

Sermon: Grief for the Sins of Men
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PSALM 119:136: Rivers Of Waters Run Down Mine Eyes, Because They Keep Not Thy Law.

It is no rare spectacle to see a person in tears. Man is the heir of trouble, the child of sorrow, which assails him in a thousand forms. If exempt for any time from suffering in his own person, his sympathies are continually called forth by the afflictions of others to whom he is linked by the bond of a common nature, and by the more tender ties of kindred and friendship. How often do we see the face foul with weeping for the loss of a parent, a brother, a child, or a husband; and scarcely has the mourner washed himself and dried up his tears, when some new calamity causes them to flow afresh! The enquiry which we are ready to make on such occasions, What ails thee? Why weepest thou? does not express our surprise at the sight, but our desire, whether dictated by curiosity or benevolence, to ascertain the cause of the distress.

But, my brethren, the text presents us with a spectacle which is rare indeed, and which, though far from unreasonable, is calculated to excite very general surprise—a man whose heart was pierced, and from whose eyes the tears streamed, not on account of any bodily pain, or domestic trial, or worldly loss, but on account of the violations of God's law which he witnessed around him. David had met with heavy calamities of a temporal kind, and on these occasions we behold the keen sensibilities of the man blended with the confidence and submission of the saint. When persecuted by Saul as a traitor, when forced to flee from his capital by the unnatural rebellion of Absalom, or when informed of the unhappy death of that undutiful but beloved son, we can account for his grief on common principles. But when he composed this lengthened and beautiful piece of devotion, which expresses throughout the calm but intense breathings of delight in the law or revealed will of God, felt and cherished in the hours dedicated to uninterrupted and fixed meditation, he appears to have been free from all the ordinary causes of distress and sorrow. The afflictions which he had suffered were recollected by him only as affording grounds of thanksgiving on account of the spiritual benefit he had derived from them. The attempts of his enemies, and the bitter scorn with which they had assailed him, were thought of only to enhance his esteem for those statutes, the study of which had made their envenomed darts to fall harmless at his side. Yet while enjoying that peace which passeth all understanding, and which is the blessed portion of those who love God's law, there was one thing which pained him, which was an alloy to his happiness, which we find him repeatedly lamenting in the course of the Psalm, and which occasioned him more poignant grief than all the personal and domestic trials under which his heart had formerly bled. His righteous soul was vexed from day to day by the frequent, open, bold, and persevering transgressions which he saw and heard of. I beheld transgressors, and was grieved. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

Grief for sin is one of those charities of the heart, whose operation begins at home. He who has never seen his own sin, who has not been grieved for it, and wept over it, cannot feel grief for that of others. There is sympathy implied in sorrowing for the sins of others; and we cannot feel deeply for those distresses to which we are utter strangers in our own persons. Without this personal experience, we may weep, but will not grieve; and our tears will, at the very best, be theatrical and professional. Nay, they will pass for gross hypocrisy with Him who sees the heart. There is great danger of self-deception here. We are apt to flatter ourselves that we hate sin, when we condemn or bewail it in the conduct of others, while, in reality, we are only indulging a splenetic, censorious, or fretful disposition. Self-love, too, conceals from us the guilt or turpitude cleaving to our actions,

which we clearly see in the same or similar actions done by others. When David heard the story of the poor man and his ewe-lamb, he could not repress the sentiments of indignation which rose in his breast against the hard-hearted oppressor; but what an appalling discovery was made to him when the prophet said, Thou art the man! The spoiler of the poor man was forgotten, and his deed, base as it was, swallowed up and lost in that of the ravisher of Bathsheba and the murderer of Uriah. I have sinned. He felt as if there had not been another sinner in the world. The sacrifice of a broken spirit is pleasing to God; but it must be offered, like those of the priests under the law, first for our own sins, and then for the people's (Heb. 7:27).

But this gracious principle, while it begins at home, must not end there. It must be liberal and diffusive; and its diffusiveness is one mark, and no small or accidental one, of its genuineness. The exercise described in our text was not peculiar to David. We find it displayed in the recorded experience of the most distinguished saints in Scripture. Of Lot we are told that he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds (2 Pet. 2:7). Isaiah exclaims, Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips (Is. 6:5). Jeremiah has been called the weeping prophet, because his writings were bedewed with tears, produced, not merely by the destruction of the daughter of his people, but by the wickedness and rebellion which brought it upon her. Mine eye, says he, runneth down with rivers of water —mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission (Lam. 3:48, 49). We see the same spirit manifested by Paul, and by one greater than them all —the Man of Sorrows, who showed his acquaintance with this as well as other causes of grief, by weeping over the unbelief, the obduracy, and the wickedness of men.

If we mourn for sin truly, it will excite our grief wheresoever and by whomsoever it is committed. But, like all our sympathies, it will be excited more powerfully by the sins of those with whom we are more intimately connected, and by such of them as come more immediately within the sphere of our own observation. We are to mourn more especially, though not exclusively, for the sins of our own land, of the city in which we dwell, of the church with which we are in immediate fellowship, of the congregation of which we are members, and of our own families.

Having made these general reflections, let us now, in the first place, trace these rivers of grief to their springs; and in the second place, specify some of the leading qualities of this grief.

I. Let us trace these rivers of grief to their springs.

1. Grief for the sins of men springs from love to God. Every saint feels a lively interest in the honor of God, arising from the knowledge which he has had of his boundless goodness, and the supreme delight which he takes in him as his all-sufficient and everlasting portion. Sin is a violation of the authority of God, and an offence to the essential purity of his nature. It insults his majesty, and reflects dishonor (so far as a created act can do) upon all his attributes. How strong and impressive is the language which God in condescension employs when speaking of the conduct of sinners in reference to himself. They make him a liar, deny him, reproach him, lift up the heel against him; he is limited by them, made to serve, robbed, wearied, tempted, provoked, vexed, grieved, broken, pressed under them as a cart is pressed under sheaves. Now all the saints feel as he feels. They feel as a dutiful subject, servant, child or wife feels, when a gracious prince, kind master, liberal benefactor, indulgent parent, or affectionate husband, is dishonored or ungratefully used. Every letter of his name, every work of his hand, every word of his mouth, every precept or institution on which he has stamped his authority, every lineament of his image which can be traced on any the meanest of his creatures, they respect; and cannot bear to see any injury done to it, or even dishonor breathed upon it. How then can they be but grieved —is it any wonder that rivers of waters run

down their eyes, when his name is profaned, his works contemned, his word denied, his precepts trampled on, his image disfigured and derided?

2. It springs from love to the law of God. Consider, my brethren, where the text lies —in the heart, in the very bosom of the most fervent breathings of delight for that law which sinners keep not. It is bedded in a channel of pearls. What variety, what fulness of appropriate language, does the Psalmist employ in this sacred ode, to express his esteem for the revealed will of God, without any mixture of that vain repetition or straining, which is to be seen in formal and studied encomium! The law of thy mouth —the word of thy lips —thy commandments —thy precepts —thy testimonies —thy statutes —thy judgments. They are true, faithful, righteous, wonderful, everlasting. God's law had quickened him —made him wiser than all his teachers —comforted him in all his affliction —was his counselor in critical cases. He cannot utter his love for it —he loved it exceedingly —he asks God to consider how he loved it —it was his delight —sweeter than honey to his mouth —better than thousands of gold and silver —it was his meditation all the day —he kept it, and made haste to keep it —he had sworn and he would perform it —he hid it in his heart —he rejoiced in it as those that find great spoil —he inclined his heart to it —he stuck to it —he opened his mouth and panted, his eyes failed, and he fainted in looking for it. And as if he had exhausted speech in its praise, he exclaims, hopeless of doing it or his own feelings justice, I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad!

What is the reason brethren, that we do not feel that deep grief for sin which the Psalmist evinced? It is because we have not the intense love which he felt for that law, of which every sin is a transgression. And why should we not? Its limits surely have not been contracted —it has lost none of its excellences or recommendations. There is one consideration (not to mention others) which ought to increase our respect for the law, and consequently our grief for sin. Christians must reckon every sin as a violation of that law which the Son of God has magnified, and made honorable, and vindicated by his obedience in our nature and in our stead. And God, by the agony and death of his Son, has stamped sin with the broad and burning brand of this hatred. O harder than the adamant must that heart be, which weeps not for that which brought the sweat as great drops of blood from the body of our Redeemer, and made his soul sorrowful even unto death!

3. It springs from love to the sinner. Love to God produces love to our brethren, —and this affection is expressly enjoined by the law which is so much esteemed by every genuine saint. None knows better than he the sad and awful consequences of sin. Having escaped them himself, he is anxious to save others; and when all advices and remonstrances fail, and sinners will not hear nor consider to give glory to God, what can he do but, like the prophet, weep in secret places for their pride and impenitency? One sinner destroyeth much good; and when we see the law broken in any instance, we cannot calculate to how many sins this will lead in the same individual, or in others over whom he has influence, or to whom his example may extend. While the Christian hates the sin, he loves the person of the sinner; and the more he loves the latter, the more must he loathe and mourn over the former. This affords an illustration of the Psalmist's language: Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

4. There are personal feelings which stir this grief, and enter into its composition. When we see a person in distress, it frequently reminds us that we were once afflicted in the same or a similar way —a recollection which strengthens our sympathy, if it is not the spring from which it directly flows. In like manner the saint is made to recollect his former sins, and his grief for them mingles with that which he feels for the present sins of others. In how many ways, too, unperceived by us, may we not have contributed by our untenderness, or the careless performance of our duties, to lead astray or to harden others! Judah was forced to say, on fuller information, respecting his daughter-in-law whom he had condemned to be burned, She hath been more righteous than I (Gen. 38:26). And how painful must have been the recollections of David on the misconduct of his sons! National guilt,

which brings down temporal calamities on a people, is the aggregate to which each has contributed his share. Though the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, but every one shall be dealt with ultimately for his own transgressions; yet the sins which we see committed around us are the sins of our common nature, which, by the very laws of humanity, we are called to deplore. The words of the heathen poet may be adopted fitly on such occasions, and in this application, by the Christian: I am a man; and I reckon nothing that belongs to mankind foreign to me. They are the fruits of the sin of our first father and representative, which is imputed justly to us all. They proceed from that depravity of nature which is common to all, and which might have discovered itself in us, by the same gross scandals and crimes which we observe in others, if this had not been prevented by converting grace, or providential restraints. It is told of a good man, who had a deep insight into the depravity of his heart, which had been cured by the regenerating grace of God, that he never saw a criminal going to the scaffold without saying, There goes such a one —pronouncing his own name.

II. I now proceed to mention the leading qualities of this grief.

1. It is genuine. There may be, and often is an affected and hypocritical expression of sorrow for prevailing sins, and there may be false and lying tears, as well as words, before God. Such were those which we may suppose the Jews to have shed, when, on visiting the tombs of the righteous which they had built from a pretended zeal, they exclaimed, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets (Mat. 23:30). And such are the wailings over public sins by those who indulge in practices, less gross it may be, but equally repugnant to the law of God. But the feeling described in our text was preceded, as we saw, by profound grief for personal sin, and is uniformly associated with a recollection of the sins which the mourner has himself committed.

Its genuineness is evinced by its impartiality. The sincere mourner is grieved for the sins of friends as well as of enemies, —of those of his own religious connection, as well as those of other denominations, —for the sins of his own family, as well as those of his neighbors; nay, he is more sensibly affected with the dishonors done to God by those who are most intimately connected with him —the provoking of sons and daughters. He is grieved for all sin. The ears of every sober person are shocked at hearing the hellish imprecations uttered by some profane men; but he is affected by hearing the name of God taken, or minced, in vain. Few that have any respect to religion but would have their feelings hurt if they saw the theaters thrown open, and men flocking to places of public entertainment or business, on the Lord's day (although this is done in some countries called Christian); but he is distressed to know that this holy day is so generally spent in idleness, in private dissipation and parties of pleasure, in unnecessary visiting, or in vain, worldly and irreligious company and conversation.

The genuineness of these tears is evinced by the ease with which they flow. Take a person of tender feelings to a scene of distress, and the tear will instantly start to his eye on beholding it. Tell a benevolent man of a worthy family involved at once in sickness and destitution, and you need not to give him a minute description of the distressing scene which harrowed up your feelings on visiting it, to dispose him to contribute for its relief. The mere sight of sin draws forth the sorrow of a godly man. I BEHELD transgressors, and was grieved. It was an ancient custom to employ minstrels and hired mourners on occasions of domestic calamity, with the view of increasing the sorrow of those who assembled, and thus doing more honor to the dead. The saint has no need of such theatrical stimulants. His eye affecteth his heart (Lam. 3:51).

In fine, his tears flow more freely in secret; he goes to his closet, and on his knees he weeps and makes supplication before his heavenly Father. It was to God that the Psalmist was speaking in the text; and every true mourner can join with him in his appeal, Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee (Ps. 139:21)?

2. This grief is generous and seemly. There is a godly sorrow for the evils of this life; but sorrow for worldly distresses is no proper mark of godliness. The observation applies so far to sorrow for sin. If we grieve and weep merely for our own sins, there may be ground to suspect that we are actuated by a selfish principle, —that we are merely afraid of the punishment to which they expose us. But when we are grieved for the sins of others, after our own have been pardoned and blotted out, this shows that we feel the dishonor done to God, and are touched with compassion for the souls of others.

It is accordingly a feeling of which no person needs to be ashamed. To be overwhelmed with affliction —to burst into tears at every untoward or distressing occurrence —to indulge in immoderate grief even on occasion of great trials, is weak and childish. But it is not unseemly to weep for sin, for any sin, and it is not easy to be excessive in this expression of sorrow. Such tears become Christian men —men of stature and valor; for, as one has expressed it, it is the truest magnanimity to be sensible on the point of God's honor which is injured by sin. David was reprov'd by his commander-in-chief for mourning immoderately and indecently for Absalom; but he had no reason to be ashamed when rivers of waters ran down his eyes, because they kept not God's law. And had this degraded him in their eyes, he might have replied, as on another occasion, I will be yet more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight (2 Sam. 6:22).

3. This grief varies, especially in it's expression, in different persons, and in the same person at different times. This is common to it with other gracious dispositions in the hearts of men who are but partially sanctified, and whose exercise, in this their sublunary state, resembles the tide which ebbs and flows according to the varying influence of the moon.

Sometimes their eyes are dry, at other times the tears may be seen standing in them; now they trickle down the cheek, and again they run like a stream. Sometimes their hearts are altogether unaffected, and they have no tears to shed for sin, and what is worse, no desire to shed them; at other times, they could wish that their head were waters, and their eyes a fountain of tears, and that they had a lodge in the wilderness where they might weep day and night for the guilt of their people, and the judgments it has provoked. Sometimes the transition from insensibility to melting of heart may be very sudden, and effected by a very slight instrumentality. He who has the key of the well that is in the heart can open it by a touch, a word, a look. An instance of the species of sorrow exemplified in the text occurs in the Epistle to the Philippians. The Apostle had been exhorting his brethren to :rejoice in the Lord, and he had been giving them an example of it in his own exercise, in that most charming passage, beginning, Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord. But while pursuing this pleasing strain, the Spirit brought to his remembrance some instances of professors, who had joined with him is speaking the same language, but had been left foully to contradict it; and he all at once changes his voice: :Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18). And it was some time before he recovered himself, so far as to intimate to them that he did not mean to retract what he had given them as his final exhortation: Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice (Phil. 4:4).

A difference may be expected in the exercise of the saints, at least as to degree, in the manifestation of sorrow for sin. Some are more eminent for one grace, and others for another; as Moses for meekness, and Job for patience; Elijah for zeal against sin, and Jeremiah for grief on account of it. The same affection, therefore, may often be discovered, according to the character of the individual, in the different forms of indignant reprehension, mild expostulation, or tearful complaint. The natural temperament is also to be considered. The constitution of some men denies them tears; and grace does not in this world change the bodily temperament. Deep waters make little noise, and are scarcely seen to roll or to move. Sometimes the sorrow is too big for utterance; and tears, when they

come, bring relief. Even the situation of the person is to be taken into account. Abraham was called to walk with God in faith and obedience; while Lot, having chosen his residence in a city notorious for its wicked practices, had his righteous soul vexed from day to day.

4. This grief is habitual. Though it may vary, as the object of it is presented or withdrawn, or as the attention is called off to other and necessary duties, and there is a time to weep, and a time to refrain from weeping, yet it is not a transient emotion, but an abiding exercise. David in the text does not say, rivers ran, but run. Paul could call God to witness that he had great sorrow and continual heaviness in his heart (Rom. 9:2); for his unbelieving and impenitent countrymen. As long as Christians are in this world they will have reason for this feeling; although it may be more strongly excited on some occasions than on others. The idolatrous connections which were formed by Esau were a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 26:35); and at a later period of their lives, the latter gave expression to what must often have been the experience of the saints, when she said, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth (Gen. 27:46). Woe is me, cries the Psalmist, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace (Ps. 120:5, 6). But offences must come, scandals will be occurring from time to time in the church; and unless the Christian go out of the world, he cannot avoid coming in contact with persons whose conduct will stir up his grief, and keep these rivers of waters from remaining stagnant.

In fine, this grief is influential and profitable. It may be useful to others; it will be useful to ourselves. By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. It will increase our love to the law of God, on the principle which leads us to take an interest in the person whom we have sympathized with under distress or injurious treatment. It will enhance our compassion towards the sinner, by leading us to contemplate the misery to which he is exposed, to pray for him with greater fervency, and use every means for his relief. Sin is hateful, and the person who has rolled himself in it is odious in the sight of God and of all good men. But our indignation against sin is apt to become a passion (which it never is in God), it is apt to be influenced, if not kindled, by the strange fire of our own corruptions, and to be directed against the person of the offender instead of his sin, to alienate us from him instead of exciting us to seek his salvation, and to dispose us to blaze abroad instead of covering the multitude of sins. Now our grief for sin will check our indignation against it, and its waters will reduce and cool down our feelings (if I may so express it) to the proper Christian temperature. In such cases, it is always dangerous when our anger is more intense than our grief.. Jacob's sons, when they heard of the folly wrought in Israel by the dishonor of their sister, were grieved and very wroth. And this excess of indignation finally precipitated them into an act which not only brought on the name of Israel; a deeper stain than that which they sought to wipe off, but extorted from him these bitter words on his death-bed: Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel (Gen. 49:7). We never more need to put away all wrath and bitterness and clamor and evil speaking, and to be tender hearted, than when we are reproving sinners, or using means to recover those who are led captive of the devil. Had Jonah been more grieved for the wickedness which led to his denunciation against the inhabitants of Nineveh, he would not have been angry at their repentance and relieve.

True grief for sin may also be expected to have a good effect on the sinners themselves. Surely if any thing will awaken a person to a consideration of his ways, it would be the clear conviction that he was giving the most acute distress of mind to a godly minister, parent, brother, friend or neighbor. If any advice or remonstrance can have effect, it would be that conveyed in the accents of tender sympathy and unaffected sorrow,. This would oil, not feather, the arrow of reproof. If it was a Christian brother who was thus dealt with, surely he would be gained, and made to say, Always smite me thus, for it is a kindness; reprove me thus, for it is an excellent oil, which shall not break mine head. If, provided we had a call and opportunity in Providence, we were to rise from our knees, and with hearts melted with grief for his sin, to go to him and say, I am distressed for thee, my brother;

my bowels are moved within me, my repentings are kindled. You see before you a fellow-offender, one who has sinned in the same manner as thou hast done, and whose sin has this day been brought to remembrance by thinking upon thine: If we were to act in this manner, have we not some ground to expect that, by the blessing of God, it might be the means of calling forth a kindred feeling in his breast, and might we not hope to see realized, in a much higher sense, the pathetic scene described by the poet, when an aged king went to beg the body of his son, and succeeded in touching and melting into pity the stout heart of the murderer, by reminding him that he also had a father? [Now each by turns indulged the gush of woe, And now the mingled tides together flow.]

But, above all, genuine grief for sin has an influence with God himself, and has often been the means of averting his displeasure, not only from the individual himself, but from those over whom he mourns. When God was about to inflict a signal punishment on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he issued a special order to spare those who were engaged in this exercise. Go through the midst of the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof (Ezek. 9:4). Whole nations may have been indebted for their preservation from ruin, to the seasonable flowing of these rivers of waters from the eyes of a few genuine mourners in Zion, who, obscure and despised as they may have been, must be ranked, on this account, as the truest patriots, and the best benefactors of their country. Ungodly men, says a pious writer (Archbishop Leighton), though they meddle not with public affairs, or should they be faithful and honorable in meddling, yet by their impious lives they are traitors to the nation, the incendiaries of states and kingdoms. Godly men, though they can do no more than mourn for the sins of the nation, are the most loyal and serviceable subjects, bringing tears to quench the fire of wrath kindled by sin.

Let these sayings sink down into your ears. Let us all be deeply humbled in the sight of God. Let the land mourn, every family apart (Zech. 12:12). Let every man be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not (Jonah 3:8)?

Let me close this subject with a few reflections.

1. How rare is this exercise, even among professing Christians! To the greater part of the world it is wholly unknown. As the men of the world are strangers to the joy peculiar to a godly man, so they cannot enter into the grounds of his sadness. How can it be expected, when they never saw the criminality or turpitude of sin, which, to their vitiated taste, instead of being an evil and bitter thing, is a sweet morsel, which they roll under their tongue? With them, the mourner for sin is either a hypocrite or an enthusiast, he either acts a part by affecting a sorrow which he does not feel, or he foolishly mars his own happiness by brooding over the representations of a gloomy imagination, and indulging the qualms of a sickly and distempered conscience. Thus it has been in every age. Thus it was with David, or rather a greater than David, who had to say, When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb unto them. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards (Ps. 69:10-12). This, though it stirs instead of abating their inward grief, induces them to restrain the expression of it in public, and to seek for secret places in which they may give it vent without provoking the reproached and insolent contempt of them that are at ease in Zion. As in the context of the words I was quoting; But as for me, my prayer is unto thee.

That those who never felt any love to God or his law should look strangely on the person who mourns and is in bitterness for it, is not to be wondered at. But there is a fact which comes nearer to us, and which may justly excite both surprise and alarm. How rare is the exercise of the Psalmist among those who profess godliness! Among those who have separated from the world lying in

wickedness, and who testify against and condemn the abominations done in the midst of the land! How far short in this respect do those come whom we are bound in charity to look upon as Christians indeed! O 'tis a rare thing to see a person weep for sin, but it is a rarer, much rarer thing to see one weeping and grieved for the sins of others! Where, oh where are those adown whose cheeks the tears of sorrow for sin flow? Whose sore runs in the night, and whom neither bodily health, nor domestic enjoyments, no, nor the assurance of personal salvation, will comfort, while they see God's law broken, and his name every day blasphemed? God knows where they are: they are his hidden ones, like the seven thousand in Israel, who were unknown to Elijah, and like the mourners in Jerusalem, who could be discovered, not by Ezekiel, but by the man clothed in linen, with the writer's ink-horn by his side (Ezek. 9:2). We have often read the words of the text, they are familiar to our ears, we acquiesce in them as a just description of the exercise of a saint. But what experience have we of the exercise which they describe, or, allowing them to be figurative, of the inward sentiment of which they are the natural sign? It is said that God puts the tears of his children into his bottle (Ps. 56:8). Ah! my brethren, if the tears which we have shed for worldly trials were separated and set aside, and if those which we have shed under awakenings and compunctious visitings for our own transgressions were also separated and set aside, what would the residue be? The smallest vial in the apothecary's shop would more than suffice to hold it. It will be so far a favorable symptom, if we are convinced of our mournful failure in this matter, and grieved for the hardness of our hearts.

2. How much need is there for the renewing and softening influences of the divine Spirit! The exercise described in the text supposes, in relation to sin, a discerning eye, a tender conscience, and a full heart. But the heart of man by nature is, in regard to spiritual things, blind, insensible, and unfeeling. Even those who possess great natural sensibility, and who have tears in readiness for every earthly object of distress, have none to bestow on that which is the fruitful and malignant source of all the evils which have drowned the world in sorrow. They may feel at the commission of those gross vices which attach infamy to themselves or their connections, or which entail visible misery on the culprit. But they feel not for sin, for the dishonor it does to God, and the degradation and ruin which it brings on the rational and immortal soul. The hard and flinty heart must be struck by the rod of God's word, wielded by the hand of a greater prophet than Moses, before the waters of godly sorrow will flow from it; and there is this difference between it and the rock in the neighborhood of Horeb: the one needed to be struck only once; whereas the other requires repeated strokes of divine influence, in order to extract the treasure which is infused into, not inherent in it. Even the renewed heart is apt to return to its original obduracy, or to contract a callousness as to sin by its daily contact with it, unless this is subdued by the grace of God. It is true, our Saviour has said, He that believeth on me, out of his belly (that is, out of his heart) shall flow rivers of living water. But what says the Evangelist in explanation? But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive (John 7:39). Would we have the services of this day, would you have the word now spoken, to profit us, by leading us to mourn and be in bitterness for our sins? Like David in the text, then let us look up, with faith and fervent desire, to him who promised to pour on the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.