

**CFBC Hymns Class 19**  
**Joseph Hart (Come, My Soul)**

***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.***

Psalm 43:5 Authorized Version

***“For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ.”***

Robert Murray McCheyne

**Dialogue between a Believer and his Soul. Ps. 43. 5 (edited to show the dialogue)**

***Believer...***

Come, my soul, and let us try,  
For a little season,  
Every burden to lay by;  
Come, and let us reason.  
What is this that casts thee down?  
Who are those that grieve thee?  
Speak, and let the worst be known;  
Speaking may relieve thee.

***Believer's Soul...***

O I sink beneath the load  
Of my nature's evil!  
Full of enmity to God;  
Captived by the devil;  
Restless as the troubled seas;  
Feeble, faint, and fearful;  
Plagued with every sore disease;  
How can I be cheerful?

***Believer's Counsel...***

Think on what thy Saviour bore  
In the gloomy garden,  
Sweating blood at every pore,  
To procure thy pardon!  
See him stretched upon the wood,  
Bleeding, grieving, crying,  
Suffering all the wrath of God,  
Groaning, gasping, dying!

***The Soul's Struggle...***

This by faith I sometimes view,  
And those views relieve me;  
But my sins return anew;  
These are they that grieve me.  
Oh! I'm leprous, stinking, foul,  
Quite throughout infected;  
Have not I, if any soul,  
Cause to be dejected?

***Believer's Counsel...***

Think how loud thy dying Lord  
Cried out, "It is finished!"  
Treasure up that sacred word,  
Whole and undiminished;  
Doubt not he will carry on,  
To its full perfection,  
That good work he has begun;  
Why, then, this dejection?

***The Soul's Struggle...***

Faith when void of works is dead;  
This the Scriptures witness;  
And what works have I to plead,  
Who am all unfitness?  
All my powers are depraved,  
Blind, perverse, and filthy;  
If from death I'm fully saved,  
Why am I not healthy?

***Believer's Counsel...***

Pore not on thyself too long,  
Lest it sink thee lower;  
Look to Jesus, kind as strong –  
Mercy joined with power;  
Every work that thou must do,  
Will thy gracious Saviour  
For thee work, and in thee too,  
Of his special favour.

Continued...

Jesus' precious blood, once spilt,  
I depend on solely,  
To release and clear my guilt;  
But I would be holy.  
He that bought thee on the cross  
Can control thy nature;  
Fully purge away thy dross;  
Make thee a new creature.

***The Soul's Struggle...***

That he can I nothing doubt,  
Be it but his pleasure.  
Though it be not done throughout,  
May it not in measure?  
When that measure, far from great,  
Still shall seem decreasing?  
Faint not then, but pray and wait,  
Never, never ceasing.

***Believer's Counsel...***

What when prayer meets no regard?  
Still repeat it often.  
But I feel myself so hard.  
Jesus will thee soften.  
But my enemies make head.  
Let them closer drive thee.  
But I'm cold, I'm dark, I'm dead.  
Jesus will revive thee.

**Excerpts from Joseph Hart's Spiritual Autobiography**

***I used to be*** often terribly cut down with those words, "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxv. 30); which sometimes sunk me almost to utter despair; and then again I used to receive some comfort. At length despair began to make dreadful head against me...

***...I used to*** run backwards and forwards to places of religious worship, especially to the Tabernacle in Moorfields, the Chapel in Tottenham Court Road, where indeed I received some comfort, which, though little, was then highly prized, because greatly needed; but in the general almost every thing served only to condemn me, to make me rue my own backslidings, and envy those children of God who had continued to walk honestly ever since their first conversion.

Notions of religion I wanted no man to teach me: I had doctrine enough, but found by woeful experience, that dry doctrine, though ever so sound, will not sustain a soul in the day of trial.

***In this sad state I went moping about...till Whit-Sunday, 1757***, when I happened to go in the afternoon to the Moravian Chapel in Fetter Lane, where I had been several times before. The minister preached on these words, “Because thou hast kept the words of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. iii. 10). Though the text, and most of what was said on it, seemed to make greatly against me, yet I listened with much attention, and felt myself deeply impressed by it. When it was over, I thought of hastening to Tottenham Court Chapel; but presently altering my mind, returned to my own house.

I was hardly got home when I felt myself melting away into a strange softness of affection, which made me fling myself on my knees before God. My horrors were immediately dispelled, and such light and comfort flowed into my heart as no words can paint. The Lord by His Spirit of love came, not in a visionary manner into my brain, but with such divine power and energy into my soul, that I was lost in blissful amazement.

***(Note the “dialogue” Joseph Hart has with his Saviour...)***

I cried out, “What me, Lord?” His Spirit answered in me, “Yes, thee.” I objected, “But I have been so unspeakably vile and wicked.” The answer was, “I pardon thee fully and freely. Thy own goodness (for I had now set about a thorough amendment, if peradventure I might be spared) cannot save thee, nor shall thy wickedness damn thee. I undertake to work all thy words in thee and for thee; and to bring thee safe through all.” The alteration I then felt in my soul was as sudden and palpable as that which is experienced by a person staggering, and almost sinking, under a burden, when it is immediately taken from his shoulders. Tears ran in streams from my eyes for a considerable while; and I was so swallowed up in joy and thankfulness, that I hardly knew where I was. I threw my soul willingly into my Saviour’s hands; lay weeping at His feet, wholly resigned to His will, and only begging that I might, if He was graciously pleased to permit it, be of some service to His Church and people.

Thenceforth I enjoyed sweet peace in my soul; and had such clear and frequent manifestations of His love to me, that I longed for no other heaven. My horrors were banished, and have not, I think, returned since with equal violence. And... though I am very barren of good, and full of evil; though I have many sore trials and temptation in my soul; yet it pleases the Lord to reveal Himself often in me, to open the mysteries of His cross, and give me to trust in His precious blood...

I soon began to be visited by God's Spirit in a different manner from what I had ever felt before. I had constant communion with Him in prayer. His sufferings, His wounds, His agonies of soul were impressed upon me in an amazing manner. ...Now I saw that the grief of Christ was the grief of my Maker; that His wounds were the wounds of the Almighty God; and the least drop of His blood now appeared to me more valuable than ten thousands of worlds. As I had before thought His sufferings *too little*, they now appeared to me to be *too great*; and I often cried out in transports of blissful astonishment, "Lord, 'tis too much, 'tis too much; surely my soul was not worth so great a price." I had also such a spirit of sympathetic love to the Lord Jesus given me, that after I had left off to sorrow for *myself*, for some months I grieved and mourned bitterly for *Him*. I looked on Him whom I had pierced, and felt such sharp compunction, mixed at the same time with so much compassion, that the pain and the pleasure I experienced, are much better felt than expressed.

***Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, is now the only thing I desire to know.*** In that incarnate mystery are contained all the rich treasures of divine wisdom. This is the mark towards which I am still pressing forward. ***This is the cup of salvation, of which I wish to drink deeper and deeper. This is the knowledge in which I long to grow; and desire at the same time a daily increase in all true grace and godliness.*** All duties, means, ordinances, etc. are to me then only rich, when they are enriched with the blood of the Lamb, in comparison of which all things else are but chaff and husks.

...from the wonderful dealings of God towards me, I endeavour to draw the following observations (***Note the series of affirmations, each introduced by "That..."***)

On the one hand I would observe, ***that*** it is "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God which sheweth mercy." ***That*** none can make a Christian but He that made the world. ***That*** is the glory of God to bring good out of evil. ***That*** whom He loveth, He loveth unto the end. ***That*** though all men seek, more or less, to recommend themselves to God's favour by their works, yet "to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." ***That*** the blood of the Redeemer, applied to the soul by His Spirit, is the one thing needful. ***That*** prayer is the task and labour of a Pharisee, but the privilege and delight of a Christian. ***That*** God grants not the requests of His people because they pray; but they pray because He designs to answer their petitions. ***That*** self-righteousness and legal holiness kept the soul *from*, rather than draw it *to*, Christ. ***That*** they who seek salvation by them, pursue shadows, mistake the great end of the law, and err from the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life*. ***That*** God's design is to glorify His Son alone, and to debase the excellency of every creature....

**That** no righteousness besides the righteousness of Jesus (that is, the righteousness of God) is of any avail towards acceptance. **That** to be a moral man, a zealous man, a devout man, is very short of being a Christian. **That** the eye of faith looks more to the blood of Jesus than to the soul's victory over corruptions. **That** the dealings of God with His people, though similar in the general, are nevertheless so various, that there is no chalking out the paths of one child of God to those of another; no laying down regular plans of Christian conversion, Christian experience, Christian usefulness, or Christian conversation. **That** the will of God is the only standard of right and good. **That** the sprinkling of the blood of a crucified Saviour on the conscience by the Holy Ghost, sanctifies a man, without which, the most abstemious life and rigorous discipline is unholy. **Lastly, that** faith and holiness, with every other blessing, are the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, and **that** He has a right to bestow them on whom He will, in such a manner and in such a measure as He thinks best; though the spirit in all men lusteth to envy....

For my own part, I confess myself a sinner still, and though I am not much tempted to outward gross acts of iniquity, **yet inward corruptions and spiritual wickedness continually harass and perplex my soul**, and often make me cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" **From me they are not yet removed; though I once hoped, with many others, that I should soon get rid of them.**

**All I can do is to look to Jesus through them all; cling fast to His wounded side; long to be clothed with His righteousness; pray Him to plead my cause against these spiritual enemies that rise up against me; and though I feel myself leprous from head to foot, believe that I am clean through the word which He hath spoken unto me. In short, I rejoice, not because the spirits are always subject to me (for, alas! I find they are often too strong for me to control), but because my name is written in heaven.**

**(Note Joseph Hart's further affirmations...)**

**I am daily more and more convinced that** the promises of God to His people are absolute; and desire to build my hopes on the free electing love of God in Christ Jesus to my soul before the world began, which I can experimentally and feelingly say, **He hath** delivered me from *the lowest hell*. **He hath** plucked me as a brand out of the fire. Though my ways were dreadfully dangerous to the last degree, His eye was all along upon me for good. **He hath** excited me to love much, by forgiving me much. **He hath** shewed me, and still daily shews me, the abominable deceit, lust, enmity and pride of my heart, and the inconceivable depths of His mercy; how far I was fallen, and how much it cost Him of sweat and blood to bring me up.

**He hath** proved Himself stronger than I, and His goodness superior to all my unworthiness. **He gives me** to *know* and to *feel* too, that without Him I can do nothing. **He tells me** (and He enables me to believe it) that I am all fair, and there is no spot in me. Though an enemy, **He calls me** His friend; though a traitor, His child; though a beggared prodigal, **He clothes me** with *the best* robe, and has put a ring of endless love and mercy on my hand. And though I am often sorely distressed by spiritual internal foes, afflicted, tormented, and bowed down almost to death, with the sense of my own present barrenness, ingratitude, and proneness to evil, **He...whispers to my soul**, "I am thy great salvation."

**His free, distinguishing grace is the bottom on which is fixed the rest of my poor, weary, tempted soul. On this I ground my hope, oftentimes when unsupported by any other evidence, only by the Spirit of adoption received from Him.** He hath chosen me out from everlasting, in whom to make known the inexhaustible riches of His free grace and long-suffering. Though I am a stranger to others, and a wonder to myself, yet I know *Him*, or rather, am known of Him. **Though poor in myself, I am rich enough in Him. When my dry, empty, barren soul is parched with thirst, He kindly bids me come to Him, and drink my fill at the fountain head. In a word, He empowers me to say, with experimental evidence, "Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound." Amen and amen.**

### **Spurgeon on Psalm 43:5 (Treasury of David)**

**Why art thou cast down, O my soul? As though he were two men, the psalmist talks to himself...**Why this deep depression, this faithless fainting, this chicken hearted melancholy? **As Trapp says, "David chides David out of the dumps"; and herein he is an example for all desponding ones.** To search out the cause of our sorrow is often the best surgery for grief. **The mist of ignorance magnifies the causes of our alarm; a clearer view will make monsters dwindle into trifles.**

**Touching sin in relation to God's wrath. Touching sin in relation to God's wrath, a true believer may plead God's justice or righteousness on these three grounds:**

**(a) Christ our Advocate or Attorney so pleads.** John 17:24, etc....

**(b) Christ hath satisfied God's justice, so that on Christ was laid all the sins of all believers.** He was "wounded" for them. Now, God cannot in justice punish twice; therefore, seeing Christ was wounded, believers must be healed. Isa 53:1-12.

**(c). Believers have God's righteousness imputed to them 2Co 5:1-21; therefore, God must deal with believers as he will deal with his own righteousness.**

## **The Purifying Power of Delight in Christ**

**Scottish pastor Robert Murray McCheyne (1813–1843) left us with one quote that has become quite famous, and for good reason. It goes like this: “For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ.” The quote is short, sticky, and it helps to both keep our focus on Christ and protect us from the trap of over-introspection with our own sins.**

The line is taken from a letter published in *Memoir and Remains of the Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne* [(Edinburgh, 1894), 293]. Here’s a little more of the context:

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Jer. 17:9. Learn much of the Lord Jesus. For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. He is altogether lovely. Such infinite majesty, and yet such meekness and grace, and all for sinners, even the chief! Live much in the smiles of God. Bask in his beams. Feel his all-seeing eye settled on you in love, and repose in his almighty arms. . . .

When taken by itself the quote seems to suggest that McCheyne was simply content to turn a blind eye to his own weaknesses. Such an interpretation is far from the truth. If we keep reading we find what McCheyne writes later in the same paragraph.

. . . Let your soul be filled with a heart-ravishing sense of the sweetness and excellency of Christ and all that is in Him. Let the Holy Spirit fill every chamber of your heart; and so there will be no room for folly, or the world, or Satan, or the flesh.

Here is the punchline to the entire thought. ***The excellency of Christ is both the brilliant contrast to the sin in our hearts, and the remedy to the sin we find there.*** McCheyne was well aware that we battle indwelling sin by filling our hearts with “the sweetness and excellency of Christ and all that is in Him.” ***Communion with Christ is the key to sanctification. This is the expulsive power of a new affection.*** This is to be changed from one degree of glory to another by beholding the brilliance of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

***In these words McCheyne reminds us that for every look at your own sin, take ten looks at the beauty of Christ, because as you delight in Christ you are expelling sin and pursuing sanctification.***

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-purifying-power-of-delight-in-christ>

## **Excerpts from “Three Ways the Glory of Christ Comforts the Downcast Soul”**

*This is John Owen’s description of how contemplating the glory of Christ brings comfort to the soul troubled with depressive feelings.*

It is a woeful kind of life, when men scramble for poor perishing reliefs in their distresses. ***This is the universal remedy and cure, – the only balsam for all our diseases... Whatever presseth, urgeth, perplexeth, if we can but retreat in our minds unto a view of this glory, and a due consideration of our own interest therein, comfort and supportment will be administered unto us.*** Wicked men, in their distress (which sometimes overtake even them also), are like “a troubled sea, that cannot rest.” Others are heartless, and despond, – not without secret repinings at the wise disposals of Divine Providence, especially when thee look on the better condition (as they suppose) of others. And the best of us all are apt to wax faint and weary when these things press upon us in an unusual manner, or under their long continuance, without a prospect of relief. This is the stronghold which such prisoners of hope are to turn themselves unto. ***In this contemplation of the glory of Christ they will find rest unto their own souls.*** For...

- **Our troubles are slight compared to the glory of Christ**

***It will herein, and in the discharge of this duty, be made evident how slight and inconsiderable all these things are from whence our troubles and distresses do arise.*** For they all grow on this root of an over-valuation of temporal things. And unless we can arrive unto a fixed judgement that all things here below are transitory and perishing, reaching only unto the outward man, or the body, (perhaps unto the killing of it), – that the best of them have nothing that is truly substantial or abiding in them, – that there are other things, wherein we have an assured interest, that are incomparably better than they, and above them, – it is impossible but that we must spend our lives in fears, sorrows, and distractions. ***One real view of the glory of Christ, and of our own concernment therein, will give us a full relief in this matter.*** For what are all the things of this life? What is the good or evil of them in comparison of an interest in this transcendent glory? When we have due apprehensions hereof, – when our minds are possessed with thoughts of it, – when our

affections reach out after its enjoyments, – let pain, and sickness, and sorrows, and fears, and dangers, and death, say what they will. we shall have in readiness wherewith to combat with them and overcome them; and that on this consideration, that they are all outward, transitory, and passing away, whereas our minds are fixed on those things which are eternal, and filled with incomprehensible glory.

- **Our troubles are stilled by the glory of Christ.**

***The minds of men are apt by their troubles to be cast into disorder, to be tossed up and down, and disquieted with various affections and passions. So the Psalmist found it in himself in the time of his distress; whence he calls himself unto that account, ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me?’ And, indeed, the mind on all such occasions is its own greatest troubler.*** It is apt to let loose its passions of fear and sorrow, which act themselves in innumerable perplexing thoughts, until it is carried utterly out of its own power. ***But in this state a due contemplation of the glory of Christ will restore and compose the mind,*** bring it into a sedate, quiet frame, wherein faith will be able to say unto the winds and waves of distempered passions, “Peace, be still;” and they shall obey it.

- **Our troubles are overwhelmed by increasing awareness of God’s love.**

It is the way and means of conveying a sense of God’s love unto our souls; which is that alone where ultimately we find rest in the midst of all the troubles of this life; as the apostle declares, Rom. 5: 2-5. ***It is the Spirit of God who alone communicates a sense of this love unto our souls;*** it is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.” ***Howbeit, there are ways and means to be used on our part,*** whereby we may be disposed and made meet to receive these communications of divine love. ***Among these the principal is the contemplation of the glory of Christ*** insisted on, and of God the Father in him. It is the season, it is the way and means, at which and whereby the Holy Ghost will give a sense of the love of God unto us, causing us thereon to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” ...***This will lift the minds and hearts of believers above all the troubles of this life, and is the sovereign antidote that will expel all the poison that is in them; which otherwise might perplex and enslave their souls.***

(from the preface of John Owen’s *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ*, in *Works* 1:278)

<https://nikkingle.com/2021/03/05/three-ways-the-glory-of-christ-comforts-the-downcast-soul/>

## **Excerpts from William Bridge's Ministry of Encouragement in “A Lifting Up for the Downcast”**

William Bridge was born about the year 1600 in Cambridgeshire, England. He entered Emmanuel College of Cambridge University, where he received his B.A. in 1623 and his M.A. in 1626. He became the rector of St. Peter's, Hungate, Norwich, where he was eventually suspended from preaching by Bishop Matthew Wren of the Church of England. Bridge left England to take refuge in Holland where he renounced his Church of England ordination, abandoned episcopal church polity, and was ordained as an independent minister. From there, he returned to England in 1642. He was a member of the Westminster Assembly, advocating independent church government in the debates over church polity. Bridge died at Clapham on March 12, 1670.

It was in the year 1648 that William Bridge preached at Stepney, London, the thirteen sermons published the following year in *A Lifting up for the Downcast*. ***The text he used for encouraging the depressed was Psalm 42:11: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God. For I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." (KJV)***

*A Lifting Up* offers several perspectives on his subject...The page references given in parentheses are found in the Banner of Truth edition of *A Lifting Up for the Downcast*, 2009.

- **Peace and Discouragement**

**...A Christian's foundational peace is knowing that sins are forgiven through justification by faith which brings peace with God. However, Bridge's *second* truth about Christian peace is that it "is possible ... this peace may be interrupted, and God's people may be much discouraged, cast down and disquieted" (7). So, the Christian enjoys "inward peace" based on having been forgiven for sin...When Bridge says that the downcast "have no reason for their discouragements," he is encouraging the suffering to turn their attention from their difficult circumstances to look to the resources found in the sovereign Lord.**

- **Trinitarian Peace**

**The peace which the Christian enjoys is Trinitarian peace because of its source in the ministry of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

**This Trinitarian nature of God's ministry of peace is effected in the Christian's life through each member of the Trinity ministering in a manner unique to His person.**

**What Bridge does throughout *A Lifting Up* is argue from the lesser to the greater; when problems that are causing distress are considered in the light of the greater power of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then those personal difficulties seem small before the greatness of God.**

The saints and people of God are, as I may so speak, of God's special acquaintance, and so they have peace, for they walk with God, and have communion with Him. They have communion with the Father, and He is the God of all consolation; they have communion and fellowship with the Son, and He is the Prince of Peace; they have communion and fellowship with the Spirit, and He is the Comforter. They have communion with the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit, in and by the gospel; and that is the word of peace, the gospel of peace. The saints and people of God, therefore, ordinarily have peace within (9).

The Father gives peace to the Saints by His *prerogative* in that it is the will of God to give inward peace to His people (9). God the Father will also give consolation through His *promise* of peace as described in Psalm 29:11 and Isaiah 26:3 (10). **It is an element of the Father's ministry to the redeemed that He gives not only the eternal peace of justification but also the temporal peace necessary to face the contingencies of life.**

The Son is engaged to give peace because He is *qualified* and *endowed* to do so by the Father as described in Isaiah 41:4 (11,12). John 14:27, 20:19 shows the Son's *disposition* is as a meek but powerful shepherd who has a tender and loving concern for His sheep (13). **The Son's office, as the great High Priest ministering between God and man, fulfills the Old Testament office of priest. What is more, the Son has suffered the temptations of this world and compassionately brings peace.**

**The Holy Spirit is engaged to give peace to the saints as their *executor* and *advocate*. The Holy Spirit executes Christ's will to bring peace to the Saints as the great Comforter who was promised (13f). Though Jesus is the Christian's advocate, Bridge notes that, in effect, there are two advocates, "but I say, we have, as it were two Advocates, one in heaven above [Jesus], and one in our bosom [the Holy Spirit]" according to 1 John 1:2; John 14:16 (14). Bridge's vivid language shows the application of the Comforter's work within the follower of Christ.**

- **Discouragement Defeated by Faith in Christ**

The last sermon in *A Lifting Up* is titled, "The Cure of Discouragements by Faith in Jesus Christ," which is both an evangelistic appeal to the downcast to believe the Gospel and encouragement to the Christian to live in faith. The theme is, in good pastoral fashion, short but sweet--*Faith is the help against all discouragements* (262). **Faith rests upon Christ for redemption, but faith also is applied in daily living and growth in sanctification.** Though the Christians of the seventeenth century were discouraged by wars and disasters, fearsome diseases and plagues, and the daily struggles to live faithfully in service to Christ--*Faith is the help against all discouragements. The restless soul does not find repose until it rests through faith in the arms of the Sovereign of the universe and lives by faith.*

**Fear and discouragement, observed Bridge, arise in Christians because they sometimes do not see their situations fully with the eyes of faith** (268). Examples presented by him to make his point include things such as **problems being blown out of proportion, or conversely, not seen to be as bad as they really are; temptations appear to be unendurable despite the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13; and afflictions may often appear to be pointless from the perspective of the downcast person** (268).

## Conclusion

*Bridge calls downcast Christians to take their eyes off of themselves and their conditions, and look unto God who is the author and finisher of their salvation. Today, as in the seventeenth century, consolation is found in the fundamental peace of redemption, the unique compassionate ministries of the persons of the Trinity, and the covenant of grace. True, biblical, redemptive faith views the Christian's circumstances as the working out of God's caring and compassionate will, so Bridge turns the beleaguered believer to Psalm 42:1, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" which he answers with the work of the Great Comforter speaking through Scripture about the everlasting arms of God wrapped around those redeemed through the work of Christ.*

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<https://www.reformation21.org/articles/william-bridges-ministry-of-encouragement-in-a-lifting-up-for-the-downcast.php>

## Joseph Hart and His Hymns

The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology

In Hart's hymns, the reader can warm to his treatment of the suffering of Christ, the vicarious sacrifice of the Redeemer, and the priestly office of the Saviour.

In common with many of the 18th century revivalist hymns, Hart stresses the wretchedness of sinful souls. He indicates the perilous state of the soul without Christ. When he realises the vileness of the unredeemed soul, and thereafter discovers the possibility of newness of life through conversion, this leads him to wonder and praise. The first hymn in the book describes the universal nature of the sin which Christ bore. Sin repeats itself in 'each sin infected sire'. (Hymn 38 v. 2) Although he acknowledges the nature of sin, he is not slow to confess his own personal sinfulness, e.g.,

And dost thou still regard,  
And cast a gracious eye  
On one so foul, so base, so blind, So dead, so lost as I?  
Hymn 10 v. 6.

This accords with a phrase in his Experience where he describes himself as 'feeling leprous from head to foot'. The words 'leprous' and 'wretched', occur often, e.g.,

Leprous soul, press through the crowd In thy foul condition;  
Struggle hard, and call aloud  
On the great Physician;  
Wait till they disease he cleanse, Begging, trusting, cleaving;  
When, and where, and by what means, To his wisdom leaving.  
Hymn 18 v. 6.

Hymn 106 based on Romans 7:24, has this plea:

How sore a plague is sin,  
To those by whom 'tis felt!  
The Christian cries, Unclean! Unclean!  
E'en though releas'd from guilt.  
o wretched, wretched man!  
What horrid scenes I view!  
I find, alas! do all I can,  
That I can nothing do.

If 'wretched' and 'loathsome' are not enough to describe the unredeemed soul, Hart adds a further expressive word, 'vile'.

Not so the needy helpless soul  
Prefers his humble prayer;  
He looks to Him that works the whole,  
And seeks his treasure there.

His language is, 'Let me, my God, On sovereign grace rely:  
And own 'tis free, because bestow'd, On one so vile as I.

Hart's view of man is that in his unregenerate state, he is without beauty and there is nothing that could possibly attract the divine mercy, except by grace. This leads us to consider the next theme, that of grace. Grace is paradoxical, and Hart suggests the reason why a sinner refuses it:

What makes mistaken men afraid  
Of sovereign grace to preach?  
The reason is (If truth be said)  
Because they are so rich.  
That is very telling, and penetrates the self-righteous heart. Hart is quick to declare that the sinner abuses grace when he sins and turns his back on mercy. In the hymn based on the story of the Prodigal:

The prodigal's return'd;  
The apostate bold and base;  
That all his Father's counsels spurn'd,  
And long abus'd his grace.  
Hymn 71 v. 2.

One cannot but notice the strength of Hart's faith not only on God's grace but also in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and especially his sufferings in Gethsemane and on the Cross. Nowhere is this love seen to full effect than in another of Spurgeon's favourite hymns:

There my God bore all my guilt:  
This through grace can be believ'd:  
But the horrors which he felt,  
Are too vast to be conceiv'd;  
None can penetrate through thee,  
Doleful, dark Gethsemane!  
Hymn 75 v. 13.

Hymns like the following indicate that Hart recognises that it was the love of God that brought forth the blood of the Son to ransom the repentant sinner:

Love to Jesus Christ and his,  
Fixes the heart above;  
Love gives everlasting bliss;  
But who can give us love?  
To believe's the gift of God;  
Well-grounded hope he sends from heaven;  
Love's the purchase of his blood,  
To all his children given.  
Hymn 64 v. 2.

The blood of Christ is the object of the faith of the believer:  
Whoe'er believes aright  
In Christ's atoning blood,  
Of all his guilt's acquitted quite,  
And may draw near to God.  
Hymn 53

We may note that Hart covers ideas inherent in atonement such as the incomparable nature of the blood of Christ, and how men are bought with such a price. There are solid riches found in the blood of Christ which brings union with the Lord. The blood of Christ gladdens the heart of the believer, and signals the wisdom of God's mercy...

The God I trust  
Is true and just;  
His mercy hath no end:  
Himself hath said, My ransom's paid;  
And I on him depend.

Then why so sad,  
My soul? Though bad,  
Thou hast a friend that's good;  
He bought thee dear; (Abandon fear!)  
He bought thee with his blood.

So rich a cost  
Can ne'er be lost,  
Though faith be tried by fire;  
Keep Christ in view; Let God be true,  
And every man a liar.  
Hymn 99, based on Romans 3:4.

Most of the main doctrines of the Christian evangelical faith are represented in the hymns. We have selected a few, and let Hart speak for himself. Hart observed in his Experience:

***...that no righteousness besides the righteousness of Jesus is of any avail towards acceptance. That to be a moral man, a zealous man, a devout man, is very short of being a Christian. That the eye of faith looks more to the blood of Jesus than to the soul's victory over corruptions.*** That the sprinkling of the blood of a crucified Saviour, on the conscience by the Holy Ghost sanctifies a man, without which the most abstemious life and rigorous discipline is unholy. Lastly that faith and holiness with every other blessing are the purchase of the Redeemer's blood.

***Although the objective doctrines of the faith are evident, the subjective necessity of taking those doctrines into the very heart and life of the believer are never lost.***