

Spurgeon on 'Cut to the Heart'

This extract is taken from C.H.Spurgeon's sermon 'Pricked in Their Heart' on Acts 2:36-37. While, as I have explained elsewhere,¹ I do not always agree with Spurgeon's use of 'we', 'us', 'you' and 'your' when speaking of the death of Christ for sinners, the point of what follows is to stress that men such as Spurgeon think of conviction of sin and repentance as something which cuts far, far deeper and far, far wider than Keller acknowledges.

Spurgeon:

Observe, that as the result of Peter's sermon, his hearers felt a mortal sting. 'They were pricked in their heart'. The truth had pierced their souls. When a man confesses² that he has done a fearful wrong to one who loved him, he grows sick at heart, and views his own conduct with abhorrence... How ought we to feel towards the Lord Jesus, who laid down his life that we, who were his enemies, might live?... Then add to it a spiritual conviction of the sin of badly-treating the Son of God, the perfect one, the lover of our souls, and you come near the meaning of being 'pricked in the heart'. Oh, to think that we should despise him who loved us, and gave himself for us, and should rebel against him that bought us with his own blood while we were his enemies! I would to God everyone here that has not come to Christ would feel a sting in his conscience now; and would mourn that he has done this exceeding evil thing against the ever-blessed Son of God, who became man, and died for love of guilty men. When we read 'they were pricked in their heart', we may see in it the meaning that they felt a movement of love to him – a relenting of heart, a stirring of emotion towards him. They said to themselves: 'Have we treated him thus? What can we do to show our horror of our own conduct?' They were not merely convinced of their fault so as to be grieved, but their desires and affections went out towards

¹ See my *Offer*.

² Original 'finds out'.

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the offended one, and they cried: 'What shall we do? In what way can we acknowledge our wrong? Is there any way of undoing this ill towards him whom we now love?' To this point I would have you all come. I would have you know the meaning of Newton's hymn:

*I saw one hanging on a tree
In agonies and blood,
Who fix'd his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.*

*Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seem'd to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.*

*My conscience felt and own'd the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And help'd to nail him there*

*Alas! I knew not what I did;
But now my tears are vain;
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain.*

Let us tearfully enquire how we can end our opposition, and prove ourselves to be his friends and humble servants.

As a consequence of Peter's sermon, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, these people exhibited obedient faith. They were roused to action, and they said: 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' They believed that the same Jesus whom they had crucified was now Lord of all, and they hastened to be obedient unto him. When Peter said: 'Repent!' they did indeed repent. If repentance be grief, they grieved at their hearts. If repentance be a change of mind and life, they were indeed altered men. Then Peter said: 'Be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins'. Take the open and decisive step: stand forth as believers in Jesus, and confess him by that outward and visible sign which he has ordained. Be buried with him in whom your sin is buried. You slew him in error; be buried with him in truth. They did it gladly, they repented of the [their?] sin; they were baptised into the sacred name. And then Peter could tell them: 'You have

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remission of sins: the wrong you have done to your Lord is cancelled: the Lord has put away your sin for ever. Remission of sins comes to you through Jesus, whom you slew, whom the Father has raised up. You shall not be summoned before the bar of God to account even for the hideous crime of murdering the Lord, for by his death you are forgiven. In proof of forgiveness you shall now be made partakers of the great gift which marks his ascending power. The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, even upon you his murderers, and you shall go forth, and be witnesses for him'.

O my hearers, to what a place have I brought you now? If indeed the Holy Spirit has helped you to follow me in my discourse, see where we have climbed! However black your crime, however vile your character, if you have seen the wrong that you have done, if you have repented of having done it because you see that you have sinned against your loving Lord, and if you will now come to him repenting and believing, and will confess him as he bids you confess him in baptism; then you have full remission, and you shall be partakers of the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit, and henceforth you shall be chosen witnesses for the Christ whom God has raised from the dead. Beloved, you need no choice speech from me: pure gold needs no gilding, and as I have told you the most wonderful of all facts in heaven or in earth, I let it remain in all its simple grandeur.

May God write out this old, old story on your hearts! Oh, that he would issue a new edition of his gospel of love, printed on your hearts! Every man's conversion is a freshly-printed copy of the poem of salvation. May the Lord issue you hot from the press this morning, a living letter³ to be known and read of all men; and specially to be read by your children at home, and your neighbours in the same street! The Lord grant that hearts may be pricked by this sermon, for his name's sake! Amen.⁴

³ Original 'living epistle'.

⁴ Spurgeon sermon number 2102.