



Broken and Comfortless

We all know what it is like to feel alone, even when surrounded by people. Loneliness preceded the fall, and is in fact the first thing that God said that was “*not good*” (Gen. 2:18). Loneliness transcends the human experience, before and after the fall. So in one sense we can understand the meaning of this text, yet there is something in it beyond our own experience. David penned this psalm when he was in the throes of afflicted loneliness. Yet we find here, not only the words of David. As Augustine once said, we have before us “The prayers of Christ from the cross.”

Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.”

Psalm 69:20

Broken

Spurgeon once said, “*Our Lord died of a broken heart, and reproach hath done the deed.*” Reproach is a hard thing for anyone to face. We often think that Christ died of His injuries. But this is not true. When our Lord suffered upon the cross, He did not die as a result of His pierced hands and feet. It was not the result of His bodily position, making it hard to breathe. It was not exposure to the elements with no garment to cover Him. It was not thirst, or hunger that killed Him.

Luke 23:46 gives us some insight into this idea when it says, “*And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.*” He gave up His own soul. “*I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again*” (John 10:18). It was the reproach of the Father on His sinless soul that grieved Christ’s soul unto death. There was no stronger hammer on Christ’s soul than reproach.

The phrase, “*Reproach hath broken my heart,*” as we look at it from Christ’s vantage point in the context of His passion, means something quite amazing. If we look at the full range of possibilities in these few words, we would find a different application for David than Christ. David felt, no doubt, the human and immediate meaning of these words as he writes them in his own context. For David, this probably meant, “*great and painful disappointment, a sorrow-filled heart*” which is found quite readily in its meaning. Yet there is also in this phrase a deeper definition. “*Reproach hath broken my heart.*” also means, “Crushed violently, or to quench, like a fire.” It means to “utterly shatter.”

Could the soul-crushing reproach of the Father have killed Christ? If the trial of His soul in anguish caused His capillaries to burst with blood in the garden, why could not His soul-pain also take His life? Mental emotions and passions are well known by all to affect the heart by way of palpitations, faintings, heart attacks, etc. Great emotion and passion, it is said, can have an overwhelming effect, producing a rupture of the walls of the heart. It is stated by medical authorities that our outward and emotional circumstances can have a devastating effect on the body.

If this is true of regular hearts, how much more of the Son of man Who carried the eternal wrath of every sin of His elect? When, during those dark and dreadful hours on the cross, He, “*being made a curse for us,*” “*bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows,*” and suffered for sin the judgment of God upon man. He was “*full of anguish,*” and now “*exceeding sorrowful even unto death.*”

Comfortless

One of the greatest pleasures of the human experience is comfort. I am not speaking about a warm Lazy-Boy recliner with a built-in massager. I’m talking about *emotional and spiritual comfort*.

Perhaps you remember as a child the warm embrace of your mother after you had skinned your knee. The kiss on the forehead and her loving embrace hardly took away the pain but it did make you *feel better*. You were being sympathized with, soothed in your pain, in a word, you were being comforted. But strangely enough, for anyone to enjoy the pleasure of comfort, we need first to feel pain. It is the only way comfort may come.

In 2 Corinthians 1:4 we are reminded that the loving sympathies of the Father are found through the *“sufferings of Christ as they abound in us.”* But here again it is only through tribulation that *“we ourselves are comforted of God.”* It is through pain, trial, and tribulation that we feel the warm embrace of the Holy Spirit’s comfort through the promises of the Word. Yet none of this is possible without the reality of our text, *“I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.”*

Notice that this text does not say “onlookers,” “lovers of Christ,” or “friends.” Christ had those. We know that Mary, Martha, John, and perhaps even Peter saw Him die on the cross. We think of the angel that comforted Christ in His garden pain. Were these not comforters? In part, yes. But there is more.

The word “comfort” here in our text does not mean simply a “There-there, everything will be alright” kind of comfort. It is speaking of something deeper, a soulish consolation. It is speaking about not simple empathy, but identifiable sympathy. The many survivors of a tragedy often develop a lifelong friendship because they are indelibly tied to an event that changed their lives forever. This is the kind of comforter Christ was scanning the horizon for. He did not find it in Peter. He did not find it in John. He did not even find it in the crucified thief who asked to be remembered. No, in this regard He was all alone! He did not even find it in the Father. *“Eli, eli, lamma sabachthini,”* meaning, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”*

No comfort from the Father, no assurance from heaven. Why? Because the curse of God due to us for sin, would be an eternal hell of loneliness for every sinning soul – an eternity of endless torment and anguish, but also eternal solitude. Christ was without comfort so we might have reconciliation, peace, and comfort. Comfort, while sin may buffet us, while the flesh might condemn us, *“the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ”* (2 Cor. 1:5).

Christ meets us when we come to Him for comfort. His heart was broken so ours could be healed. He was abandoned to suffer so that we might have eternal fellowship. He was despised and rejected so that we might be adopted as sons and daughters of God. He knows our pain, and our loneliness, and our sorrow. *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins”* (1 John 4:10).

*“My Savior! and did you too feel
How sad it is to be alone,
Deserted in the adverse hour
By those who must your love have known?”*

*“Forsaken of your nearest friends,
Surrounded by malicious foes –
No kindly voice encouraged you,
When the loud shout of scorn uprose.*

*Yet there was calm within your soul,
No stoic pride that calmness kept,
Nor Godhead unapproached by woe –
Like man you had both loved and wept.*

*“Who is alone if God be near?
Who shall repine at loss of friends,
While he has One of boundless power,
Whose constant kindness never ends.*

Octavius Winslow

Jerrold Lewis

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