past, yet the effects and benefits are ever new, and to the eye of faith are ever present. How admirable is this expedient, that the wounds of one, yea, of millions, should be healed, by beholding the wounds of another! Yet this is the language of the gospel, Look and live. "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Three great wounds are ours, guilt, sin, and sorrow; but by contemplating his weals or scars with an enlightened eye, and by rightly understanding who was thus wounded, and why, all these wounds are healed.

You who live by this medicine speak well of it. Tell to others, as you have an opportunity, what a Saviour you have found. It is usual for those who have been relieved, in dangerous and complicated diseases, by a skilful physician, to commend him to others who are labouring under the like maladies. We often see public acknowledgements to this purpose. If all the persons who have felt the efficacy of a dying Saviour's wounds apprehended by faith, were to publish their cases, how greatly would his powder and grace be displayed! They are all upon record, and will all be known in the great day of his appearing. Some of them are occasionally published, and may be read in our own tongue. And though they are not all related with equal judgment, nor attended with circumstances equally striking, yet there is a sufficiency, in this way, to leave the world without excuse. Not to mention modern accounts of this kind (though many might be mentioned which are indisputably true, and superior to the cavils of gainsayers), the Confessions of Augustin may be appealed to, as a proof that the gospel is not a system of notions only, but has a mighty power to enlighten the bewildered mind, to subdue the obstinate will, to weaken the force of long confirmed habits of evil, to relieve from distressing fears, and to effect a real, universal, permanent, and beneficial change of sentiment and conduct, such as no similar instance can be found, in the history of mankind, to have been produced by any other principles. But if you are a true Christian, in the circle of your connections you will sometimes have a fair opportunity of giving a reason of the hope that is in you. Pray for grace and wisdom to improve such seasons; and if you speak the truth in simplicity and love, you know not but the Lord may give his blessing to your testimony, and honour you as an instrument of good. And to convert one sinner from the error of his way, is an event of greater importance, than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from temporal evil.

Yet remember, if you espouse this cause, a certain consistency of character will be expected from you, without which you had better be silent, than speak in its defence, or profess yourself a sharer in the privileges of the gospel. There are too many persons who treat the great truths we profess as mere opinions, points of speculation, which form the shibboleth of a party: there are others, who think an attachment to them the sure sign of an enthusiastic deluded imagination: and there are others, again, who misrepresent them as unfavourable to morality, and affording a cloak and an encouragement to licentiousness.

Beware, lest, by an improper conduct, you lay stumbling-blocks in the way of the blind, strengthen the prejudices of the ignorant, and give weight to the calumnies of the malicious. The people of the world are quick-sighted to the faults of religious professors; and though they affect to despise their principles, they are tolerable judges what that conversation is which only these principles can produce, and always expect it from those who avow them. They will make allowances for others, and admit human infirmity as a plea for their faults, but they will not extend their candour to you. If your zeal for the truth, and your regular attendance upon the ministers who preach it, are not accompanied with a spirit of humility, integrity, and benevolence; if you are passionate, peevish, discontented, censorious, or proud; if they observe that you are greedy of gain, penurious, close-fisted, or hard-hearted; or even if you comply with their customs and spirit, mingle with them in their amusements, and do not maintain a noble singularity by avoiding every appearance of evil; they will not only despise you in their hearts, but they will take the occasion of despising and speaking evil of the truth itself on your account. But if you are all of a piece, and are truly solicitous to adorn your profession, by walking agreeably to the rules of the gospel, and filling up your relations in life to the glory of God, and the good of your fellow-creatures; by thus well-doing, you will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (1 Pet. ii. 15), and in a great measure stop their mouths, if you cannot change their hearts. And though they may affect to rail at you, or to ridicule you, they will be constrained to feel a secret reverence for you in their consciences.

But are there any hearts of stone amongst us, who are still unaffected by the love and sufferings of the Son of God; who are still crucifying him afresh, and living in sin, though they hear and know what it cost him to make an atonement for sin? Yet now hear—now look—Behold the Lamb of God! The Lord in mercy open the eyes of your mind. I address you once more. I once more conjure you, by his agony and bloody sweat, by his passion, cross and death, to seek to him that your souls may live. Can you be proof against these arguments? Nay, then, should you live and die thus obstinate, you must perish indeed!