

## BROKEN BONES

### NO. 861

A SERMON  
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 21, 1869,  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.”*  
*Psalm 51:8.*

BACKSLIDING is a most common evil, far more common than some of us suppose. We may ourselves be guilty of it, and yet may delude our hearts with the idea that we are making progress in spiritual life. As the cunning hunter always makes the passage into his pits most easy and attractive, but always renders it most difficult for his victim to escape, so Satan makes the way of apostasy to be very seductive to our nature, but alas, the path of return from backsliding is very difficult to tread, and were it not for divine grace, no human feet would ever be able to make progress in it. If I should be successful, this morning, in calling attention to decline in the spiritual life, especially in calling the attention of those to the matter whom it most concerns—I mean those who are themselves declining—I shall feel happy indeed. At the same time, if I should so speak that those who have backslidden may be encouraged to hope for restoration, and to seek with earnestness and eagerness, that they may even now be *restored*, a second good result will have followed, and unto God shall be double praise! Dear friends, we make little enough *advance* in the spiritual life, as it is—it were a thousand follies in one to be going *back*. When I look at my own standing on the road to heaven, I am so dissatisfied with that to which I have attained, that to give up an inch of what I have gained would be excess of madness! A rich man may lose a thousand pounds or more and not feel it; but he whose purse is scant cannot afford to lose a shilling. Those who abound much in divine grace might, perhaps, be able to bear some spiritual losses, but you and I cannot afford it! We are too near bankruptcy as it is, and so poverty-stricken in many respects, that it well behooves us to look to every one of the pennies of grace, to watch our little drains and expenditures, and to neglect no means by which even a little might be gained in the spiritual life. May God grant to us now that while we are listening to His word we may derive a blessing.

There are three things to which I shall call your attention this morning. The first is, *the plight in which David was*—he speaks of his bones as having been broken; secondly, *the remedy which he sought*, “Make me to hear joy and gladness”; and then, thirdly, *the expectation which he entertained*, namely, that the bones which had once been broken would yet be able to rejoice.

**I.** In commencing, let us notice THE PLIGHT IN WHICH DAVID WAS. His bones had been broken.

We hear persons speak very flippantly of David's sin—boldly offering it as an accusation against godliness, and as an excuse for their own inconsistent conversation. I wish they would also look at David's *repentance*, for if his sin was shameful, his sorrow for it was of the bitterest kind, and if the crime was glaring, certainly the afflictions which chastised him were equally remarkable. From that day forward, the man whose ways had been ways of pleasantness, and whose paths had been paths of peace, limped like a cripple along a thorny road, and traversed a pilgrimage of afflictions almost unparalleled! Children of God cannot sin cheaply! Sinners may sin, and in this life they may prosper, yes, and sometimes prosper by their *sins*, but those whom God loves will always find the way of transgression to be hard. Their folly will cost them their peace of mind; it will cost them their present comfort, and even cost them all but their souls, so that they are saved, but as by fire. David had sinned, and for a while the sin was pleasurable—all the attendant circumstances appeared to be favorable to his escape from punishment. He had managed to conceal his crime from the injured Uriah, and then he had with horrible craftiness, effected the death of the injured husband. Every circumstance in providence seemed to favor

the concealment of the monarch's sin; his conscience slept; his passions rioted, but his heart was estranged, and his grace was at its lowest ebb. Perhaps he even persuaded himself that his adultery, which might have been a great sin in others, was excusable in himself because of his position as a despotic sovereign who, according to Oriental notions, had almost absolute power over the persons of his subjects. It is so easy to persuade ourselves that what custom concedes to us, it is right to take, but because David was a man after God's own heart, his ease in sin could not long continue—the Lord would not allow such a disease to destroy His servant. David's rest was abruptly broken. The stern prophet, Nathan, delivers to him a parable with a personal application. The sense of right in the king is awakened, conviction of sin, like a lightning flash, destroys the towers of his joy, and lays his peace prostrate in ruins! He trembles before God, whom in his heart he loved, but whom he had for a while, forgotten. The king goes into his chamber mourning and lamenting before the Lord, followed by the chastising rod which drives the word of God home upon his conscience! The Holy Spirit becomes the spirit of bondage to him, and makes him again to fear; by the rough north wind of conviction all his joys are withered, and his delights cut off; he becomes one of the most wretched of mortals; his sighs and groans resound through his palace, and where once his harp had poured forth melodies of pleasant praise, nothing is heard but dolorous notes of plaintive penitence! God have mercy on you, O conscience-stricken monarch! Your couch is watered with your tears, and your bread made bitter with your grief. Well do you compare your sorrow to the pain of broken bones! Brothers and sisters let us open up that poetical metaphor before us.

We may gather from this that David's plight was *very painful*. "His bones," he says, "were broken." A flesh wound is painful, and who would not wish to escape from it? But here was a more serious injury, for the bone was reached and completely crushed. No punishment was probably crueller than that of breaking poor wretches, alive, upon the wheel when a heavy bar of iron smashed the great bones of the arms and of the legs—the pain must have been excruciating to the last degree! And David declares that the mental anguish which he endured was comparable to such extreme agony. You are on your way home today, and in affecting a passage across one of our most perilous roads, you are startled by a fearful cry, for some poor unwary passenger has been dashed down by a huge and impetuous vehicle! You rush to the rescue, but it is too late—the unhappy victim is pale and death-like, and the word sounds terribly on your compassionate ears when you are informed that his bones are broken. We think comparatively little of wounds which only tear the curtains of flesh, but when the solid pillars of the house of manhood are snapped in two and the supports of the body are broken—then every man confesses that the pain is great indeed. David declares that such was his pain of mind. His soul was racked and tortured, anguished and tormented. The pain of a broken bone is as constant as it is excruciating, it prevents sleep by night, and ease by day; the mind cannot be diverted from it; men cannot shake off the remembrance that this, their frame, is so seriously injured. O beware, you believers who are just now tempted by the sweets of sin, and remember the wormwood and gall which will be found in the dregs afterwards! You who feel the soft blandishments of sin to be so pleasing to your flesh, and are ready to yield to its gentle fascinations, remember that when it reveals itself, the softness of its touch will all be gone, and it will be towards you as a huge hammer, or like the crushing wheels of the chariot of Juggernaut, crushing your spirit with anguish! The velvet paw of the tiger of sin conceals a lacerating claw!

The metaphor also signifies that the result of his sin and of his repentance was exceedingly *serious*. A trifling thing is superficial. That which is merely on the surface is not a matter which may cause us deep anxiety; but a broken bone is not a thing to laugh at! Such an injury compels a man to change his lightheartedness for apprehension. Had it been but a skin wound, he might have wrapped his handkerchief about it, and have gone his way and have said, "It will heal in due time." But in the case of a broken bone he anxiously sends for the surgeon, and knows that he must lie by a while—he feels the accident is no mere trifle. Believe me, dear friends, genuine sorrow for sin is not as some suppose it—mere sentimentalism. Under sorrow for sin I have seen men driven almost out of their senses, until it seemed as if their minds would fail them under their apprehensions of guilt and its heinousness. Yes, some of us have personally felt it, and we bear witness that if all forms of bodily pain could be heaped upon us at

once, we had sooner bear them all than the burden of sin! O believe me, as I am sure you will who have felt the same—guilt upon the conscience is worse than the body on the rack. Even the flames of the stake may be cheerfully endured, but the burnings of a conscience tormented of God are beyond all measure unendurable! Many have felt this soul-anguish, and have endured this month after month, but have at last found rest, so that there is comfort in this misery, for it ends well and profitably. May you who now feel your bones to be broken, now plead, as David did, “Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.”

The plight into which David fell was more than serious and painful—it was *complicated*. The setting of one broken bone may puzzle the surgeon, but what is his task when many bones are broken? In one bone a compound fracture will involve great difficulty in bringing the divided pieces together, in the hope that yet new bone may be formed, and so the member may be spared. But if it should come to a broken arm, *and* leg, *and* rib—if in many places the poor human frame has become injured, how exceedingly careful must the surgeon be! Often the very treatment which may be useful to one member may be injurious to the other—disease in one limb may act upon another. The cure of the whole, where all the bones are broken, must be a miracle! If a mass of misery—a man full of broken bones—shall yet become healthy and strong, great credit must be given to the surgeon’s skill. Brothers and sisters, you see the case of a man then who has sinned against God by backsliding from his ways, and who is heavily struck by his conscience, and by the Holy Spirit! It is a complicated sorrow which he endures. The metaphor of broken bones also seems to indicate that *the greater powers* of the soul are grieved and afflicted. The bones are the more important part of the structure of the body; in our spirits there are certain graces which are, so to speak, the bones of the spiritual man—to these David refers. Our heavenly Father is sometimes pleased when we have sinned to allow our faith to become weak like a broken bone. We cannot grasp the promises we once delighted in; we cannot voice the encouraging word as we did in happier days; our faith brings us pain rather than rest. He allows our hope to lose its joy-creating power, and like a broken bone, our very hope for a better land where rest remains becomes a pining disquietude at our present forlorn condition. Even love, that notable limb of strength which makes the soul to run so nimbly, is full of weakness and anguish, and makes us cry, “Do I love my Lord at all, and if so, how could I have offended Him so greatly? When I have backslidden so far, surely for me to talk about love to God would be to take a holy word upon polluted lips!” At that time the great master graces within our spirit seem, each of them to minister to our woe, and though they are there—as the broken bone is still in the man’s body—they are so injured and weakened, and all but powerless, that their only vitality is the sad vitality of pain! Our faith in the Scriptures leads us to tremble at their threats; our hope shocks us because though we have hope for others, we cannot rejoice for ourselves! And our very love to God, yet alive within us, makes us hate and despise ourselves to think we should have acted thus towards One so good and kind. O brothers and sisters, you who are lingering on the brink of sin, and are beginning to slip with your feet, may the thought of these broken bones awaken you from your dangerous lethargy as with a thunderclap! And may you fly at once to the cross and to the fountain filled from Jesus’ blood, and begin your spiritual career anew with more earnestness and watchfulness than you have ever shown before! The case was painful, serious and complicated.

In the fourth place, it was extremely *dangerous*, for when several bones are broken, every surgeon perceives how very likely it is that the case will end fatally. Around each shattered bone there lingers the danger of gangrene, and if that grievous ill should intervene, the healing is in vain. When a heart is broken with repentance, the *gangrene of remorse* is most urgent to enter it; when the spirit is humbled, the *gangrene of unbelief* covets the opportunity to take possession of the man. When the heart is really emptied and made to feel its own nothingness, then the demon despair beholds a dark cavern in which to fix his horrible abode. It is a dreadful thing to have faith broken, hope broken, and love broken—and the entire man, as it were, reduced to a palpitating mass of pain. It is a dreadfully dangerous condition to be in; for, alas, my brothers and sisters, when men have sinned, and have been made to suffer afterwards, how often they have turned to their sins again with greater hardness of heart than ever! With many, the more they are struck the more they revolt. When the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint, and

they seem to be nothing but “wounds and bruises and putrefying sores,” through the afflictions they have suffered—yet they still return to their idols, and the more they are chastened the more they revolt! Think, I pray you, how many professors have backslidden and have been chastened, but have continued in their backsliding until they have gone down to hell! I did not say *children of God*—I said *professors*; and how do you know but what *you* may be a mere professor yourself?

Ah, my friend, if you are living in known sin at this time, and are happy in it, you have great cause to tremble! If you can go on from day to day, and from week to week in neglected prayer and neglected reading of the word; if you can live without the means of grace in the week days; if you are cold and indifferent towards our Lord and Master, if you are altogether becoming worldly and covetous, and vain, fond of levity and the things of this world, and yet are at ease—you have grave cause to suspect that you are a *bastard* in the family, and not one of the true children of the living God! I use that hard expression, remembering how the poet puts it—

*“Bastards may escape the rod,  
Plunged in sensual, vain delight;  
But the trueborn child of God,  
Must not, would not, if he might.”*

Ah, indeed, he would not if he might! Great God, never let us sin without a smart! Never allow us to turn to the right or to the left without receiving at once a reproof for it, that we may be driven back into the strait and narrow path, and may so walk all our lives with You! The danger is, when the bones get broken, the gangrene of despair, or the mortification of indifference may set in, and the man becomes a castaway. How this ought to keep any of you who know the Lord from indulging in the beginnings of declension! How jealous should you be lest you run these frightful risks!

Yet again, David’s case was most *damaging*. Supposing the danger to be over, yet a broken bone is never a gain, but must always be a loss. Poor man! While his bone is broken he is quite unable to help himself, much less to help others! His being unable to help himself makes a draft upon the strength of the church of God; power which might otherwise be employed, has to be turned into the channel of succoring *him*, so that there is a clear demand upon the Christian power of the church which ought to be expended mainly in seeking after lost souls—there is a damage to the whole church in the declension of *one* backsliding believer! Moreover, while the man is in this state he can do no good to others. Of what service can he be who does not know his own salvation? How can he point others to a Savior when he cannot see the cross himself? How shall he comfort another man’s faith while his own faith can scarcely touch the hem of your garment? By what energy and power shall he help the weak when he himself is the weakest of all? Yes, and let me say even after God in His mercy has healed every broken bone, it is a sad detriment to a man to have had his bones broken at all! Somehow or other there is never the freedom of action and degree of energy in the healed arm that there is in the one that was never broken. It is a great blessing for the cripple to be helped to walk with a crutch, but it is a greater blessing never to have been a cripple. It is an unspeakable blessing to have been able always to run without weariness and walk without fainting. When a man’s bone has been broken in his boyhood, if it is ever so well set yet, I have heard say, it will feel the changes of the weather, and will feel starts and shocks unknown before—unpleasant reminders that it was once broken. So it is with us—if we have fallen into a sin, even though we have recovered from it, there is a weakness left, and a tendency to pain. We never are the men, after backsliding, that we were before; and we never make altogether a recovery from great *spiritual* decline, so as to be, all things considered, quite what we were before. I grant that in some points we may become superior, as, for instance, in knowledge of self and in experience of the spiritual life, we may even have made an advance, but still, in holy agility, in sacred vivacity, in consecrated exultation, we are not what we were. I will defy David to dance before the ark of God with all his might after the sin with Bathsheba had crippled him; yes, and there is no giant killing, there is no slaying his ten thousands, there is very little of high and mighty exploit in Israel’s cause after the sin, even though succeeded by a gracious recovery. I grant you, David exhibited virtues of another class, and excellences of another kind, but even these are not such as to tempt us to risk the experiment for ourselves! God grant that our bones may not

be broken, lest our soul be damaged for life. May we never be like a ship which has been all but wrecked and just escaped the rocks, tugged into harbor with extreme difficulty, her hull all but water-logged, her cargo spoiled, her masts gone by the board, her streamers gone, her crew and passengers all wet and saved as by the skin of their teeth—a mere hulk dragged into haven by infinite mercy! God grant, instead of that, that we may have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, sails all filled, with a goodly cargo on board to the praise of the glory of His grace who has made us accepted in the beloved!

One more reflection on this point and that is, although David's case was very painful, very serious, very complicated, very dangerous, and very damaging, yet it was still *hopeful*. The saving clause lies here—"The bones which *You* have broken." What? Did *God* break those bones? Then the breaking was not done by *accident*, but by design! Did God, in chastisement, deal with David's spirit, and bring him into this killing sorrow? Then He who wounds can bind up! Infinite power rests in God, and if He has, in wisdom, been pleased to break, He will, in mercy, be pleased to reset the bones! O you wounded spirits, far be it from Me to wound you yet more! Far rather would I help to bind on the splints and the strapping. Let this then be your consolation, like a piece of heavenly plaster may this be to you—"The Lord kills *and* makes alive; the Lord wounds *and* He makes whole." None but He can do it! If your sorrow is a hatred for sin, depend upon it, the devil did not give you that sorrow, and your own nature did not breed it—it is a heaven-given sorrow! Those bones of yours shall yet be healed! Yes, and they shall yet rejoice!

The lesson for this first part of the subject then, is, let as many as are now possessing any spiritual health and enjoyment be careful that they do not lose it. Let such as have lost their nearness to God be anxious to regain it before worse evils shall come. Let those who are almost in despair take heart, for they cannot be in a worse plight than David was, and the God who rescued David can rescue them! Let them not sit down in despair, but, with the psalmist, let them rise up with humble hope, and address themselves, as we do now, in the second place, to the remedy.

## II. THE REMEDY TO WHICH THE PSALMIST RESORTED.

Observe, negatively, he did not lie down sullenly or in despondence; he turned to his chastening God in prayer! He did not offer sacrifices, nor attempt good works of his own; he turned not to *himself* in any measure, but to God alone. He did not cast away his confidence in God. He still believed that there was power in heaven to save him, and therefore, by humble faith, he lifted up the voice of his cry to the Most High in these words—"Make me to hear joy and gladness."

Now notice, brothers and sisters, in this, first of all, *David believed that there was joy and gladness even for such as he was*. Notice the verse which comes before this text, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Yes, there is the key to his meaning. He believed that there was *pardon*, and that pardon would restore his joy and gladness to him! He was confident that God could pardon, that He could pardon completely, that He had already provided the means of pardon. David alludes to that in the hyssop—that God could thoroughly pardon even *him*, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Now, beloved mourner, I pray you believe the same precious fact. There is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared. Great as your sin may be, whether as a sinner or as a fallen Christian, yet still it cannot exceed the boundless extent of Jehovah's compassion; He is able to forgive the greatest sins through the blood of His dear Son. There cannot be as much enormity in your sin as there is merit in the Savior's atonement. What? Though you should have sinned against light and knowledge, and as far as you could do so, have crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame, yet, without injury to His justice or taint upon His holiness, God can stretch out the silver scepter and forgive you, even you! And He can do that at this instant! Believe that, believe that now, for it is most certainly true!

In the next place, *David knew that this joy and gladness must come to him by hearing*. Observe, "Make me to *hear* joy and gladness." He did not expect it by *doing*—he did not look for it merely by praying; he certainly did not expect it by feeling! He expected it by *hearing*. Oh, those fops and fools, what good is it, in all they *do*, who attempt to preach the gospel, as they say (which gospel is no gospel),

through the *eyes*, by their vestments and pantomimes! Why, the gate of mercy is the *ear*! Salvation comes to no man through what he *sees*, but through what he *hears*! As says the Scripture, “Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live.” As it was well observed this week by an eminent brother in Christ, there are some who despise sermons, and imagine that public prayer is everything. But these should remember that nowhere in the New Testament did Jesus commission special men to go forth and celebrate public prayer! Nowhere did He give even a hint of a ritual! Nowhere did He prescribe a liturgy; He did not ordain morning prayer, and vespers, or so much as a formal prayer for the day! But He did say to His disciples—“Go you into all the world and *preach* the gospel.” Far are we from undervaluing the assembling of ourselves together for public prayer, but yet it is suggested that so little should be said of that which we call public worship in the New Testament—while the same book teems with references to the *preaching of the word*—and plainly declares that by the foolishness of *preaching* God will save them who believe! Our Lord Himself was throughout His whole life, a preacher, and among the greatest signs of His Messiahship He mentioned that the poor had the gospel preached to them! The fact is, the sermon reverently heard and earnestly delivered is the highest act of worship! And the preaching of the gospel is, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, the greatest instrumentality for the salvation of men! Though all the liturgies that were ever said or sung had remained unwritten; though all the notes of pealing organs had been silent; though every morning celebration, and evening chant had been unknown; though every “performing of service” had been foresworn—the world might have been all the better for the loss! The gospel faithfully proclaimed is God’s gate of mercy; the preaching of His word by earnest lips touched with the consecrating fire, is the power of God unto salvation! The hearing of the word is the great horror alike of papists and infidels—but it is the greatest of all means of divine grace!

Let those who are disconsolate and cast down remember the Master’s precept, and be diligent in listening to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus. God asks no *sacraments* of you—“You desire not sacrifice, else would I give it.” David turned away from ceremonies, and his truly evangelical prayer was, “Make me to *hear*,” for *there* is the point of *healing*! Notice that the hearing which David intended was an inward and *spiritual* hearing with his whole soul. One is struck with the expression, “Make me to *hear*.” What? David, have you no ears? Does he mean, “Lord, send me a prophet”? No, there was Nathan, there was Gad—Israel was not without her prophets in those days. He does not ask for a preacher; what, then, did he seek? What? Had the man’s ear become deaf? *Spiritually* that was the case. He heard the word of comfort, but he did not hear it aright. He was distracted; his soul was tempest-tossed; his conscience tormented him. The threats of the law thundered in his ears, so that when the good word came, “The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die,” he did not hear it as being his own! He took it with him into his prayer closet, and he remembered the words, but he could not feel the inward sense to be true to himself. Therefore does he ask for the hearing ear. “Lord,” he seems to say, “Cleanse these ears of mine! O give my poor heart the power to grasp these absolving words, lest I should be like those who having ears, hear not, and having eyes, see not, and do not understand.” Believe me, I can make some of you hear well enough with your outward ear, but one of my most earnest prayers is that God would make you all hear *within*—and especially those who are desponding; and those who refuse to be comforted. I suggest this prayer to mourners, today, to take home with them, and I beg God’s people to join in supplication for them. “Make me to hear! Make me to hear that precious gospel! Make me to hear and to receive Your own true word! It has comforted so many, Lord, let it comfort me! I know Your blood has pardoned others, O help Your poor broken-hearted servant to get pardon as well as they! I do not doubt Your power or Your willingness to save others, but, Lord, there are such obstacles and difficulties about *my* case! I beseech You, roll away the stone from the sepulcher of my poor dead hopes, and make me to live in Your sight. It is really a making, Lord—a creation, a work of omnipotence, a work in which the attributes of Your power and Your grace will be resplendent. *Make* me to hear! You who have made the ear at first, can make it new. O *make* me to hear joy and gladness!” Do you catch the meaning of the psalmist? He knows that the comfort must come by *hearing*, but he knows it must be a *spiritual* hearing, and therefore he asks for it of the Lord.

**III.** And now, as time fails us, though we might have enlarged here, we shall turn in the last place to THE HOPE WHICH THE PSALMIST ENTERTAINED.

What was it? “That the bones which You have broken may *rejoice*.” Notice—not, “that the bones which You have broken may grow quiet, and be calm, and at rest”—that was not enough. Not, “that the bones which You have broken may become callous, indifferent, painless.” No, no! *That* he would have vehemently disapproved—but, “that the bones which You have broken may *rejoice*.” He dares to ask for great mercy! Yes, the greatest mercy! When a great sinner comes to a great God, if he pleads at all, he will do well to plead for great things, for since he deserves *nothing* at all, all that comes to him must come of grace, and therefore the same mercy which freely gives the little may as well give the much! Therefore, seeking sinners, make bold to open your mouths wide, for He will fill them!

Let us look at these words more closely—“that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.” He means then, that if he is enabled by faith to look to Christ, whose blood is sprinkled by the hyssop upon the soul; if he receives perfect pardon through the atoning sacrifice which makes sinners white as snow, then he will possess a deeper and truer joy than before. In times past his tongue rejoiced, but now his *bones* will rejoice; before, his flesh rejoiced, now his *bones* and *marrow* will rejoice; the deep pain which he had felt within the inmost depths of his nature would now be exchanged for an equally deep content, which like an artesian well, gushes up from the very heart of the earth all clear and fresh! It would rise in continual flood from the heart of his nature, all fresh with holy exultation, and he would now know what sin meant as he never knew before! He would know what chastisement for sin was as he could not have dreamed before! He would know what *mercy* meant as he had not before understood! And therefore his inmost nature shall praise and bless God in a way in which he had never done until that hour! That deeply experimental, painful, and yet blessed experience of his weakness, and of God’s power to save, taught him a heart-music which only broken bones could learn. You know, brothers and sisters, there is a great deal of flash about many of our spiritual joys. They are in the grosser parts, very near akin to carnal excitement, and especially with young beginners the gladness is too apt to trail in the mire of mere mental pleasure. Our gladness is frequently far from being deep as we could wish—but after the bone-breaking everything is solid; after the bone-healing everything is true! What our joy lacks in vividness, it makes up in stability and depth. So David means, “The innermost core of my nature; the very essentials of my spiritual being shall sing and rejoice.”

Note again, he means that his joy would be more than ever *a matter of his whole soul*. “My bones which were broken shall *all* of them,” in the *plural*, “rejoice.” He had been a mass of misery—mercy shall make him a mass of music! It is not easy to get the whole man to praise God; you can bless God, sometimes, in His house with your heart and with your voice too, but your thoughts will wander after the sick child, or after the bad debt. Some faculty or other is unstrung—the 10 strings are not all in tune, but when the bone-breaking process has been suffered; when the man feels himself thoroughly crushed before God; then *all* his thoughts are concentrated upon his *misery*—and when he obtains relief, then all his thoughts are concentrated upon the *mercy*, and he blesses God with a unanimity of all his powers never before reached! The bones which God has broken, without discord, every one of them praise Him.

That rejoicing expected was peculiar to the brokenness which would be apparent in it. Every broken bone would then become a mouth with which to bless God, but there would always be a humility, gentleness, softness, and tenderness in such praise. I must confess I like to listen to the high sounding cymbals, and I can shout as loudly as any, “Praise the Lord with the harp; blow upon the trumpet in the new moon.” I can cry with ardor, “O for a shout, a sacred shout to God, the Sovereign King.” But the dulcimer’s soft notes often have the most music in them to *my* weary ears; trumpet notes of triumph may be too much like the noise of those who go forth to the battles of earth, or make merry in the feast. But the soft music of broken bones is peculiarly sacred, and reminds one of the Master’s sacred joy, the soft and solemn music of His soul when He said, “My praise shall be of You in the great congregation; I will pay My vows before them that fear Him.” When He blessed God on the cross, that a seed should serve Him; that it should be unto the Lord for a generation, His joy was true and deep. “Still waters run deep.” The

brokenness of heart has not in it the roaring as when the sea roars, and the fullness thereof, but it has the gentle flow of that silver river, “the streams which make glad the city of God.”

Once again, the joy which the psalmist expected would have *much of God in it*, for you observe that the Lord appears in this verse twice—“He breaks the bones, and He makes the ear to hear joy and gladness.” God is appealed to as the breaker and the healer. After having been sorely struck, and having at last found comfort, we always think more of our Lord Jesus than we did before. If I have grown in anything since I have known the Lord, I think it is in this one thing, in having more frequent and realizing thoughts of God the Father, Son, and Spirit, personally considered. There was a day when I thought *doctrine* the first thing and all-important, and there was a time when I conceived inward *experience* to be most exceedingly worthy of my regard; I think the same now, but over and above all, that my soul possesses a deep sense of God, and a longing to be in daily *personal* fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Surely this being filled with God is a more excellent way, for doctrine may be but food untasted, and experience may turn out to be but fancy, but to live upon God by faith, and to serve Christ with the heart, and to feel the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, this is reality and truth! When a man has had such dealings with God as David had, and received such mercy from Him, then his joy will be fuller of God than it ever was before.

You will notice in the verse, too, that David *sets no end* whatever to his joy. “The bones which You have broken may rejoice,” but how long? Oh, as long as ever they please! Once let the bone be set, the ground of joy is constant and continuous. A pardoned sinner never needs to pause in his sacred gratitude. Let the Lord visit the most broken-hearted among His people, and light their candle, and the devil cannot blow it out; nor death itself, that last of foes, shall not quench the sacred flame! O see, my brothers and sisters, how blessed a remedy Christ has provided for all the evils of your backsliding! See how to get at it, by an earnest prayer to God through Christ! Go to your chambers and breathe out a prayer, you daughters of sorrow, and you sons of woe, for—

*“The mercy seat is open still—  
There let your souls retreat.”*

God waits to be gracious! He comes today in the gospel to meet His poor prodigal, and to receive him with arms of love. Christ, this morning, by our ministry, is sweeping the house to search for His lost piece of money. The Good Shepherd is seeking His wandering sheep. O be joyful and thankful that you are in the land of mercy, in the place where the heart of God yearns over His dear wandering ones! Come to Jesus now, O come now by faith, and let your prayer be the words of the text, “Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.”

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