

MEMOIRS
OF
REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD:
BY JOHN GILLIES, D.D.
REVISED AND CORRECTED
WITH
LARGE ADDITIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS.
TO WHICH IS APPENDED
AN EXTENSIVE COLLECTION
OF HIS
SERMONS AND OTHER WRITINGS.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.—DANIEL. xii. 3.

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SELECTIONS
from the
SERMONS AND OTHER WRITINGS
of
REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD,

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT will be remembered, by those who have perused the foregoing memoirs, that Whitefield complains, that the transcripts of his sermons, taken in short-hand, and published by his well-meaning, but irresponsible friends, were unfair and mutilated exhibitions of his actual performances. He says of some of these imperfect copies, that “the sense and connection are entirely destroyed.” It has been thought a duty, therefore, to confine the following selections from his sermons and other writings, as far as possible, to those which came immediately from his own pen, or received his final revision, or, at least, his sanction and approbation. Thus, it is believed, justice will be done to the memory of this wonderful man; and no further apology need be made for limiting our range of selection mainly to those writings which, says he, “I think I may say, were given me by the Lord Jesus Christ.”

[“The reader will notice that the Sermons which precede [Sermon XVII], were published by Whitefield himself. Those which follow are transcripts of his extempore discourses taken in short-hand.” John Gillies.]

SERMON XVIII.

SOUL DEJECTION.

PSALM xliii. 5.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

I HAVE often told you in my plain way of speaking, that grace is very frequently grafted on a crab-stock; that the Lord Jesus picks out persons of the most peevish, churlish disposition, and imparts to them the largest measure of grace, but for want of a better natural temper, a great deal of grace does not shine so bright in them, as a small degree in those that are constitutionally good natured. You will hear them always complaining something or other is the matter. What a pity it is we cannot all agree in one thing, to leave off chiding others to chide our own selves, till we can find nothing in ourselves to chide for; this we shall find will be a good way to grow in the divine life, when, by constant application to the Lamb of God, we get a mastery over those things which hitherto have had the mastery over us. But are these the only people that complain? Are people of a melancholy disposition only subject to a disquietude of heart? I will venture to affirm, that the greatest, the dearest children of God, have their complaining, and their dreary hours. Those who have been favoured with large measures of grace, even those that have been wrapped up as it were, to the third heavens, basking on the mount, in the sunshine of redeeming grace, and in raptures of love crying out, *It is good for us to be here*; even these must go down to Gethsemane; and if they would not be scorched with a strong burning fever from the sun of prosperity, shall find clouds from time to time overshadowing them, not to burn, but to keep them low. It is on this account, that you see good men in different frames at different times; our Lord himself was so; he rejoiced sometimes in spirit, but at other times you find him, especially near the last, crying out, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry you here and watch*. And I am going to tell you of one tonight, who had the honour of being called *the man after God's own heart*; and who, though an Old Testament saint, was greatly blessed with a New Testament spirit, and had the honour of

composing Psalms, which in all past ages of the church have been, and in future ones will be, a rich magazine and store-house of spiritual experience, from which the children of God may draw spiritual armour for fighting the good fight of faith, until God shall call them to life eternal: may this be your happy lot. What frame was this good man in, when he composed this forty-second Psalm? The Psalm itself can best tell. It seems composed when he was either persecuted by Saul, or driven from his own court by his fondling, beloved son, Absalom: then David appeared truly great. I honour him when I see him yonder, attending a few sheep; but I admire the young stripling, when I see him come out with his sling and stone, and aiming it at the head of Goliath, the enemy of God; or, when exalted and filling the seat of justice; but to me he never appears greater, than when he is bowed down in low circumstances, beset on every side, struggling between sense and faith; and as the sun, after an eclipse, breaking forth with greater lustre to all the spectators. In this view we must consider this great, this good man, David, when he cries out, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God.*

Supposing you understand the words as a question, *Why art thou cast down. O my soul*, though thou art in such circumstances? Pray now what is the cause of thy being so dejected? The word implies, that he was sinking under the weight of his present burden, like a person stooping under a load that lies upon his shoulders; and the consequence of this pressure without, was disquietude, uneasiness, and anxiety within; for say what you will to the contrary, there is such a connection between soul and body, that when one is disordered, the other must sympathize with its ever loving friend.

Or, you may understand it as chiding himself, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, why art thou disquieted within me*, how foolish it is to be thus drooping and dejected; how improper for one favoured of God with so many providences, and special particular privileges, for such a one as thou art, thus to stoop, and be made subject to every temptation; why dost thou give thy enemies such room to find fault with thy religion on account of thy gloomy looks, and the disquietude of thy heart? A yoke which thou wilt find to be lined with love, and God will keep it from galling thy shoulders. You see he speaks not to others, but to himself; would to God we did thus learn that charity begins at home. Then he goes to God with his case, O my God, says he, *my soul is cast down within me*. O that we could learn, when in these moods, to go more to God, and less to man, we should find more relief, and religion would be less dishonoured. But see how faith triumphs in the midst of all; no sooner does unbelief lift up its head, but faith immediately puts it down. A never-failing maxim is here proposed, *hope thou in God*, trust in God, believe in God; for I am sure, and all of you that know Jesus Christ are persuaded of it too, that all our troubles arise from our unbelief. O unbelief, injurious bar to comfort, force of tormenting fear! on the contrary, faith bears

every thing. *Put thy trust in God*, as in the old translation; *hope in God*, as in the new, *I shall now praise him*. The devil tells me my trouble is so great, I shall never lift up my head again; but unbelief and the devil are liars; *I shall yet praise him*; my God will carry me through all; I shall yet praise him, even for casting me down; I shall praise him even for that which is the cause of all my disquietude; he will be *the health of my countenance*; though my afflictions have now made my body low, suck up my spirits and hurt my animal frame, *he will be the health of my countenance*; I shall by and by see him again, and be favoured with those transforming views, which my God has favoured me with in times past: *he is the health of my countenance, and my God*: though the devil tempts me, and my evil neighbours say, *where is now thy God?* Dost thou think thou art a child of God, and thy father suffers thee to be cast down? I tell thee, O Satan, that God who I have been so vilely tempted as to believe has forsaken me, will come over the mountains of my guilt, will forgive my backslidings against himself, my unbelief shall not make his promises of none effect; I shall praise him even while I live, I shall praise him before I die, I shall praise him for ever in heaven, where he will be after death, *the health of my countenance, and my God*; thus faith will get the better in a saint. David was sometimes left to say, in effect, all things are against me; yet, still in most of the Psalms, in this, the text, the 113th, and many of the rest, he triumphs in God; and he composed but very few without praising at the end, though he complains at the beginning. God help us thus to do!

But it is time to leave off speaking, particularly of David, and to turn to you to whom these words, I pray God, may prove salutary and useful. I have had a great struggle in my mind this afternoon what I should preach from; I have been praying and looking up to God, and could not preach for my life on any other text, which has often been the case before, and whenever it was, some poor soul has been comforted and raised up; and among such a mixed multitude, there are some, no doubt, come to this poor despised place, cast down and disquieted within; I shall endeavour to inquire what you are cast down for, and then I shall propose a great cure for you, namely, trust in God; and I pray that what was David's comfort may be yours. Why should we not expect an answer, when we pray that God before you go home may make you, whether you will or no, leave your burdens behind you? And God keep you from taking them up as you go home.

Probably, there may be some of you that are real believers; perhaps I ought to ask your pardon: where am I preaching? In the Tabernacle, the most despised place in London; so scandalous a place, that many of the children of God would rather go elsewhere! God help us to keep up our scandal! But yet I believe there are many king's daughters here; many of you whom God enabled in this place first to say, *My Lord, and my God*. When you put your fingers, as it were, on the print of Christ's nails, and put your hands into his

side, and were no longer faithless, but believing, you thought you should never be cast down any more, but now you have found yourselves mistaken; and I shall endeavour, in the prosecution of this text, to speak to all that are cast down whether before or after conversion, and then to such that were never cast down at all; and if you was never cast down before, God cast you down now.

What are persons cast down for? What are some of you disquieted within for? I have reason to believe, from the notes put up at both ends of the town, that there are many of you that have arrows of conviction stuck fast in your souls. I have taken in near two hundred at the other end of the town, within a fortnight; if this be the case, that God is thus at work, let the devil roar, and we will go on in the name of the Lord. And what are you cast down for? Some poor soul will say, with a sense of sin, the guilt of it, the enmity of it, the very aggravated circumstances that attend it, appear and set themselves as in battle array before me: once I thought I had no sin, at least I thought that sin was not so exceeding sinful; but I now find it such a burden that I could almost say with Cain, "it is greater than I can bear." And perhaps some of you are so cast down, as in your haste to say as Colonel Gardiner, that great man of God told me himself had said when under conviction, "I believe God cannot be just, unless he damns my wicked soul." Is this thy case? Art thou wicked, art thou so cast down, so disquieted, that thou canst not rest night nor day? Shall I send thee away without any comfort? Shall I send thee away as the legal preachers do? As a minister some time ago did, when a man told him how wicked he had been; O, says he, if you are so wicked, you are damned to be sure, I shall not trouble myself with you. When a poor negro was taken up for thieving, another went to him and said, you are so bad I must turn my back to you; that is the law, but the gospel is turn thy face to God; think not that God is dealing with thee as an absolute God, a God out of Christ. I would have nothing to do, says Luther, with an absolute God: as such he is a consuming fire. Trust God in Christ, throw thyself upon him, throw thyself on the Son of God; cry with thy brother, and now thou art in that temper, thou wilt not be ashamed to call the thief thy brother; say with him, "Lord, remember me when thou art in thy kingdom;" thou shalt yet praise him, thou shalt yet have the forgiveness of thy sins; thy pardon shall not only be sealed in heaven, but thou shalt have it in thy heart: these are only the pangs of the new birth, the first struggling of the soul immersing into the divine life; he shall yet be the health of thy countenance: these poor cheeks, though bedewed with tears, shall by and by have a fine blush, when a pardoning God comes with his love; it shall even make a change in thy countenance, for as a heavy heart makes a man's countenance sad, so a cheerful heart makes the countenance pleasant: thou shalt know him to be thy God, thou shalt say, *my Lord, and my God*. Lord Jesus, grant this may be the happy moment. Was Jesus here, was the Redeemer now in this metropolis, I am

sure he would go about the streets, he would be a field preacher, he would go out into the highways and hedges, he would invite, he would run after them; Lord Jesus, take the veil from our hearts, and let us see tonight thy loving heart as the Son of God! Trust in God, you will say, it is very easy for you to say so, but I cannot trust in God; can't you? who told you that? That is the work of God; you are not far from the kingdom of God. Who convinced thee of thy inability to believe; do you think the devil did? No, it was the Spirit of God procured by the blood of the Lamb, that was to come to convince the world of sin. If thou canst not trust as thou wouldst, say, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief:" stretch out thy poor hand. I am thinking of Sunday last, when I was giving the sacrament, I observed there was one blind communicant that could not see, but he thrust out his hand; I observed several lame persons, but there were enough to give it to them; I saw also a poor barrow woman, and I took particular care to give the cup to her; so I put it up to the mouth of the poor blind man: if that is the case, what love must there be in God to the poor soul!

But, methinks, I hear some poor soul say, that is not my case, I am not cast down for that, but I am cast down because after that I knew God to be my God, after I knew Jesus to be my King, and after I had mounted upon my high places, the devil and my unbelieving heart threw me down again; would you not have me cast down? Would you not have me disquieted? A person of an Antinomian spirit would say, do not tell me of your frames, I have learned to live by faith, I do not care whether Christ manifests himself to me or no, I have the word and the promise, I am content with a promise now; so these poor creatures go on without any frame, because they will not live in it: from such Antinomianism, good God deliver me. How! how! how! not cast down at an absent God, nor disquieted when God withdraws? Where are you gone? You are gone far from your father's house; if nothing else will do, may your father whip you home again. But tender hearts when they reflect how it was once, are cast down; David says, "My tears have been my meat day and night, for I had gone with a multitude to the house of God." Here he looks back upon his former enjoyments, his spiritual prosperity, (as Job looks back upon his temporal,) and says, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* it is because I do not meet God in his ordinances as I used to do; poor deserted, panting soul! poor disquieted soul! he must be the health of thy countenance, he will yet be thy God. Who was it sought Jesus sorrowing? What would you have thought of the virgin Mary if she had said, I do not care whether I see my son or not; she sought him, and found him in the temple. God grant every poor deserted soul may find him tonight; I mean, in the temple of his heart. And in the case of Mary, she says, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him:" if they had not taken away her Lord, Mary would have been rich: so you may say your corruptions, your backslidings, and ingratitude, have taken away your Lord. Lord grant thou mayest

find him tonight. He that said, *Mary*, can call thee tonight, and can make thee say, my dear Lord, I come tonight; he can call thee by thy name.

But, say you, I am cast down because I am wearied with temptation: not only my God is departed from me, but an evil spirit is come upon me to torment me; I am haunted with this and that evil suggestion, that I am a terror to myself. Come, come, hear what David saith in the beginning of the Psalm, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.” What say you to that? If you have a mind to see the beauty of this verse, read Mr. Hervey’s *Theron and Aspasio*, which will live when its despisers are dead; and those that have endeavoured to disparage him will be obliged to own, that he was one of the greatest luminaries we ever had, and one that has laid down the doctrines of the gospel, in a manner to charm and allure the great and noble. Well, is it thy case that unbelief assails thee, go where thou wilt? Well, still trust in God, *thou shalt yet praise him for the health of his countenance: he will command his loving kindness in the day, and his song shall be with thee in the night*. Though it be night, there is some moon, blessed be God, or some stars; and if there is a fog that you cannot see, God can quiet his people in the dark, he will make the enemy flee; fear him not, God will comfort thee, if thou trust in him.

But, say you, I am cast down and disquieted within me; why? Because I have one affliction after another, no sooner is one trial gone, but another succeeds; now I think I shall have a little rest, the tormentor will not come nigh me today, but no sooner has the Christian so said, but another storm comes, and the clouds return after the rain; then we think we must be cast down, and that we ought to be disquieted; this was David’s case; what does he say? “All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.” I believe he found after that, there were more waves to come than he had yet felt: why? says a poor distressed soul, because I have been so long in Christ, and have those cursed corruptions yet within. I have thought to have been rid of them all long ago; I thought I had no corruptions left thirty-three years ago, and that the Canaanites were all rooted out of the land, that Pharaoh and his host were all drowned in the Red Sea; but if I find the old man is strong in me, I look upon myself to be less than the least of all saints, God knows; and you that walk near God, and have made greater advances in the divine life, if you are honest must say, O this body of sin and death, if I shut this old man out the fore door, he comes in at the back door. Come, come, come soul, trust in God, he will give power to the saint, he will give strength, and in due time deliver thee: go to God, tell him of them; beg thy Redeemer to take his whip into his hand, either of small or large cords, and use it rather than your corruptions should get head again.

Time would fail to mention all that are cast down on these accounts, but I must mention one more; perhaps some of you may be cast down with fear not of death only, but of judgment. I believe there are thousands of people

die a thousand times, for fear of dying once. Drs. Mather and Pemberton, of New England, were always afraid of dying, but when they came to die, one or both of them said to some that were intimate with them, *is this all, I can bear this very well*: and I have generally found that a poor soul, that cannot act that faith on God it once did, or in old age when the body grows infirm, as they used to do, yet they go off rejoicing in God, as a good soul that was buried at the Chapel the other day said, *I am going over Jordan*. Therefore, O poor soul, leave this to God, he will take care of thy dying hour. If any of you are poor here, and I was to promise to give you a coffin and a shroud you would be easy; now can you trust the word of a man, and not that of God? Well, the Lord help you to trust in him; “having loved his own, he loves them unto the end he is a faithful, unchangeable friend, that sticketh closer than a brother.

Who would not be a Christian, who would but be a believer, my brethren? See the preciousness of a believer’s faith: the quacks will say, here buy this packet, which is good for all diseases, and is really worth nothing: but this will never fail the soul. Now I wish I could make you all angry; I am a sad mischief maker; but I will assure you, I do not want to make you angry with one another: some people that profess to have grace in their hearts, seem resolved to set all God’s people at variance; they are like Samson’s foxes with fire-brands in their tails, setting fire to all about them. Are any of you come from the Foundry, or any other place tonight? I do not care where you come from, I pray God you may all quarrel tonight; I want you to fall out with your own hearts; if we were employed as we ought to be, we should have less time to talk about the vain things that are the subjects of conversation. God grant your crosses may be left at the cross of the Lamb of God this night.

And if there be any of you here, (as no doubt there are many,) that are crying what nonsense he is preaching tonight, I should not wonder if they were to mimic me when they go home; if they should say, I thank God, I was never cast down; you take God’s name in vain; you thank God you was never cast down: the very answer you have given makes me cast down for you; why so? Why, as the Lord liveth, I speak out of compassion, there is but one step between thee and death. Do you not know the sessions began at the Old Bailey today? If there were any capitally convicted, what would you think to see them playing at cards, or go on rattling, and drinking, and swearing? Would not you yourselves cry, and if it were a child of your own, would it not break your heart? But yet thou art that wretch; I must weep for thee, my brother sinner; we had both one father and mother, Adam and Eve; this was our sad original.

Dear Christians, pray for me tonight. I remember once I was preaching in Scotland, and saw ten thousand affected in a moment, some with joy, others crying, ‘I cannot believe’; others, ‘God has given me faith’; some fainting

in their friends' arms: seeing two stout creatures upon a tomb stone, hardened indeed, I cried out, you rebels come down, and down they fell directly, and cried before they went away, *What shall we do to be saved?* Have any of you apprentices, whom you have brought from time to time to the Tabernacle, but now will not let them come, because you think they grow worse and worse, and you will be tempted to leave off praying for them? Do not do that; who knows but this may be the happy time. Children of godly parents, apprentices of godly people, servants of people who fear the Lord, that hear gospel preachers, that are on the watch for every infirmity, that go to their fellow servants and say, these saints love good eating and drinking; they are only gospel gossips. Is this the case with any of you? If it is, you are in a deplorable condition, under the gospel and not convinced thereby. O may God bring down you rebels tonight: may this be the happy hour you may be cast down and disquieted within you. What can I say more? I would speak till I burst; I would speak till I could say no more; O poor souls that hast never yet been cast down. I will tell you, if you die without being cast down, however you may die, and have no pangs in your death, and your carnal relations may thank God that you died like lambs, but no sooner will your souls be out of your bodies, but God will cast you down to hell; you will be lifting up your eyes in yonder place of torment; you will be disquieted, but there will be nobody there to say, *hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him.* O my God, when I think of this, I could go to the very gates of hell to preach. I thought the other day, O if I had my health, I would stand on the top of every hackney coach, and preach Christ to those poor creatures. Unconverted old people, unconverted young people, will you have no compassion on your own souls? If you will damn yourselves, remember I am free from the blood of you all. O if it be thy blessed will, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, take the hearts of these sinners into thy hand. Methinks I see the heavens opened, the Judge sitting on his throne, the sea boiling like a pot, and the Lord Jesus coming to judge the world: well, if you are damned, it shall not be for want of calling after. O come, come, God help you to come, whilst Jesus is standing ready to receive you. O fly to the Saviour this night for refuge; remember if you die in an unconverted state you must be damned for ever.

O that I could but persuade one poor soul to fly to Jesus Christ; make him your refuge; and then however you may be cast down, *hope in God, and you shall yet praise him.* God help those that have believed, to hope more and more in his salvation, till faith be turned into vision, and hope into fruition. Even so, Lord Jesus. Amen and Amen.