

CONSOLATION FOR ALL THAT ARE AFFLICTED

WHICH ARMETH US AGAINST
IMPATIENCE UNDER ANY CROSS



NICHOLAS BOWND

CONSOLATION FOR ALL THAT ARE AFFLICTED

WHICH ARMETH US AGAINST
IMPATIENCE UNDER ANY CROSS



NICHOLAS BOWND

Consolation for All that are Afflicted

**Which Armeth Us Against Impatience
Under Any Cross**

Nicholas Bownd

Monergism Books

This text has been initially updated from EEBO-TCP by Project Puritas.

Further revision and editing done by Monergism.

Copyright Monergism via universal text usage permission from the above.

Copyright © 2025

Published by Monergism Books

P.O. Box 491

West Linn Oregon 97068

www.monergism.com

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher or author, except as permitted by U.S. copyright law.

Editor's Note – During the EEBO-TCP Transcription Process, all the text was hand transcribed according to visual representation; and as such, sometimes the letters s, l, f & t are misconstrued with each other, these letters regularly being almost illegibly similar in the original facsimile script. Though it is rare for these errors to remain post-edit, unfortunately they may remain if uncaught. My sincere apologies in advance where such errors occur. As the Puritan Edward Leigh once said "If thou findest faults and Errata in the book, let love cover them, for to err (as the Satirist saith) is the sad privilege of mortality, and he (of all men) erreth most, who challengeth a privilege from error." Also, the symbol <H&G>, when included, signifies omitted Hebrew & Greek. Lastly, some archaic words may be updated to more contemporary terminology; but changes have been kept to a bare minimum.

Contents

To the Right Worshipful.

1. A Treatise Full of Consolation for All that are Afflicted; in Mind, Body, or Otherwise; which Armeth us Against Impatience Under Any Cross.

To the Right Worshipful.

To the Right Worshipful Sir Henry Warner Knight, and to the virtuous Lady Francis Warner his Christian and godly wife, the daily increase of that true godliness, that hath the promises of this life, and of the life to come.

Right Worshipful Sir, in respect of your place indeed, some learned Treatise of Justice might have seemed more fitting: which if I had attempted, I could have added nothing unto that, which you daily practice, and have done many years, to the great good of that part of our country, wherein God hath placed you. But yet, as you are a Christian, and a professor of the Gospel, and so (even in the multitude of God's blessings, many ways, and plentifully poured out upon you) are subject with all the rest of God's children, unto some afflictions and crosses; this argument, I hope, for the time present, or to come, may seem not altogether unseasonable. Seeing that the Lord hath said, that if any man will follow him, he must take up his cross and follow him. And therefore that is it, which everyone must look for, at one time or another, and in what kind it

shall seem best to his heavenly wisdom. For here I have labored, to show out of the word of God, many reasons of the patient and comfortable bearing of the same. But whatsoever it be, it proceedeth from a heart unfeignedly well-wishing unto you: and so I pray you accept of it, as an apparent testimony of the same.

And for yourself, good Madame, though your own virtues and kindness deserve much, God having put upon you that crown of glory, that Solomon speaketh of, namely, that your age is found in the way of righteousness, even in these most corrupt and dangerous times: yet the worthy memory of M. Robert Foorth sometimes of Butly, Esquire, heretofore the guide of your youth, yourself being joined unto him in the nearest covenant of God, had been sufficient to move me among other his friends and allies, to show what testimony of love I could unto any of his.

Whose zeal to the Gospel of Christ, and love to all, that professed it: with his sincerity in executing of justice, hearty affection to all his neighbors; great hospitality and relief to the poor, even in the times of greatest scarcity and want; with most excellent orders in his family for daily prayer, for reading the Scriptures, and for singing of Psalms, do yet speak for him, and shall whiles this age remaineth. Whose uprightness of heart unto God (wherein he was a right Nathanael, even a true Israelite indeed) I pray God, that all his right worshipful children, sons and daughters may set before their eyes, as an example to follow.

And so praying God to bless you both, with many comfortable days together in this life, and eternal happiness after death in the kingdom of heaven, never to be severed: with the like blessing of God upon the right worshipful your children, and children's children on both sides, I bid you all most humbly and heartily fare-well in Christ.

Norton in Suff., Jun. 24, 1608.

Your Worships in all unfeigned love for Christ's sake,
Nicholas Bownd.

A Treatise Full of Consolation for All that are Afflicted; in Mind, Body, or Otherwise; which Armeth us Against Impatience Under Any Cross.

*L*ikewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what to pray as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh request for us with sighs, which cannot be expressed. – Rom. 8:26, &c.

27. But he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the meaning of the Spirit: for he maketh request for the Saints, according to the will of God.

28. Also we know that all things work together for the best unto them that love God: even to them that are called of his purpose.

29. For those whom he knew before, he also predestinate to be made like to the image of his Son, that he might be the first borne among many brethren, &c.

The general intent and purpose of the Apostle here is, to entreat of the matter of afflictions, to this end, that he might show, that none of them shall be able to hinder us from our salvation, that so being well persuaded of them, and of the goodness of God towards us in them, we might be the better prepared for them, and have more comfort in the bearing of them. For he having proved before, that we are justified and saved by faith in Christ, for the further assurance of all those that rely upon Christ for their salvation, he removeth out of their minds, those things that might seem to weaken their faith herein.

And namely, first of all the consideration of our natural corruption, cleaving fast unto us; hindering us from that which is good, and drawing us to that that is evil, even after such time, as we do believe: of which he hath spoken in the former chapter, saying, I allow not that which I do: for what I would, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good: for to will is present with me, but I find no means to perform that that is good. For I do not the good, that I would, but the evil that I would not, that do I. I find then, that when I would do good, I am thus yoked, that evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God in the inner man. But I see another law in my members rebelling against the law of my mind, and leading me captive unto the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!

For answer unto which he saith, that by the imputation of the perfect holiness of our Savior Christ, the guiltiness of this is taken away, and is not imputed unto us before the judgment seat of God: and therefore he saith, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me: for if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but the sin that dwelleth in me: and therefore it

shall not be laid unto my charge: for I myself in my mind serve the law of God: though in my flesh I serve the law of sin: and therefore in the next chapter he breaketh out into this comfortable saying, and avoucheth it most confidently, that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

And this communion and fellowship that herein we have with Christ for the discharging of us from the guilt of our natural corruption, we know by two infallible tokens: the one is the Spirit of sanctification, which we have received from him, whereby it cometh to pass, that we walk not after the flesh anymore, but after the Spirit. For if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in us: he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us: and therefore if we mortify the deeds of the body by the Spirit, we shall live: for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God: and thus this sanctification of ours, which is in sincerity and truth, though in much weakness and great imperfection proceeding from the Spirit of God, is a sure token that we are partakers of the righteousness of Christ to the perfect justifying of us in the sight of God, and to the taking away of all the remnants of sin inhering and dwelling in us continually.

The second testimony hereof is the Spirit of adoption, which he giveth us, to assure us of his favor, and to deliver us from our fears in measure, and to teach us cheerfully and comfortably to pray unto God, as to our most merciful Father: for he saith that this spirit of sanctification, is not the spirit of bondage, to fear again: which fear is wrought in us by the sight of our sins through the ministry of the law: but it is the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father, that is, it sealeth up our adoption in our minds, and so openeth our mouths in prayer unto God: and therefore he addeth: that the

same Spirit beareth witness with our Spirits, that we are the children of God: and if we be children, we are also heirs, even the heirs of God, and heirs annexed with Christ. Thus by the Spirit of adoption, which is discerned by this most excellent operation of his, that it causeth us to pray in hope to God, as to our father, and to call him not once father after a faint manner, but twice or thrice; yea continually, Abba, father, or father, father: we know that we have our part in Christ, for whose sake only he is our father, and so are by him delivered from the guiltiness of all the remnants of corruption and sin, though they are in our flesh, and dwell there continually, as the Apostle saith: and do show themselves both by unbelief, and by hindering us from doing of that good that we would, and causing us to do that evil that we would not.

Another thing whereby our faith is assaulted and often weakened, is the consideration of those manifold and grievous afflictions which may and do befall us in this world; whereby it might seem unto us, that our ways are not so acceptable unto the Lord, that we might have comfort in them. For answer unto which, he sheweth, that of what nature or kind soever they be, they shall be so far from hindering us from the favor of God, and from our salvation; as that in them we have Christ Jesus, who went before us in all our afflictions, further then we can, and yet at the last came unto glory: and therefore if we patiently abide, as we have not only the Prophets, and Apostles, and Martyrs, and other holy men; but even Christ himself to be our fellow in them; so we shall be fellows with him, and like unto him in glory: for he saith, If so be that we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him.

And least that it might seem grievous unto us, to go to so happy an estate through so grievous and painful a way, and so might think, that the kingdom

of heaven, though it be never so precious in itself, we should buy it too dearly; he telleth us assuredly, that by considering the afflictions of this world on the one side, and the felicity of the kingdom of heaven on the other side, and so casting up the account of the one and the other, he hath found the total sum of them both to be so far differing, that all the afflictions of this miserable and wretched world endured by any, and from the first hour of their birth, unto their last breath, are not to be compared in greatness or continuance, unto that glory and happiness that shall there be revealed and bestowed upon us, according to the express words of the text: I count, or all things being well considered, I gather, that the afflictions of this present time, are not worthy of the glory that shall be shown unto us.

And as this glory is thus great, so it is most sure and certain, though we do not presently enjoy it; and therefore we need not in any wise to doubt of it: for all the other creatures of God, besides man, which are unreasonable and dumb, have in their kind a certain sense and feeling of it; for though they be now subject, (and that yet but for a time) unto this vanity, that is, corruption and abuse, which they are in: yet by the instinct of nature they do most earnestly, and as it were with their heads lifted up, and necks stretched out, that they might see a great way off, look for the revealing of the sons of God, that so they themselves also might then be redeemed from bondage into their glorious liberty; and they shall not be disappointed of their hope. Therefore much more we that have received the first fruits of the spirit, should with greater patience in trouble abide the will of God a while, and with more certainty and earnestness of desire look for an happy change of all our afflictions in that most glorious day.

Which the Apostle setteth out in much more pathetical and significant words then I have expressed, and therefore I could not pass them over; for

he saith, The fervent desire of the creature, that is, of the whole frame of this world, and of all things in it, waiteth when the sons of God shall be revealed. 20. Because the creature is subject unto vanity, not of his own will, or natural inclination, but by reason of him which hath subdued it under hope. For though he did by his curse upon all the creatures, which he had made for man, show how greatly he was displeased with the fall and sin of man, yet he would give them hope to be restored: and therefore he addeth, 21. For the creature also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. For we know that every creature groaneth with us also, and travaileth in pain together unto this present: as a woman with child, not only with exceeding sorrow, but with hope of a comfortable deliverance in time. And not only the creatures, but we also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we do sigh in ourselves, waiting for the adoption even the redemption of our own bodies, that is, our last restoring, when as our adoption shall be fully accomplished in soul and body.

Which condition of ours in affliction, though grievous for a time, but most happy in the end, that we might not refuse to undergo, with the rest of the creatures, and our brethren and sisters: he calleth us to consider the wise order which God hath appointed in saving of us, which is by hope: for he saith, We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: for how can a man hope for that he seeth, but if we hope for that we see not, we do with patience abide for it. Therefore we must not imagine so soon to enjoy all happiness, as we believe it: but be content to want all things for a time: that hoping for them with patience and longsuffering, we might come to them at last: unless we will go about to invert this excellent order, which the Lord

hath determined and appointed to be in saving us; which is by training us up in the hope and expectation of all things promised for a season.

But now because the hope that is deferred, is the fainting of the heart, as Solomon saith, that is, it maketh a man sick at the very heart, to be long deferred of that that we desire and hope for: and therefore we might fear both in respect of our own weakness, and also the greatness, together with the long continuance of affliction, that we should not with patience under the cross continue to hold out happily unto the end: he further addeth for our singular comfort, that the Spirit, which we have received, whereby we are sanctified, and whereby we pray to God, as to our Father, shall perform this office also unto us, that it shall help to bear the burden of our affliction with us; and so though we be never so weak, yet being supported by the power of it, we shall be able to endure them well enough: for he saith, Likewise the spirit also helpeth our infirmities.

So that it shall be all one with us, as with a young child, upon whose shoulder the father laying a heavy burden, which of itself were able to press him down to the ground; he should so put his hand under it, that he should bear the whole weight almost and stress of it himself, and so he should make him carry it. Now if the earthly father will not of his natural affection overladen the poor child, then we need not to fear, but that the Lord our spiritual father will so increase our strength, according to the measure of our afflictions, that we shall find this promise to be true by experience, That his holy Spirit shall help our infirmities.

And thus David commendeth the mercy of God unto us, That as a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him: he knoweth whereof we be made, he remembereth that we be but dust: where he rendereth this one reason of the merciful dealing of God

towards us, even the knowledge that he hath of our weak and frail estate; which thing, as it is most comfortable to consider, so we shall find it to be most true by experience; because our Savior Jesus Christ hath prayed for us, as himself witnesseth in the Gospel, unto his heavenly father, that he would give us a comforter that might abide with us forever; even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive.

And the blessed Apostle confesseth of himself, that he was partaker of the fruit of this prayer; for being in many afflictions that were able to have overcome him, yet by the power of God's spirit, he did hold out happily in them: saying, We are afflicted on every side, yet are we not in distress; we are in doubt, but we despair not; we are persecuted, but not forsaken; we are cast down, but we perish not: Everywhere we bear about in our body the dying of the lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might also be made manifest in our bodies; for we which live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our bodies. Where he compareth the miserable estate and condition that the faithful, and more specially the Ministers are in, unto a continual dying, and the virtues of the spirit of God in them unto life, which oppreseth that death: and he rendereth this reason, why the Lord doth thus often afflict his servants, namely, That the excellency of that power might be of God, and not of us, that is, that all men might perceive howe they stood not by man's power, but by the singular virtue of God, in that they die a thousand deaths, but never perish: and so in many dangers as he defendeth them, so in much weakness he upholdeth them, and his Spirit helpeth their infirmities.

And this grace of God also upholding him in great weakness against most dangerous temptations he acknowledgeth in another place: for when he felt himself so sore troubled with them to his continual grief, as if he had had a

prick thrust into his flesh; and the messenger of Satan did so molest him, as though he had been most shamefully buffeted on the face: for which he besought the Lord thrice, that is, very often, that it might depart from him: he received this answer from God, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect through weakness. So in this spiritual combat, the Spirit of God did uphold him against the temptations of Satan, and of his own corruption: and so he concludeth, that when he was weak, then was he strong: that is, in his greatest weakness he felt the power of God upholding him; and so shall we, if we wait upon him.

For the Apostle sheweth that this which he found by experience in himself, by the goodness and mercy of God, belongeth to all the rest of the faithful, when he writeth thus to the Corinthians: God is faithful, which will not suffer you to be tempted above that you be able, but will even give the issue with the temptation, that you may be able to bear it: where he saith, That God that would have us tempted for our good, will by his spirit so strengthen us, that we shall be able to bear them, and have an happy issue out of them. And if there were no Scripture to prove it, our own experience might tell us the truth of it; for if we have observed anything, we may remember that many times we have been brought very low, and have undergone such hard brunt's, that we thought we should never have been able to have borne them. Neither indeed should we, but that there was another thing in us, far above ourselves, which did help us, and caused us both to endure, and to overcome those things, which we thought we should have fainted in the midst of them: and so we may boldly say with this holy Apostle, Blessed be God, even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies and God of all comforts; which comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them that be in affliction, with

the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth through Christ.

Thus the Lord increaseth the comforts of his Spirit in his servants according to their afflictions, so that they do not only equal them, but also exceed them in time: and so being supported by the Spirit, they are able to bear them. And this promise of God, that his Spirit shall help us in our infirmities, is so much the more worthy to be considered of us, because it is so general, that it shall help us, not in some few only, but in all our infirmities whatsoever: for he speaketh indefinitely, and not limiteth the promise to anyone. So that there can be no weakness in us so great, or infirmities so many upon us, in which the Spirit shall not strengthen us, even to the bearing of the greatest cross, that God shall lay upon us; as we have seen it in the Apostle before, who said, that God did comfort him in all his tribulations, and his consolations in Christ did abound, even as his sufferings did abound.

But in the mean season Paul giveth us to understand, that the afflictions of God's children are oftentimes so great, that they far pass any strength that is in us to bear them; and that we are not able to do it of our selves: yea, that we are very weak of ourselves, and subject to many infirmities, though we have received the Spirit of sanctification, and of adoption: for the same Spirit doth not clean rid us of them, whiles we are in this world, but doth only help us in them: according to the express words of the Apostle, Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. In so much that he confesseth not only of other the faithful, but also of the Apostles, and of himself, in whose name he speaketh, and joineth himself with them, that they were not able to have undergone so many and great things, as they did,

being frail men like unto us, but that they had the Spirit helping them in their infirmities: for he doth not say, that the Spirit helpeth your weakness, but us, that are the strongest, and helpeth us in our infirmities: then no man must think to be free from them, it is and must be sufficient for us that the Spirit doth help us in them.

The truth of which may likewise appear in the great complaint of David, Job, and the rest of God's servants, who though they did patiently bear many great things, yet not without the bewraying of many great infirmities in themselves: for Job though he be commended unto us as a most tried pattern of all patience; yet how many and great infirmities appeared in him it is evident, when he thus cried out against himself, Let the day perish, wherein I was borne, and the night when it was said, there is a man child conceived: let that day be darkness, let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it: and why died I not in the birth? Or why died I not when I came out of the womb? Why did the knees prevent me? And why did I suck the breasts? And many more such bitter words proceeding from great weakness he uttered against himself. And David, though he was a man after God's own heart, and did bear many afflictions under Saul with great patience; yet in many Psalms he bewrayeth great infirmities: I said in mine hast, I am cast out of thy sight; he acknowledgeth his infidelity to be such, that he did rashly say that God had clean forsaken him: and in another place he speaketh thus of himself; I said in my fear, All men are liars, that is, he said in his temptation, that Samuel the Prophet, when he told him, that he should be King of Israel, did not speak it from God by the spirit of prophesy, but of his own head, and so did but lie and dissemble with him.

Therefore we are not to imagine of such a portion of God's Spirit, that might swallow up all our infirmities, and clean rid us of them, (for then we should be no men) but it must be sufficient, that we are aided with the strength of it, so that we finally fall not down, and lie still under the heavy burden of affliction, yielding to our infirmities, and so overcome of them: so that there is a mixed thing, as it were in us; namely, our own infirmities to humble us, and the strength of God's Spirit to enable us to bear our afflictions. So that having so strong and so able a helper, to bear with us the burden, we may be comforted with hope of enduring the greatest thing, that may befall us in this world, though continuing upon us never so long. Not indeed always in that manner, that we ought, and do desire, but so as it may be acceptable unto God, and so far forth as his holy Spirit shall help us in our infirmities: for though there be nothing in us but infirmities, yet there is help for us from the Spirit of God.

And that we might even in our infirmities, by the help of the Spirit of God bear all afflictions as we ought, the Apostle further addeth, that the same Spirit shall likewise stir us up in all necessities of ours, to pray unto God for help, and for his grace, and to make our moan unto him, as to our father, and we shall be heard of him therein, saying, For we know not what to pray as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh request for us with sighs, which cannot be expressed: but he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the meaning of the Spirit: for he maketh request for the Saints, according to the will of God. Where we see, both what great infirmities we be subject unto, and also how the Spirit of God helpeth us in the same. For sometimes through the greatness of our misery, we know not what to say, or howe to pray to God as we ought: and yet then his Spirit doth stir up in us, though not many well-ordered speeches or words; yet those sighs and groans which

being unspeakable, and not felt of them, in whom they are, are well understood and accepted of God, because they proceed from his spirit, whose meaning he knoweth and granteth, because it maketh request for the Saints according to the will of God.

Wherein we are first of all to consider, that though we have received the spirit of God, even the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, which spirit teacheth us to pray, and by which we have many times called upon God with great assurance and comfort, both for and with ourselves and others also; yet there may be a time, and that very often, wherein we may be so distracted by some great affliction, and in such a case, that being as it were astonished and overcome with the greatness and strangeness of it, we cannot well tell what to pray, or what to ask of God. And though prayer at such a time especially be our only refuge, according to the saying of the Prophet, Call upon me in the day of trouble, so will I deliver thee: yet we cannot tell how to begin, and what to say. And so unlike shall we be unto ourselves, and to that, that we have been in times past, as though we were not the same: nay, our estate may seem to be like unto the wicked, who are at their wits end, and know not how to pray unto God at all. For if we were asked then, what we would have, we cannot make a direct answer; and though we have liberty to ask of God according to our need, yet we cannot use it: for we cannot tell what to pray.

O what a wonderful thing is this! But yet most true; and that which is to be found not in some few mean persons only, that are ignorant, and have not accustomed themselves to prayer; but in the most excellent servants of God, even the Apostles themselves; as Paul here bringeth himself in with the rest for an example, and in this great infirmity maketh himself like unto the rest, saying; For we know not what to pray as we ought. And though

there be many excellent prayers in the Old and New Testament, by which we might learn how to pray; and especially we have a perfect form of prayer prescribed by our Savior Christ to direct us in all things needful for us: yet in temptation we ask those things many times, which if we had them, would be hurtful unto us: and when we do ask that that is profitable and good, yet even then by prescribing unto the Lord the time when, and the manner how, and the means whereby we would be delivered, according to our own mind, we pray with such impatience and distrust, that it may be truly said of us, We cannot tell what to pray as we ought.

This was the estate of that good King Hezekiah, when he was sick unto death; at what time being greatly pained in his body, and sore troubled in his mind, and out of all hope of life, he turned his face unto the wall, and prayed unto the Lord; but how? He doth express it in these words. Like a Crane or a Swallow so did I chatter, I did mourn as a dove: that is, in the bitterness of his soul he did not use many words; yea, he was altogether so confused, that his prayer was like the chattering of birds, he knew not almost what to say.

Such was the perplexity and more then infirmity of David, when as in his great afflictions, instead of praying, he roared all the day long, as he saith of himself; When I held my tongue, my bones consumed, and when I roared all the day: so that sometimes he held his peace, being between hope and despair, and sometimes he uttered many desires; but being carried away with the present feeling of his adversity, they were more like the roaring's of a wild beast, then any well-ordered prayer. And at another time he saith, Mine heart trembleth within me, and the horrors of death are fallen upon me: fear and trembling are come upon me, and an horrible fear hath covered me: in which words, he sheweth in what infirmity and weakness he was

then fallen into: and for his prayers, after what manner they were framed, he declareth in these words; I mourn in my prayer and make a noise, so that there was mourning and some kind of noise, and little else. And another time he expresseth his outward estate, and the inward affection of his mind, and the manner of his prayer then, after this sort. My days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burnt like a hearth: mine heart is smitten and withered like grass, because I forgot to eat my bread: for the voice of my groaning my bones do cleave to my skin. I am like a Pelican of the wilderness, and am like an owl of the deserts. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. Surely I have eaten ashes as bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. By which kind of speeches he showeth how greatly his affliction did work upon him, so that in them he did groan and weep, and cast out many fearful cries, but all things were so out of order in his prayer, that they were like the chattering of a Pelican and of a sparrow, and the screams of an owl, rather than anything else, if God had considered them in his justice, and so he might have rejected them.

Thus we see, that these most excellent servants of God in their greatest conflicts and agonies, were so far from being able to pray unto God in any tolerable manner, that in their own sense and feeling they did but roar and cry, sob and sigh, weep, mourn and complain; and that also very confusedly, even like the Crane, the Swallow, the Pelican, the Sparrow, even the Screech Owl itself: so distracted were they in themselves, and full of disorder, and fallen into so many great infirmities at once. Therefore we may not judge of ourselves, or of others, by any one such accident, or few particular cases, least we should deceive ourselves, saying, I have not the spirit of God, for I cannot pray nor call upon God in mine affliction; and if I do at any time, it is not as I ought: for this is that which Paul confesseth of

himself, and of other the servants of God, and which we have seen in these two excellent Kings, Hezekiah and David, that in affliction oftentimes we cannot tell what to pray as we ought.

But yet in this great unfitness of ours, we must not be like to the wicked, who then give over all prayer, because they are unfit for it: and we are subject unto this temptation, to put off prayer, because we see that we cannot pray as we ought, and so we are made to think, that we should offend God in prayer. But we must then strive earnestly against this infirmity of ours, and so pray to God that we might pray; and as the Disciples said unto Christ, Lord teach us to pray; so let us desire the Lord to give us his good spirit of prayer: which if we will do, no doubt we shall find his promise to be true, that then The spirit of God in us shall make request for us. For as our Savior Christ comforteth his Disciples in another case, seeing that they should be brought before the Governors and Kings for his sake: But when they deliver you up, take no thought how, or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that hour, what you shall say; for it is not you that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you: Even so we shall find by experience, that when we are most unfit to pray, if we will not yield to this infirmity and slothfulness, but strive against it, there shall be a secret inward working in us, whereby we shall be stirred up to do something; and there shall be a labor of the heart, and an endeavor of the mind, aspiring unto that which we may seem not to attain unto: and there shall be many sighing's, though few words; many great desires, though few voices: yea, there shall be that which we cannot greatly conceive of ourselves, and everything shall be unspeakable: according to the saying of the Apostle, That when we know not what to pray as we ought, the spirit of God shall make request for us, with sighs which cannot be expressed.

For no doubt these men that we spake of before, Hezekiah and David, even at those times, when they could not tell what and how to pray of themselves; yet the Spirit of God helping their infirmities, they did pray in some good acceptable manner, and there were at the least unspeakable sighs and groans stirred up in them: for it is said of Hezekiah, that he then turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord: and afterwards it is said, The Lord did hear his prayer. And David, when as in his own feeling he did but roar and sigh, and mourn; as he saith, I go mourning all the day, I roar for the grief of mine heart: yet then he made his desires known unto the Lord in prayer, and poured them out very plentifully before him. And when he did but mourn and make a noise, he desireth the Lord to hearken unto him, and to answer him: and when he saith, that his groanings were like the Pelicans, and the sparrows, and the screech owls, yet to show, that in them there was a work of God's spirit, which made them acceptable to God, he beginneth the Psalm thus: O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto thee: incline thine ears unto me, when I call make hast to hear me. And to show that his example in thus praying was for the instruction and comfort of the Church, it is thus entitled, A prayer of the afflicted, when he shall be in distress, and pour out his meditation before the Lord: Showing not only that the afflicted in their distress do thus pray, but that the Lord heareth them therein, and granteth their desire.

And thus is it said of the whole Church of God in Egypt, at what time, as they were greatly oppressed, so that they grew weary of their lives, by sore labor in clay, and in brick, and in all work in the field, with all manner of bondage, which was laid upon them most cruelly; so there was great ignorance and much weakness among them, and therefore not knowing well many of them how to pray to God, They sighed to God for the bondage, and

cried; and their cry for the bondage came unto God, and he heard their moan, and looked upon them, and had respect unto them: and he said unto Moses, I have surely seen the trouble of my people, and have heard their cry, for I know their sorrows, therefore I am come down to deliver them.

This is then a most notable comfort in all afflictions, that we believing in Christ, and made thereby partakers of his holy spirit, it shall so help us in all our infirmities, that when we cannot tell what, or how to pray as we ought, it shall teach us so to do it, as we may have hope and comfort of being heard. For this is that which Paul addeth in the next verse, That he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the meaning of the Spirit; for he maketh request for the Saints according to the will of God. Where by knowing, he doth not only mean that he understandeth it, as he doth all other things; but he accepteth and alloweth of it, and doth most willingly grant such requests, as though they were made in far better liking to ourselves: and so is the word taken in the first Psalm, where the Prophet saith, The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, that is, he doth make account of them, approve, and allow of them, regard and prosper them.

For as we have seen even now, he heard the cry of the Israelites, when they did but sigh and make their moan, and did deliver them from their cruel bondage; and he did hear king Hezekiah chattering in his prayer like a Crane, and raised him up from death, and added fifteen years more unto his life; and to confirm him therein, he brought again the shadow ten degrees back, by the degrees whereby it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz. And he heard David when he roared for the extremity of his pain, and forgave the punishment of his sin; that is, forgave him his sin, and removed the punishment thereof. And we may remember ourselves, if we have marked anything, how the Lord hath heard us many times in our greatest need,

when we have howled and cried, rather then made any settled and well-ordered prayer: yea, when we have rather moaned then spoken, rather sighed then uttered a word. For the Lord in this case regardeth not so much the multitude of words, as he looketh to the meaning of his spirit, and granteth that, though they speak never a word.

For even as a father or mother having a young infant sick of some sore disease, though the child cannot speak and call for this and that, yet they are ready to help it; and if it be elder, and can speak, yet being full of pain, it cannot call for things as it ought: nevertheless, if they can by any signs guess at the meaning of it, they will accept as much of it, as though the child had spoken very distinctly, and used many words: Even so the Lord, who is infinitely filled with the bowels of compassion towards us in Christ, far above any father or mother; insomuch as the Lord saith, Can a woman forget her child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Though they should forget, yet will not I forget thee: though he delighteth to hear us pray to him, as Christ himself witnesseth to his Church, saying, My dove, show me thy sight, let me hear thy voice; for thy voice is sweet, and thy sight comely: yet when by the extremities of our miseries we are so oppressed or distracted, that we cannot in any orderly manner pray unto him as we ought; yet he alloweth of the sighs and sobs that we offer up unto him, and granteth not so much our words (which sometimes none or very few are) as the meaning of his spirit, which is large and plentiful in us.

And hereupon it cometh to pass, that the Lord in his rich mercy imputeth not unto his servants the manifold rebellions of their flesh, or great complaints in their prayer; as he did not unto Job nor to David, who were full of them, as we have seen before; because he hath respect unto the meaning of his spirit in them: As the mother is not so much grieved or

offended with the murmurings, impatience, and froward outcries of her poor sick child; as she by the least token guesseth at the meaning of him, and taketh that in good part, and giveth to him accordingly.

What shall we say to these things? Is it true indeed, that the Lord will vouchsafe to look upon the low degree of his servants; and have respect unto poor sinful creatures, who when they are fallen into the bottom of their just deserved misery, and even then cannot pray unto him one word aright; and when they begin to speak unto him, even then their tongue cleaveth to the roof of their mouth; that he will yet hear their sighs, and their cries? Yea undoubtedly, he that of his great mercy will bear with such great weakness in men, that he will not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; he will of the like mercy hear, not only the well-ordered prayers of his Church, but even the very crying's and roaring's of his servants, though they be like the Pelicans and the owls: yea their mourning's, though they be like to the doves: yea, when they say nothing, neither indeed can, their very sobs and sighs, which come from the abundance of a troubled spirit, and cannot be expressed: for he alloweth of the meaning of his Spirit, which worketh these things in them: and if they could, thereby they are willing to perform better service unto him, and are sorry that they cannot do it. What can be more comfortable unto us, then this?

Therefore in all our necessities let us go unto the Lord in Christ with great boldness, and come unto the throne of grace: and though we cannot utter many words, yet let us speak unto him: for surely the acceptation of our prayers consisteth not in the multitude or well placing of our words, but in the request and desire of our hearts: and therefore if we can pray but two or three words, and say with the poor Publican, Lord, be merciful unto me a sinner; or with the Apostles, Lord increase our faith; or with the man in the

Gospel, Lord I believe, Lord help mine unbelief; or with the blind man, O son of David have mercy upon me; or with the thief upon the cross, Lord remember me in thy kingdom, &c. this short prayer proceeding from the Spirit of God in us, and offered up in the mediation of Christ Jesus, and in the virtue of his prayers, shall be as well received of him, when we can do no better, as if we had spent an whole hour in prayer.

Yea, if we do but lift up our minds unto God, and pray in our spirit, though we utter not one word, as that godly woman Hannah the mother of Samuel did; who being troubled in her mind prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore: but how did she pray? She spake in her heart, her lips did move only, but her voice was not heard: The Lord will hear us, as he did her, and give her according to her desire: as she afterward confessed to Heli the Priest: I prayed for this child, and the Lord hath given me my desire, which I asked of him. And so did Nehemiah pray unto God, for he waiting upon the King of Babylon as he sat at table, and being sad in his presence more than he had wont to be, the King demanded of him the cause, and he told him: then having leave of the King to ask what he would for the accomplishing of his desire; it is said that he prayed to the God of heaven: that is, he lifted up his mind unto God, and desired him to bless him in that enterprise of his, and so he did. So we if either we cannot pray in words, or want opportunity of time and place, and do but sigh unto him after an unspeakable manner, the Lord will not refuse that, because it proceedeth from his Spirit.

And as this may be no small comfort unto us in our affliction, so the Apostle Paul in the next verse following doth for our further comfort show what is the end of all the afflictions of the children of God; namely, their benefit and good, when he saith, Also we know that all things work together for the best to them that love God, even to them that are called of his

purpose. In which words he ministereth this sovereign medicine against the contagion and poison of all affliction, telling us, that they come to the believers not for their hurt, but for their singular good; especially seeing they befall them not by fortune or chance, but by the special providence of God, and that for the same end: who as he hath chosen them from everlasting, so in the same counsel of his he ordained that they should in their crosses be like unto his son. For those whom he knew before, he also predestinate to be made like to the image of his son, that he might be the first borne of many brethren: and therefore he calleth them in time, justifieth them by faith, and by the cross bringeth them to eternal glory, as he did his own natural son: as it is said in the next words, Moreover, whom he predestinated, them also he called; and whom he called, them also he justified; and whom he justified, them also he glorified.

Whereupon he boldly concludeth, that no affliction shall be able to hurt them, seeing that the Lord is with them in the same, meaning thereby to do them good: for he speaketh after a most confident manner, What shall we then say to these things? If God be on our side, who can be against us? As if he had said, seeing that God is with us in all our afflictions by his providence and power, and by the assistance of his holy Spirit, none of them shall be able to do us any harm: And the truth of God's love and meaning towards us this way, he confirmeth by a most excellent proof, when he addeth, Who spared not his own Son, but gave him for us all to death, how shall he not with him give us all things also? In which words he sheweth, that we have no cause to fear, no not in any cross, that the Lord will not give us whatsoever is profitable for us, seeing that he hath not spared his own Son to save us.

Therefore when he saith, All things work together for the best to them that fear God, it is most true, whether we take it generally, as the words may be expounded, namely, not only prosperity but adversity also, not only health but sickness, not only liberty but imprisonment, not only honor but dishonor; make for the best to those that love God. Or whether it be restrained to this particular purpose of his; namely, to affliction of what nature or kind so ever. It is no doubt the intent of the Apostle to speak of this latter, and to show, that all afflictions do not only not hinder the salvation of the godly, but do greatly further the same. Which saying of his, though it containeth an whole and entire matter by itself, yet being inferred upon the former words, he seemeth therein to answer a secret objection, which might arise in men's minds from thence; namely, that it seemeth many times that the Lord doth not hear the prayers of the afflicted, because their afflictions be not only not removed, according to their prayers, but sometimes increased contrary to their earnest desire.

Therefore we must remember, what hath been already said touching this matter, namely, how the Lord in granting our requests, looketh not so much to the particular things which we desire, as to the meaning of his Spirit in us: and granteth that, in turning our afflictions to our singular good: whereas if they were presently removed, the Lord seeth that it would be far worse with us, though we imagine the contrary. For as if one in a burning fever should in the midst of his fit impatiently desire to be washed with cold water; and then the skillful Physician standing by, being his friend also should give him some wholesome conserves or other cooling thing, he should in denying that particular thing demanded, grant unto his general meaning, which was, that he might have something given him, that might do him most good, though now being distempered, he was not able to judge

of it, but did mistake one thing for another, and thought that to be best, as to be plunged into the cold water, which indeed is the worst: So we whatsoever we ask in our distress by prayer unto God, our meaning is and must be, if it be ruled by God's spirit, that we would have that given unto us, which might procure our best good, and further our salvation most of all. Therefore if the Lord suffer our crosses to remain, and turn them to our good, though we in particular prayed for the clean taking of them away, he fulfilleth both these promises unto us at once; namely, he giveth us according to the meaning of his spirit in us; and he also causeth them to work together for the best to those that love God.

Thus then Paul besought the Lord thrice, that is, very often, that the messenger of Satan might depart from him; and yet the Lord suffered him still to buffet the Apostle, least he should be exalted out of measure, through the abundance of revelations that were given unto him: and the Lord gave him this further answer, that his grace should be sufficient for him to uphold and strengthen him, and that the power of God should be seen in the Apostles weakness. The Lord in denying this request of his, did give him according to the meaning of his spirit in him, which was, that the Lord would deal with him this way, as it should make most for his own glory, and for the furtherance of Paul's salvation; and also did cause this affliction to work together with other things for his best good; for this did him more good remaining, then if it had been taken away: for hereby he had more experience of his own weakness, and of the power of God, then otherwise he could have had.

And thus also the Lord hath verified from time to time unto the rest of his servants the truth of that promise of his, which is uttered by the mouth of the Prophet Solomon, God will fulfill the desire of the righteous; that is,

God will not only bless those that serve him, but he will bestow those blessings upon them most of all, which they especially desire, and do most earnestly pray unto him for: according to that that is said in the Psalm, He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him. Which promises are so to be understood, not that he will always give them every particular thing that they ask, for many times through ignorance, or being distempered with some temptation, they ask that that is hurtful, and then God denieth them: but he giveth them some other thing that is more profitable for them, according to the general meaning of the spirit of God in them. And so do parents unto their little children, whom they love full dearly, when they ask knives and such hurtful things, instead of them, they in wisdom give them some other thing that they shall delight in as much; and so still their frowardness, and give them their desire in another kind.

Even so the Lord fulfillleth the desire of his servants, by making an exchange, when as they name one thing, and he giveth them another as good, or better: as it is said in the Psalm, He asked life of thee, and thou gavest him a long life, even forever and ever: where in the person of David he sheweth how God dealeth with his Church, they ask life of him, and he giveth not only that, but eternal life: as he did to Hezekiah; but yet sometimes they that are weak and sick, and desire life, they have it not granted, but linger and pine away even unto death, and so God taketh them into his blessed kingdom, and gives them eternal life, which is better than that life that they desired. And thus did he deal with many of the Corinthians, whom he did by death judge and chastise in this world, that they might be saved in the world to come.

And this was the case of his faithful servant Moses, who in the wilderness desired earnestly of the Lord, that he might go over and see that good land

that was beyond Jordan, and that goodly mountain Zion, and Lebanon: but he would not hear him in that, and so caused him to go up into mount Nebo, unto the top of Pisgah where he shown him all the land, and there he died, and so entered into the kingdom of heaven, and took possession of it forever, whereof this land was but a type and figure: and so the Lord denying him that particular, even to come into the land of Canaan, gave him that that was far better, and whereby he was more confirmed in the favor of God, and in the truth of his covenant; even to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and so gave him according to the meaning of his Spirit.

But further touching this matter, we are more generally to understand, that the Apostle saith not only, that the cross shall turn to our good, but that this shall be verified of all the crosses that every way come upon us, be they never so strange, or unlooked for: whether it be sickness, poverty, imprisonment, banishment, loss of husband, wife, children, father and mother, friends and kindred, loss of name and credit, or anything else: as sorrow and grief of mind, and affliction of the spirit. Which is wisely to be marked of us, least at any time we might be deceived, to think when the Lord shall lay his hand upon us, as it pleaseth him, that if it were some other affliction, then that which now is come upon us, we could have some good hope in it; but this is so great, it toucheth us so nearly, that we cannot possibly see, how or which way it should bring us any good.

And as the Devil is ready to assault us with this temptation, so we by reason of our corruption are too prone to yield unto his persuasion therein, and so by impatency to be weary of the cross, as not able to look for any good from it. We therefore that we might comfortably withstand this temptation of his, besides that we must hold ourselves fast to the words of the Apostle, who saith, that all things work together for the best to those

that love God; he speaketh of all, not of this or that: against which if any, yea an Angel from heaven should persuade us, we must hold him accursed. We must consider that this good cometh from all affliction, not as though it were natural and proper unto it: for indeed it is otherwise, that of itself it maketh men worse, as the sun hardeneth the clay: and it driveth men from good, as the rod driveth the child away from the mother. And this is that which Satan aimeth at in all men, as he did in righteous Job, though he prevailed not, when he said of him to the Lord, Stretch out thine hand, and touch all that he hath, and see if he will not blaspheme thee to thy face. And thus he prevaieth with the wicked in all crosses that come upon them, as we see in the example of Pharaoh king of Egypt, who by the ten plagues that God sent upon him, was made more hard hearted, and waxed still worse and worse, and would not hear the commandment of God, to let the people of Israel go.

But with the children of God it is not so, the goodness of God towards them overcometh the malice of the devil against them. And as in the wilderness the sting of the fiery serpents were healed in the bodies of men by looking up to the brazen serpent; so the venom and poison of all crosses is taken away in the children of God, by virtue of the cross of Christ; so that contrary to the nature of it, it worketh good: as also by the death of Christ, the sting of death is taken away, so that it cannot hurt any of his, but doth them the greatest good, being thereby made for them a passage into eternal life. The which that it might not seem strange unto us, much less impossible; namely, that affliction hurtful in itself to the wicked, should work for the best to those that love God: we must remember that even men by their wisdom are able to make those things serve for the benefit of man, which of themselves are most hurtful unto him.

For the Physician through his skill can cure a man by God's ordinance and blessing, and so make him stronger then he was before, by taking away some part of his blood, even that wherein the life consisteth; and by taking away other humors, and so diminishing a great part of his flesh: and the Surgeon by cutting and searing the flesh with an hot iron, or eating it away with some corrosives, is able by these wounds and hurtful things, to preserve the state of the members of the body: Then the Lord much more by that which in itself would hurt our souls, is able to cure them; and to do them good. And if the Apothecary can so temper that which in its own nature is poison (as the Vipers flesh) so temper it I say, with other wholesome ingredients, and correct it with those that be cordial; that of it he will make a most sovereign Treacle, and such an wholesome confection, as shall expel poison, and drive it from the heart; and so make that which of itself would cause death, to be a special preserver of life: Shall not the Lord by his infinite wisdom, goodness, and almighty power, the Lord I say, which caused the light to shine out of darkness, contrary to the nature of it, and who calleth the things that be not, as though they were, and so causeth them to be, and which bringeth good out of evil, even his own glory out of the sin of man; shall not he be much more able by the most grievous crosses that can befall us, to work the greatest good for us that may be?

Therefore when we would look for good from our afflictions, and so be comforted in them, patiently bearing them, in hope of the blessed fruit that we shall reap by them; we must not so much look to the things themselves, how fit they be for us, nor to ourselves, how we be fitted for them; as to the truth of God's promise made unto us concerning this matter, and so be sure that the Lord will work our good thereby, because he that is true and all-sufficient hath said it. And this one persuasion no doubt, should work in us

great patience in all our afflictions; yea it should make us cheerfully, and with our heads lifted up, and not hanging down, to bear them; for how many grievous things will natural men endure willingly, if they see that they will make for the bettering of their estate? As what will not the sick patient suffer at the hands of the Physician or Surgeon by lancing, purging, fearing, diet, &c. when he is persuaded that they will procure his bodily health? Should not a Christian man and woman much more endure hard things at the hands of God, seeing he hath said that they shall procure the health of his soul, and work his good that way.

But indeed herein lieth the point of this matter, and this is all in all, namely, that the poor afflicted soul knoweth not, that the Lord by his affliction will work his good: and that maketh him so unquiet, and ever complaining: forgive him this faith, and the feeling of it, that his affliction shall be turned unto his good, and lay upon him whatsoever you will, he is content to bear it. Therefore for the satisfying of ourselves herein, let us hearken to that which the Apostle saith, We know, that all things work together for the best to those that love God: which is as if he had said, though you because of your ignorance, unbelief, and want of experience, are uncertain what will be the happy issue of all your afflictions, yet we know very well, that all shall work together for our and your good. Which he speaketh confidently both as a teacher of the Church, an Apostle, and as a man of experience, and therefore we ought to give credit unto him, rather than to ourselves. Even as the patient doth to the Physician, though himself had never experience of any such thing before: when he saith unto him, I know that this will make for the health of your body, and the preservation of your life.

And in this thing we ought to give credit unto the Apostle so much the more, because unto his own word and saying, he joineth the testimony of many other, saying, We know, meaning the rest of the Apostles and ministers, and men of experience; he saith, that all of them knew it, and therefore this word being confirmed by the mouths not of two or three witnesses only, but having (as the Apostle speaketh) so great a cloud of witnesses for it, it should be received without all gainsaying. For it is all one, as if the sick patient fearing to take the potion that is prescribed unto him, lest it should make him more sick, he should have not only one, but an whole counsel of Physicians saying unto him, that undoubtedly this medicine is like to do you good; we know the working of it very well, and have had great experience of it in many, you need not to fear it, take it upon our credit. This would much move and encourage him unto it.

So no doubt this should correct the too much fear that is in us, of being hurt by the cross, when we hear so many excellent and famous men, very skillful therein, to speak so boldly unto us of the benefit of it: even those, whom seeing that we are most ready to believe in all other things, why should we not give credit unto them in this also? But that we might do it the rather, let us a little consider in particular of the benefit of the cross. And though the Apostle name one great one here, which might be sufficient; yet before we come to it, let us see, what other ends of it the Scripture affordeth unto us.

And first of all, we shall find it to be a special means to draw us from the too much love of this world; that according to the saying of the Apostle, they that use this world might be as though they used it not, that is, that we might be so addicted to these worldly things, that we set not our affections too much upon them. For such is the corruption of our nature, that when we

have all things at will, we are so wedded to this world, that we think it best for us always to abide here, and here we would set up our tabernacles forever; and we are ready to say with the worldling in the Gospel, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, live at ease, eat and drink, and take thy pleasure: and though heaven be a thousand times heavenly, yet we desire it not at all, or not so earnestly as we should; but we are still earthly minded, and as it were groveling upon the earth: so hardly or not at all can we come unto that that we are exhorted unto, to seek, and to set our affections on those things that are above, and not on things which are in the earth; yet when by affliction we shall find that there is no contentation in any estate here below, it may move us to despise all worldly things, and to aspire unto heaven, where in the presence of God is the fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.

For this cause the holy Patriarchs suffered so many afflictions in the days of their pilgrimages, as appeareth in their several stories; in respect of which one of them said, That his days were few and evil. For whereas many earthly things were promised unto them, yet that they might not stay in them, but from them, as it were by certain stairs, they might ascend unto the consideration of heavenly things, which the earthly did shadow out unto them, and which they were especially to look for; he mingled his manifold great blessings with manifold crosses: and in that land that was promised unto them, they had no certain abiding, that they might seek after the kingdom of heaven: As the Apostle saith unto the Hebrews, By faith Abraham abode in the land of promise, as in a strange country, as one that dwelt in tents, with Izaack and Jacob heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city having a foundation whose builder and maker is God. These men had none inheritance in the land of Canaan, that they might

not dream of a perpetuity there, but might think of heaven, as of a better country, where they should remain forever, confessing themselves continually to be but strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Thus also the Lord dealeth with many before their death, laying long and grievous diseases upon them, as he did upon his servant Job, that they finding no rest in this world, might be willing to go out of it when he shall send for them, and say with old father Simeon, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: yea that they might desire death most willingly, which before as most ugly and loathsome they did abhor: and so say with St. Paul, I desire to be loosed, and to be with Christ, which is best of all. So that as the mother by some unpleasant thing weaneth the sucking child from the breast, now when stronger meat is more fit for it, upon which otherwise it would always linger to the hurt of it; so the Lord by the cross weaneth our affections from the profits and pleasures of the world, and so turneth it unto our good: and therefore if by experience we find that by any affliction we grow more weary of the world, or less in love with it, we are not only to take it patiently, but therein see the truth of this promise: we know that all things work together for the best to those that love God.

Moreover by affliction the Lord bringeth us to a more thorough repentance and sorrow for our sins, and worketh that in us thereby, which the word did not before; when we find by woeful experience what great miseries our sins have brought us unto, and how just and true God is in all his threatening's. For if when we have sinned, we would judge ourselves beforehand, God would not judge us: but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world: whereunto agreeth the saying of the Psalmist, which is found to be true by daily experience; that whether the Lord lay upon men sickness, or

imprisonment, or poverty and want, or banishment, or such like; when he humbleth the heart with heaviness they cry unto the Lord in their trouble: so that affliction bringeth men to humility for their sins, and to pray unto God to be pardoned, and to be delivered. As we see in the example of the prodigal child, who by great misery came to repent him of his riotous life; for when he had spent all, there arose a great famine in that land, and he began to be in necessity, which afterwards was so great, that he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, but no man gave them him: then he said, I will rise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants. Thus we see by affliction unto what measure of humiliation and repentance for his sins, and confession of them he was brought unto: a most excellent fruit of the cross.

The like may be said of the brethren of Joseph, who after that they had sold him into Egypt, and made their father believe that he was torn in pieces of some wild beast; though we may presume of them, that they being brought up, and still living in the house of their godly father Jacob, they did secretly repent them of their ill dealing towards their brother Joseph: yet many years after, even twenty or thereabout, when they were in adversity, the memory of it renewed itself afresh, and thereby they were brought more seriously to judge themselves for it; for they said one to another, We have verily sinned against our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear him, therefore is this trouble come upon us. Thus this cross was turned to their good, in that it brought them to a further sight and feeling of their sin, and to a more voluntary and free confession of the same.

So that affliction in this respect is compared to fire that purgeth the gold, and consumeth the dross of it; and unto a file that scoureth off the rust of iron, and maketh it bright; and unto a purgation, that expelleth the corrupt and superfluous humors out of the body. Therefore even as the fire doth not hurt the gold in consuming the dross, neither the file hurteth the iron in taking away the rust, neither doth the purgation hurt the body in expelling of ill humors: So afflictions causing us to abhor and leave some sin or other, which if we continued in, would destroy us, may truly be said not to hurt us, but to work our good, of what nature or kind soever they be: according to the saying of the Apostle, All things work together for the good of those that love God.

In the third place, this is the benefit of affliction, that it preserveth us from many sins, which otherwise through our own corruption, and the temptations of the world and Satan we might fall into; but that being under the hand of God, as it were under the rod, we are thereby kept in more awe: So that as Physic serveth not only to cure us of the diseases which we are already fallen into, but also and especially to prevent them, and to keep us in some tolerable estate of health: So the cross recovereth us out of sin, when we are fallen into it, and preserveth us from many, which otherwise might creep upon us. And therefore as some sickly bodies are driven to diet themselves, and are in a continual course of physic, to prevent that which their corrupt estate would otherwise necessarily pull upon them: So others by reason of the corruptions of their souls, and the manifold offenses that they live amongst, are always, or the greatest part of their lives in the diet of affliction, as it were the physic of their souls: not so much to bring them from gross and grievous sins, which they are as yet free from; as to keep

them from falling into them, which the Lord foreseeeth they are most ready to do, in respect of their ages, callings, and places, that they live in.

If then the Lord at any time deal with us, as men do with unruly colts , or untamed heifers, which are kept from straying out of their pastures with hedges and ditches, so that they cannot break out without their own hurt: so the Lord puts thorns and briars as it were in our ways, that is, layeth affliction upon us, and so stoppeth the way against us, that we might not break forth by any kind of disobedience either on the right hand, or on the left, to our own hurt must we not needs say, that even this way, as well as any other, the Lord worketh by affliction our singular good? And this is that, which God promised to his own people among the idolatrous Israelites, namely, that by his afflictions he would so keep them in, and bring them to such straightness, that they should have no lust to play the wantons, and to fall away from him by idolatry after the example of others: when he saith, I will stop thy way with thorns, and make an hedge, that she shall not find her paths. So that their affliction should be a hedge of sharp thorns to prick them, least they should break out, and stray from God's commandments.

And this as it is a singular end of affliction, so David pronounceth them blessed that are partakers of it to that end, and can make that good use of it to themselves, saying, Blessed is the man, whom thou chastisest, O Lord, and teachest in thy law: that thou mayest give him rest from the days of evil, whiles the pit is digged for the wicked. So that it is a blessed thing to be so corrected, that he is taught the right use of it, even to walk more carefully in the obedience of God's law, that so he may escape those punishments which shall come upon the wicked for their sins to their destruction. And this use David made of his affliction, as he professeth of himself, before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep thy words: so

that by his affliction he was kept from going astray, as he had wont to do, and was constrained in a reverent fear to walk in the compass of God's holy law: whereupon he concludeth thus by his own experience: It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may fear thy statutes. Thus affliction was a sensible kind of teaching to cause him to live after God's statutes, and not after the common course of the world.

Fourthly, afflictions in the Scriptures are called trials, because that by them the Lord trieth us, and proveth what is in us: not that he is ignorant of it; for David saith unto God, Thou knowest my sitting and rising, thou understandest my thoughts a far off; thou compassest my paths, and my lying down, and art accustomed to all my ways: for there is not a word in my tongue, but loe, thou knowest it, O Lord. So that he hath full and perfect knowledge of us without any trial: yet he trieth us by affliction, because thereby he would have ourselves and others thoroughly to know, what is in us, and in what measure: and that both in respect of the good and evil that is in us; which without the trial could not so well be known. Which kind of trial serveth to this end, that if we have received any good grace, we might be thankful to God for it, and for the measure of it: if not, we might labor for it; and if we have any sin in us, we might repent and strive against it: if not, we might take heed, that we fall not into it for the time to come; and so every way God might be glorified.

And thus speaketh the Apostle St. Peter of the afflictions of the church, comparing them unto fire, whereby metals are tried, when he saith, Now for a season (if need require) ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth (though it be tried with fire) might be found unto your praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Where the Apostle

saith, that if men by the fire will try their gold, to that end, that they might certainly know, what is the value of it, and yet it is but a thing that perisheth, and therefore in no wise to be compared to faith and other most excellent graces of the spirit of God: Then the Lord much more may make trial of them by affliction, to the end that all men may see them to be so precious, and so pure as they be; and that they may be discerned from the hypocritical and counterfeit shows of virtue that are in the wicked and ungodly: that so men might make sure reckoning of the one, and not trust to the other, and so be deceived by them.

Thus it is truly said, that God did prove Abraham, when he said unto him, Take thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will show thee: and he did so: and therefore the Apostle saith, that by faith he offered up Isaac, when he was tried: so that this was a great trial unto him, to sacrifice his own son, whom he so loved, and in whom he had received the promise. But when he stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to kill his son, the Lord said unto him from heaven, Lay not thine hand upon the child, neither do anything unto him: for now I know, that thou fearest God, seeing for my sake, thou hast not spared thine only son. The Lord knew the obedience of Abraham before, but he speaketh according to men's understanding, that now he by good proof and trial knew it, and made it known to Abraham himself, and to all posterity.

And thus our Savior Christ in the Gospel by a parable sheweth, how it is known, who have received the seed of God's word into good hearts, and who into bad: namely, they that continue in the obedience of it in the time of temptation and trial, and they that fall away, saying, They that are on the stones, are they, which when they have heard, receive the word with joy;

but they have no roots: which for a while believe, but in the time of temptation go away. Thus though they seemed to believe for a time, yet when they fall away in temptation, by this trial it appeareth, that the word of God was never thoroughly rooted in them. And by another comparison also he showeth, how upon trial it is manifest, who are profitable hearers of the word of God, and who are not: for he that heareth the word of God, and doth it, is like a wise man, which hath built his house on a rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not: for it was grounded on a rock. But he that heareth the word, and doth it not, is like a foolish man, which hath built his house on the sand, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and the fall of it was great. Temptations therefore and trials, which are here compared unto storms and tempests, will show what is in all sorts of men, and whether they have been profitable, or unprofitable hearers of the word of God; and this is a special end of them, thus to lay open men, both to themselves, and to the world: when as it shall appear, that in affliction and under the cross they are the same that they were before, or they are not, but far unlike.

After this manner were the Israelites tried and proved in the wilderness by the space of forty years, in which time some of them proved themselves murmurers, some fornicators, some idolaters, some disobedient, some faithful: and all this was by the several afflictions and crosses that did befall them. And thus also by the great afflictions that did befall Job in one day, as the loss of all his goods and children, it appeared what great uprightness and sincerity, and faithful obedience was in him: when as he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord

hath given, and the Lord hath taken it: blessed be the name of the Lord. And in all this great loss he did not sin, nor charge God foolishly.

For though Satan took him to be like other men, and that he served God more for his commodities sake, because he blessed him, then of conscience, and therefore said, Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased. But stretch out now thin hand, and touch all that he hath, to see if he will not blaspheme thee to thy face: and then the Lord said unto Satan, Loe, all that he hath is in thine hand: and thereupon Satan destroyed in one day all that he had; and yet he continued in his uprightness, and was the same man that he was before: by this great trial it appeared, that that was true, that the Lord had said of him before: that he was an upright and just man indeed; and one that feared God, and eschewed evil: for all these great afflictions could not make him to fall from his former course.

And thus lastly by trial appeared the great weakness of the Apostle St. Peter, and the rest of the Disciples, who though as a most resolute man he had said, Though all men be offended by thee, yet will I never be offended; and then Jesus said unto him, Verily this night before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice: and Peter said to him again, Though I should die with thee, I will in no case deny thee, and so said also all the disciples: yet when they saw a great multitude with swords and staves from the high Priest and Elders of the people, and Judas with a kiss betrayed him into their hands, and so they took him and led him away; then all the Disciples fled. And whereas there seemed to be a little more courage in Peter then in the rest, for he followed Christ though a far off, and so came into the high Priests hall, and sat down with the servants to see the end; yet when he saw greater

danger like to ensue, and he was charged to be one of Christ's Disciples, at the voice of a maid he grew to be so timorous and fearful, that he sware and forswear with cursing and banning, denying Christ, even that ever he so much as once knew the man. Neither himself, nor any other would have thought that so much weakness should have broke out from him, before he came to this trial; but thereby it was laid open.

Therefore, if it be good for us not to be ignorant of ourselves, as indeed hath been thought to be a point of greatest wisdom, for a man thoroughly to know himself, that so he might not be deceived with an overweening of himself; if it be good I say, for any man to see his wants and weaknesses, that he may be humbled by them, and seek to have them supplied; if it be good to know certainly that we have received such and such graces of the spirit of God, and in that measure that we have, that so we may be thankful to God for them, and comforted in ourselves over them: Then seeing that affliction and the cross bringeth forth all this fruit at once, and by trial we find what faith, hope, love, patience, obedience, &c. is in us, and what not; insomuch, that whatsoever we seemed to be before to ourselves, and to others, yet now we know certainly that we are thus and thus, and no otherwise: it cannot be denied but that affliction worketh much good unto us, and we ought upon experience to say, that we know it to be so, even as the Apostle doth here; We know that all things work together for the best to those that love God.

Which also we may so much the more confidently say, when we shall see (omitting to speak of many more uses that the cross hath) that last and greatest of all, which is spoken of in the verse following, in these words; For those whom he knew before, he also predestinate to be made like to the image of his son, that he might be the first borne of many brethren: where

he sheweth this one end of the cross, namely, that thereby we might be made like unto Christ in his sufferings. But before we come to that, we must remember that hitherto we have seen, that there is great use of affliction, and that it worketh much good: and therefore we must consider that in every cross, besides the present bearing of it, the Lord offereth great commodity unto us, and worketh it in us thereby, according to the words of the Text, All things work together for the best to those that love God.

So that as in all other things there is not only the present possession, and enjoying of them, but there is the use and comfort of them; insomuch that men may have great store of goods and possessions, and yet have no use of them, as Solomon by his great wisdom observed, and set it down in the book of the Preacher, saying, There is one alone, and there is not a second, which hath neither son nor daughter, yet is there none end of his travail, neither can his eye be satisfied with riches, neither doth he think, for whom do I travail, and defraud my soul of pleasure: Even so many have great and long crosses upon them, but make no good use of them, neither do labor after the fruit of them: but God worketh by them their good, in those that be his.

Seeing then afflictions are common both to the good and the bad, and God layeth them upon them both alike, and they must bear them whether they will or no; the one must labor for the good which the Lord offereth to them thereby, which the other not once so much as look after: of which duty of theirs, when God's children are somewhat more careless of then they should, then no doubt the Lord in wisdom and in mercy continueth his rod upon them longer; yea, and often increaseth them, because his purpose is to do them good thereby: and so herein dealeth with them as a most loving and tender father (as indeed he is) who spareth not the rod, until his child be

thereby humbled, and brought to the confession and amendment of his fault: because his purpose is, by his fatherly correction to do him good.

Wherein parents often put a difference between their children and their servants; for often they let their servants alone, and leave them as incorrigible, when they will not profit by words, or a few stripes, as not caring for them, because they purpose not always to be troubled with them: but their children, because they see that they cannot cast off natural affection from them, therefore they leave them not after once or twice correction, but still follow them with the rod, till they amend: So the Lord, when he spareth the wicked in their sins, and reserveth them for a further and more heavy judgment at the last, correcting his own children in the mean season again and again; he sheweth that his purpose is thereby to do them, above all other, much good.

Therefore let no man in the continuance of his afflictions, though long and grievous, be too much discouraged, as though the Lord were continually angry with him, or had a purpose to destroy and make an end of him thereby; for he could do that in a moment at once: but let him rather thus think with himself, and reason but of the word of God; Now I know assuredly, that the Lord loveth me indeed, because he purposeth to do me good by all things, even by affliction, according to his promise: and therefore whereas I through the untowardness of my nature, have not profited sufficiently by his former chastisements, according to his good meaning towards me, he hath sent me a new fatherly correction, thereby at the last to work my further good: and whereas I thorough the crookedness and untowardness of my sinful disposition do not yet profit by them, as he would have me; therefore I see, that in much mercy and loving kindness he continueth it, that so I might get good by it at the last.

Wherein the Lord dealeth with us like a wise and conscionable Physician; who purposing not so much to give physic unto the sick patient, and to practice on him for his own gain, as to cure him by those medicines that he applieth to him, and so seeketh his health and recovery: if the first medicine will remove the disease, then there he leaveth him, and goes no further; if not, he ministereth another medicine after that, and it may be the third and the fourth, because he hath a care of him, and seeks his health. And if at any time he maketh any intermission in the course of his physic, and ceaseth to practice any further on him, it is not because he meaneth to leave him, and to give him over, but because of the patient's weakness, that he might gather some further strength, and have a breathing time to that end.

Even so the Lord purposing according to his gracious promise, to do us good by affliction, and he having sanctified it by the cross of Christ to that end; when by the first cross we profit not, as we ought, then either he letteth the same lie the longer upon us, that it might do us good at the last; or else taking it away, leaveth another instead of it to the same end. Which though he do not presently, because we were not then able to endure, yet sometime afterwards, when it seemeth best to his heavenly wisdom. Therefore the best thing for every man is, soon to profit under the cross, that God hath laid upon him, that so it might speedily be removed: and not to labor so much for the removing of it, as for the fruit of it; least it going away without profit, and not working that in us, for which God did send it, the Lord bring upon us some greater afterwards, seeing it is his purpose thereby most assuredly to do us good.

Moreover, by this we know, that whereas every man naturally desireth that which is best for him, and yet most men err in the particulars, they desiring that which is most pleasant, profitable, and honorable, &c. in this

world: which desires of theirs the Prophet expresseth in these words; Many say, who will show us any good: By this, I say, we know, that that thing indeed is best for us at all times, whatsoever it be, which maketh most for the glory of God, for our own salvation, and for the edifying of our brethren: which because the Lord worketh many times by afflictions, as we have heard, and often more by them, then by his benefits; we must be persuaded, that even they are then best for every man: which though it be contrary to man's reason, yet it is agreeable to the word of God, and which we ought to believe.

Even as when a man's body is greatly distempered with abundance of blood, or overladen with superfluous and gross humors, or hath some member greatly putrefied: then and in these respects it is best for him to have his blood taken away, and his humors, that his flesh may be abated, and fall away; yea it is best for him in these cases to be lanced and cut, to be seared; and to have a part cut off, that the rest might be saved. Which though they be grievous in themselves, yet at this time they are most profitable, and to be desired. Therefore when any affliction or calamity doth befall us, let us not be discontented therewith, as with that that is hurtful for us, neither be too impatient and weary, as of a thing that we would fain be rid of; but submitting our judgments and wills to the judgment and will of God revealed in his word, let us quietly endure, seeing that even now the Lord giveth us that, not which we fondly desire, as the best; but which he knoweth to be, and is indeed at this time the best.

Seeing then it is so, (for the further clearing of this truth) what I pray you is the cause, why not only the wicked and ungodly, who are not able to judge of this matter, by all the wit and reason that they have; but even the very godly, who being enlightened by the spirit of God, ought to know this

doctrine to be true, and to believe it, that they, I say, do so grievously complain of their afflictions, as those which are the worst for them that can be? And as those that should not only do them no good, but much hurt: when as we have seen already how many ways they work their good, and therefore are the best for them indeed.

Why did Job, seeing his afflictions were sent unto him by God for his trial, and for his good, why did he so complain of them? Oh that my grief were well weighed, and my miseries were laid together in the balance? For it would now be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up. For the arrows of the Almighty are in me, the venom thereof doth drink up my spirit, and the terrors of God fight against me, &c. Why doth David also make so grievous complaints in respect of the affliction that did befall him, when he beginneth the Psalm thus lamentably; O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chastise me in thy wrath: for thine arrows have light upon me, and thine hand lieth upon me: there is nothing sound in my flesh, because of thine anger, neither is there rest in my bones, because of my sin. My wounds are putrefied and corrupt; I am bowed and crooked very sore; I go mourning all the day: for my reins are full of burning, and there is nothing sound in my flesh: my heart panteth, and my strength faileth, and the light of mine eyes, even they are not mine own, &c.

If these afflictions of theirs did work their good, why did they thus complain of them? Truly it cannot be denied, but that men for the most part do more complain of their afflictions, then they ought to do, and are more full of murmuring and impatency under the hand of God, then they should be: and they do not so comfortably bear their crosses as they should and might yet all this hindereth not, but that the Lord by them seeketh their good, and they should labor to profit, and to be bettered by their afflictions,

and be persuaded that they shall work together for the best unto them, though they be full of complaints, whiles they are in the midst of them. For whoever complained more of their afflictions, then these two men, Job and David, and yet who had more profit, or got more good by them then they? Both of them being thus tried, and in the trial found to be most faithful and patient, and constant unto the end.

And concerning this proneness in us to complain, we must consider that such is our nature, that we must needs have the feeling of our afflictions, unless our hearts were hardened, like iron or steel, and so we were senseless like stocks and stones, and not as men. And therefore seeing it is otherwise, namely, our hearts naturally are soft and tender, and ready to be broken with affliction, and some more, and some less; it cannot possibly be, but that everything that befalleth us, should work upon us, and that we should be moved according to the nature and quality of it; either to joy or sorrow, love or hatred, anger or fear, and such like: and therefore tribulation must needs trouble us, and affliction must needs afflict us, and the cross cannot but crucify us; and yet we may and ought for all that be persuaded, that it is for our good, and look for it from thence, and pray to God in faith that we may find it.

Even as the sick patient, and painful languishing creature under the Physicians hand, cannot as he is a natural man, endued with sense and reason, but feel to his great grief the lancing with sharp knives, and the searing of his flesh with red hot irons, and so complain of them with much heaviness, and many tears; yea cry out and roar for the extremity of his pain, though he knoweth it be best for him then thus to be handled: and therefore though he be sometimes bound in the dressing both hand and foot, or violently held by men; yet after a sort he doth most willingly suffer it.

And this is one cause of complaining in affliction, though they are persuaded that it is for their good, even the infirmity and tenderness of our nature, whereby all crosses work on us as they do.

But there is another cause more principal then this, which proceedeth from ignorance, or want of faith: for many are too full of complaints in their affliction, because they are not persuaded at all, or not at that time, when they are in temptation, that adversity, or the cross is for their good; or at least not that particular cross, and in that manner, that it is upon them: which if they could come unto, whatsoever should be laid upon them, they would not greatly complain of it, for the hope of future good would mitigate and assuage all. Therefore all such are to meditate upon that which hath already been spoken concerning this matter; namely, how many ways by affliction the Lord doth us good.

In the latter part of the verse, when he saith, To them that love God; that is, all things work together for the best unto them that love God: as he thereby restraineth this general promise, because it is not made to all; so he sheweth to whom it appertaineth; namely, to those that believe in Christ, and are sanctified by his Spirit, whereof this is one special fruit; The love of God. For he entreateth here of the certainty of the salvation of those that belong unto Christ, as appeareth by the first words of the chapter; Now then there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Where he also discerneth the true believer from others, by this fruit of faith, namely, sanctification; and here he doth name one principal of it, which is love: Love to God, from whence ariseth love unto men for his sake, and from them both, all duties to God and man.

And thus the Apostle also in another place joineth faith and love together, as those that are inseparable, when he saith, that in Jesus Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything: but faith, which worketh by love: where his meaning is, that no outward thing, or service of God, though commanded by him, as circumcision was, commendeth us to God, or maketh us acceptable unto God, but only Christ, and his obedience: which we take hold of, and so make ours by faith: which faith is then effectual and lively, when it breedeth in us a love, which love appeareth by the fruits and effects of the same. So then the Apostle here under one fruit, which is love, comprehendeth all godliness, and sanctification.

But he taketh this thing rather than any other, (The love of God) as that, that is most fit for his purpose: for speaking of affliction he saith, that by this we shall try our faith, if our love to God continue even then: so that we cease not to love God, though he afflict us. For whereas the very wicked will pretend to love God in prosperity, and as long as all things go well with them, they will profess that they love God, as much as any, yea; and that they were worse than the brute beasts, if that they did not love him, and that with all their heart, who bestoweth all things upon them so liberally, and many such glorious words they will utter: but in adversity, and when God layeth affliction upon them, their love is changed: yea, they fall into open hatred and defiance with God, yea even unto plain cursing and banning; as appeareth by the example of Job's wife, who said unto her husband; Doest thou continue still in thine uprightness, blaspheme God, and die. But he that loveth God truly, loveth him not for his back and belly, as we say, but because he is goodness itself, and therefore principally to be beloved for himself: and so their love continueth, though all outward blessings be taken away.

And herein the wicked too manifestly bewray vile minds, and servile natures; that like as servants love not their masters, nor maidens their mistresses, if they once begin to correct them for their faults; and so grow weary of them, and are ready to run away from them: as the maid servant Hagar the Egyptian did from her mistress Sarai. But the godly do this way as apparently show their liberal nature, and ingenuous disposition; in that as no correction or stripes of the father or mother, can make the child to change his love to them, and wholly to alienate his mind from them, much less can they drive him clean away from them, but he will abide in their house, and in all his need resort to them for succor: so will they still in affliction love God, and depend upon him for all things needful.

And this corruption to be in the nature of all men generally, even by affliction to fall away from the love and service of God, Satan knew well enough, and therefore thought to have found it in Job, though he did not, when he said unto the Lord, Doth Job love, or fear, or serve God for naught? As if he had said, he doth not serve thee for thine own sake, or for any love that he beareth unto thee, but for the commodity that he receiveth by thee: for he addeth, Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side: thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land: but stretch out thine hand, and touch all that he hath, to see if he will not blaspheme thee to thy face. In which words he noteth that vice, that men commonly are subject unto, that is, to hide their rebellion in prosperity, and in adversity to bewray it.

Therefore if we be free from this vice, and so cease not in affliction to love God, and in love to serve him, we shall be sure, that he will fulfil this promise of his unto us, of turning all things to our good: and causing all our

crosses to make together for the best unto us, so long as we love God: and this unfeigned love that we find we bear in our hearts unto God, is a sure testimony unto us of it, and we ought thereby to be persuaded of the undoubted truth of it, and so comfort ourselves for the time present, that God will do us good by this correction of his, even because we love him.

Moreover, seeing that the Apostles purpose here is, to entreat of patience in affliction, and to prepare us for it; this no doubt is most fit for the fame, namely, the consideration of that love, which we ought to bear unto God, whereby we might be moved to take all things in good part, that he sends unto us, because we love him, and in love are desirous to please him. For we see daily in all worldly matters, what great things all sorts of men will bear at the hands of them, whom they love: as how many grievous things doth the mother put up at the hands of her froward child, whom she tenderly loveth? And the husband passeth over with silence many things that are offensive proceeding from his wife, because she is dear unto him, and his love towards her causeth him not to regard them; yea for her sake he beareth with many things at the hands of others.

As it is said of Jacob, that he served Laban a very hard master seven years for Rahel, during which time he took great pains day and night: for in the day he was consumed with heat, and with frost in the night, and his wages was changed ten times: yet they seemed unto him but a few days, because he loved her: thus love unto men causeth us to endure hard things for their sakes whom we love: and the more we love them, the more willingly to gratify them do we cheerfully undergo any hard service for them. How much more then ought we patiently to bear all things at the hand of God, whom we know, that he so loved us, that he spared not his own son, but

gave him for us all to death: and therefore we ought to love him above all other things, yea above ourselves again.

And no doubt we would thus bear all crosses laid upon us by God for our good, a great deal more patiently than we do, if there were in us that love unto his majesty, that there ought. For love seeketh not her own things: that is, it is the property of love, not so much to seek to satisfy their own mind, as to gratify the party whom they love, even in things often contrary to their own liking: therefore let us labor for that pure and sincere love unto God, which may abide in the greatest affliction, so shall we not only patiently bear them, but be assured, that they shall be turned unto our good: according to the saying of the Apostle here; All things work together for the best unto them, that love God.

When he addeth these words in the end of the same verse, (which are called of his purpose) as he doth in them further show to whom this promise doth appertain, namely, that all afflictions shall work for their best: even unto such as are effectually called unto the knowledge of their salvation in Christ, according to the good purpose and decree of God towards them: So he sheweth the cause, why all afflictions are made profitable unto them especially, and turned unto their good in the end: which is not any worthiness of theirs, that they deserve it at God's hands, or any right behaving themselves under the cross, as though they were able to work it out themselves; for of themselves they are as weak, and frail, and impatient under it, as any other: but the free love of God towards them in Christ, whereby before the beginning of the world, he purposed to do them good, and therefore in time effectually called them. Which purpose of his nothing can alter, but he maketh all things to further it, yea sometimes contrary to their nature, as afflictions.

So that from the first unchangeable cause of their salvation, and of all good intended towards them, he sheweth the certainty of this, that all afflictions shall work together for the best to those that love God: for who can hinder or frustrate the determinate purpose of God in anything? None in the world, no not the devil himself: and therefore afflictions cannot hinder the good that he meaneth to his children, because he hath purposed to do them good. Which purpose of his for their good hath always appeared by their fruitful and effectual calling. For when he had purposed to save them by his son Jesus Christ, he called them by the ministry of the Gospel in his good time some sooner some later unto the knowledge of it; and from the same purpose of his it came to pass, that the word was made effectual unto them by the inward operation of his holy Spirit, working in them faith and repentance: and so became unto them The power of God unto their salvation, as the Apostle calleth it: that is, the mighty and effectual instrument of God to work their salvation, when it was altogether unprofitable unto others, that heard it, as well as they.

So then the Lord continuing the same purpose of his towards them, it shall undoubtedly come to pass, that though all other men should not profit by their afflictions, but wax worse and worse, as commonly the wicked do, as we see in the example of Pharaoh king of Egypt, who after many grievous plagues brought upon him, and upon the whole land, one after another, his heart was still more and more hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go: yet the Lord would turn all this to their good, because he had purposed it. And for the certainty and full assurance of this, he leadeth them to the consideration of the purpose of God appearing in their calling, which being very strange, and many things to the outward appearance against it,

yet the Lord brake through them all, and none of them could hinder it, or stay it, because God had purposed it.

And truly it is worthy our consideration, to remember how many things have been in the way to hinder the calling of men unto salvation, yet none of them could do it, because God had purposed. As who would ever have thought, that Paul sometimes called Saul, breathing out threatening's and slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord, and having now in this great fury and rage of his obtained letters of the high Priest to Damascus, that if he found any that were of that way or profession, (either men or women) he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem: should at this time be so suddenly converted, that he should not only become a Christian, but an Apostle: so that it should be truly said of him, he which was a great persecutor in time past, now is a zealous preacher of the faith, which before he destroyed: but he shows the cause of it there himself, when he saith, that God had separated him thereunto from his mother's womb, and so called him unto it of his grace: that is, in his everlasting counsel he first appointed him to be an Apostle, and secondarily even from his birth he did separate him to this office; and thirdly, in time of his mere grace and favor he called him unto it, according to his purpose.

The like may be said of some other, as of Manasseh king of Judah, who doing evil in the sight of the Lord like the abominations of the heathen: setting up altars for Baalim, and worshipping all the host of heaven, causing also his sons to pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom: and giving himself to witchcraft and to charming, and using them that had familiar spirits; there was no likelihood that he should be converted unto God, there were so many things against it: but the Lord, that had purposed to show him mercy, did bring him unto it against all these: for he caused the

King of Ashur to come against him, who took him prisoner, and put him in fetters, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babel; and when he was in tribulation, he prayed to the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers; and prayed unto him, and God was entreated of him, and heard his prayer: and then he knew that the Lord was God.

But to let these pass; let every man consider the manner of his own calling, and see how many things were within him, and without him, that might have hindered him from coming to that measure of grace, that he hath now received, that so he may acknowledge upon his own experience, that nothing is able to hinder the good purpose of God towards those that love him. And then he shall find, that the great ignorance, idolatry, or Atheism, in which all his kindred were left might have stayed this good work, but that God did draw him out of them, as he did Abraham, commanding him to forsake his country, and his kindred, and his father's house: or that the manifold great corruptions that were rooted in us, and confirmed by custom, like unto the seven devils that were in Marie Magdalene, might have kept us from the hope of it: or the loose and dissolute life that we lead, misspending our time, and the gifts of God, our wit and strength in riotousness and wantonness, as the prodigal child did; might have kept God's good hand from us: or that we did despise and tread under our feet the precious pearl of God's word, when it was offered unto us, like unto the profane beasts, or swine that Christ speaketh of in the Gospel: or that many things else might in the judgment of all men have been as a bar to keep us from an effectual calling; but that the Lord in much mercy had purposed it, and so according to the same purpose of his, he bore all things down before him, and came thorough them unto us for our good.

And so we shall be the better persuaded, that the Lord of the same unchangeable goodness of his having purposed even by the cross, and all manner of affliction to do us good, how many things so ever may seem to ourselves, or to others to be against it, that he will verify this promise unto us, and we shall find it to be true, as well as others, that all things shall work for the best to those that love God, even those that are called of his purpose.

In the next verse when he addeth; For those whom he knew before, he also predestinate, to be like to the image of his son, that he might be the first borne of many brethren: he declareth another most excellent end, wherefore the Lord layeth the cross most of all upon his children: namely, that thereby they might be like unto Christ their eldest brother, as the Lord hath ordained, that all that are his should be, some more, and some less. And so by this means especially it worketh our good, when it maketh us the members conformable and like unto Christ our head. In which words he not only saith, that all afflictions do befall us by the very special providence and hand of God, and not by fortune or chance: but also he showeth, to what end he sendeth them; namely, that as Christ himself first suffered, and then entered into glory: so all others going the same way, that he did, they might be like unto him; as the Lord hath appointed, that they should be. And therefore we need not to fear, that the cross should hinder us from our salvation, no more than it did Christ from glory: but rather that we ought in the midst of it to have such hope, that we shall be like unto Christ in glory, because we are like unto him in the cross: according as it is said in another place, If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.

Now concerning the former of these two points, namely, that no affliction cometh by casualty, or befalleth us by hap hazard, as we say, neither that

anything is done by fortune or chance, but by the very special appointment of God: he not only willingly suffering it, and beholding it, and us in it with his own eyes, but laying it upon us himself, even with his own hands, and first of all ordaining it: this, I say, not only containeth in it most notable comfort, and singular consolation, considered alone and apart by itself: but also is that, unto which the whole Scripture of the Old and New Testament beareth very plentiful witness. For seeing that we believe, according to the first article of our faith, that God made all things of nothing, therefore also we are assured, that whatsoever are the means known or unknown, of anything that befalleth us, that the Lord himself is the doer of the same: for that which they did, they did by his special power, seeing that of themselves they were first nothing, and therefore without him could not do anything.

And thus the Psalmist professeth his faith, in the name of the rest of the servants of God, acknowledging that the Lord himself hath brought all their troubles upon them, which they suffered by the violence and cruelty of their adversaries; and that he alone did in the end deliver them out of their hands: when he speaketh thus, Praise our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard; which holdeth our souls in life, and suffereth not our feet to slip. For thou, O God, hast proved us, thou hast tried us as silver is tried; thou hast brought us into the snares, and laid a strait chain upon our loins: thou hast caused men to ride over our heads: we went into fire and into water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place: where they confess that though men did so oppress them, as though they should ride over them, yet that the Lord caused them so to do, and he brought them into the snare, and by the cruelty of tyrants laid a strait chain upon their loins, which pinched them: and so he did not only behold their afflictions, but by them did of purpose try them, as men do silver.

Whereunto agreeth that most excellent saying of Job, containing the like profession of his faith in this very point; that God bringeth all affliction upon men, though he useth men, or any other means, or the devil himself, as instruments and means to work under him in the same thing. For when Satan had desired the Lord to stretch out his hand, and touch Job in his possessions, to see what would become of him then: and thereupon the Lord said unto him, Loe all that he hath is in thine hand. Then he stirred up the Shabeans, who came violently and carried away all his oxen, as they were plowing, and his asses as they were seeding: and he caused fire to come down and burn up his sheep and his servants that kept them: and he moved the Chaldeans to set upon his camels; and to carry them away, and to slay his servants: and he raised up a tempest of wind, which blew down the house where his sons and his daughters were, and slew them all. And when the tidings of all these were brought unto him on the sudden, then he fell down upon the ground, and worshipped God, saying, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken it: blessed be the name of the Lord. Thus though he saw the means of his undoing, yet he looked up to God, and confessed him to be the principal doer in this business: not ascribing his losses unto the Chaldeans or Sabaeans, but unto God working by them: and therefore he said, The Lord hath taken away.

Thus we ought so believe and confess, that whatsoever doth befall us either by wicked or ungodly persons, or by Satan himself, and all his hellish power, that the Lord is the doer of the same: for the very devils themselves were constrained to acknowledge unto Christ, when he was upon the earth, that they could do nothing without his permission, or rather without his warrant and special commandment: and that not only unto men, but even to

the worst and meanest of his creatures. For when he was in the country of the Gergaseus, there met him two men possessed with many devils; and the devils speaking in them, besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go into the heard of swine; which was feeding a far off upon an hill: so they all confess, that they were not able to enter into those very brute beasts to hurt them, until such time as Christ gave them leave.

But St. Mark speaketh of it more significantly, namely, that they said unto him, Send us into the swine: and then as St. Matthew saith, he did not only suffer them, and give them leave so to do, but bade them go, and so sent them to them: whereupon they entered into them, and carried them headlong from the hill into the sea, and so choked them there. So that they confess, that they could do nothing but by the power of Christ, sending them, ruling them, and restraining them at his pleasure.

Thus also it is written of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus, that he was lead aside of the Spirit of God into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil; to show us, that whatsoever did befall him there, the Lord God sent him thither, and to that end: and that God was not only contented to suffer him to be diverse ways tempted by the space of forty days, and forty nights continually; but that he went thither by the immediate direction of the Spirit of God for the same end and purpose: who could otherwise have preserved him, that the Devil should have had nothing to do with him. And according to this dealing of God with him, Christ hath taught us all thus to pray, Lord lead us not into temptation: which kind of words, as they be agreeable unto the words of the Evangelists, yea of our Savior Christ, So they are more full of faith and comfort, then if we should say, as many had wont to do, Suffer us not to be lead into temptation: because therein we confess, not only that the Lord beholdeth us in our troubles, and suffereth us to be lead into them,

and so is in those things a looker on; but that he, that is our father, and therefore loveth us; who made us, and therefore knoweth our strength, layeth them upon our backs himself, and doth not as it were stand by till another doth it: and therefore we need so much the less to fear, lest we should be overladen with them: for as it is said in the Psalm, as a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him: for he knoweth whereof we be made, he remembereth that we are but dust.

The consideration of this should not only make us patient in all afflictions, and willingly to bear them, because they come from God, that loveth us: but also to look for some good from them in the end, because that he, who hath promised to work our good thereby, doth lay them upon us himself. And unless we be thus persuaded of them, we shall be ready to fret, and storm, and impatiently to bear them; much more shall we think them to be for our hurt, rather than for our good. If Job when he lost all, if he had looked unto the violence and robbery of the Chaldeans and Sabeans; who spoiled him, or to the malice of the Devil, who set them a work, and had gone no further, he must needs have had a number of revenging thoughts against them, and he could no ways have put it up at their hands; but when he considered of the providence of God working by them in wisdom and mercy, beyond that that flesh and blood could conceive: and was resolved of this, that the Lord had taken all away: that made him patiently to bear all, and to give thanks unto God; and not to utter one foolish word, or to offend with his mouth.

And this made Joseph patiently to put up those injuries and wrongs that were offered unto him by his brethren; when as first of all they cast him into an empty pit, that there he might perish: and afterwards they drew him out of it, and sold him to the Ishmaelites, who brought him into Egypt. Where

afterwards he being advanced unto great honor, when in the time of famine his brethren came thither to buy corn, and he at their second coming made himself known unto them; saying, Come near, I pray you to me: I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt: but he stayeth not there: for then he might in some great heat of affection have expostulated the matter with them, and have done them some harm, seeing he had power in his hands: but he addeth further for their comfort, and to show what stayed him: Be not sad, neither grieved with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you for your preservation: for now two years of famine have been thorough the land, and five years are behind, wherein shall be neither earing, nor harvest: wherefor God sent me before you, to preserve your posterity in this land, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. Now then you sent me not hither, but God, who hath made me a father unto Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Where we see, how he turneth his eyes from his brethren, and looketh unto God, saying it was not they that sold him, but God that sent him thither, and that for the good of them all: and this made him so patiently to bear it.

And thus the Lord, though he detesteth such sins as these in men, yet he often useth them to his glory: which when men can wisely consider of, and discern the one from the other, it will make them quietly to bear great things at the hands of men, because they stay not in them, but cast up their eyes unto God: whereas if they should only look unto men, and go no further, they know that they in their doings mean them no good, but hurt: and knowing that they have deserved no such measure at their hands, they would be like the dog that bites the staff wherewith he is beaten, and considers not of him that striketh him: therefore in all afflictions, let us

believe that we have to deal with God, so shall we be patient, and comfortable under the same. And this is that, no doubt, that stayed the old man Heli the Priest, when he heard that message from the Lord by Samuel, which otherwise would have been a great deal more uncomfortable unto him, as appeareth by his words, and answer, that he gave unto him. For when he told him, that God would judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons ran into a slander, and he stayed them not; then he answered, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good. This faith, that he knew, that all things should fall out not according to the will of man, but of God, was that, that gave him hope of a good issue of all those troubles in the end: and so it must do to us.

For this is all one, as if the sick patient should have a Physician to deal with him, who were his father, his brother, or his friend: who should not only prescribe the quantity of all the ingredients for his medicine, knowing well the qualities and working of them; but should also make the confection himself, bring it unto him, and minister it with his own hands: of whose fidelity and care towards him, and desire of his health, because he doubteth not one whit; that would make him most willing to receive it, though very bitter and unpleasant: and though at the first he found it in the working somewhat churlish, yet he would hope to receive some good by it in the end; knowing who made it, and brought it unto him.

And after this manner, and under this very comparison, our Savior Christ speaketh of his own afflictions, and did most willingly endure the cross, which others would have put off from him, because it was that, that his father did lay upon him. For when Judas and the rest came with weapons to take him, Peter having a sword drew it out, and laid about him, hoping to have rescued him out of their hands: and striking at the head of one of the

servants of the high Priest, cut off his right ear. Then Jesus said unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: shall I not drink of the cup, which my father hath given me? Wherein he showeth not only what made him so patient, and what caused him to stay Peter, even the will of his Father: but thereby he doth also teach us, that whensoever any cross doth befall us, it is that portion and cup, which God our father in great wisdom and mercy hath mingled for us: and therefore we should not fear any hurt by drinking of it, but rather take it willingly, and hope that it shall work our good, according to his meaning towards us, and as he hath promised in his word.

If when the child hath offended his father, he should say to one of his servants in his anger; Take him out of my sight, and punish him so and so: this would be more grievous and fearful a great deal unto an ingenuous child, then if the father should take correction of him himself; because he was better persuaded of the goodness of his father towards him, then of the servants, and so might look for more mercy from the one, then from the other, Even so it may minister unto us no small comfort in all our afflictions, that we believe, that in them we are under our fathers hand, and he himself dealeth with us, and that he hath not in his displeasure delivered us to any other to be tormented by them.

Again, if one that were blind, offending his father, should be suddenly taken away, and carried to some punishment, he knew not whether, nor by whom, he might justly fear what would be the end and measure of it: but if he knew it were his father, part of his fear would be diminished, and he would be the less unwilling to go with him, and more quietly submit himself unto his correction: So we if at any time through our ignorance and blindness do not rightly conceive of our crosses, and of the author of them; but as uncertain we ascribe them to this, or to that, or to we know not what,

we are so much the more timorous and fearful: but if the eyes of our mind by faith in God's word be so opened, that we see clearly God to be the author of them, and that we are in the hands of none but of our father; our minds are so much the more pacified, and we shall find a wonderful alteration in ourselves, over that was in us before, in respect of the patient bearing of our present estate, whatsoever it be.

Or (to show it in another comparison) if one should be so hardly dealt withal, as is the manner in the Spanish Inquisition; in which men are examined for their faith in Christ, and religion to God, that the poor soul might be put into the greater fear, and so the sooner abjure his faith; if he should have a tormentor sent unto him very ugly disguised, more like a devil then a man, who should carry him into some dark dungeon he knew not whether, and there lay him upon the rack: this would no doubt increase the grief of his affliction so much the more, because he knew not who did deal with him, and so could look for no mercy at his hands. But now, if when he were in the midst of his torture he should hear the voice of his father speaking unto him, though thus disguised, that might somewhat uphold him, and rid him of a number of thoughts that he was troubled with before.

So all afflictions must needs be so much the more uncomfortable unto us, as long as we look not up unto him, that sendeth it; and are so blind, that we consider not, who striketh us. Yet when we hear out of the word the voice of our father speaking unto us, and telling us that it is he that dealeth with us, how strange and deformed so ever the tormentor may seem to be, that is, how grievous and unlooked for so ever the affliction be, and contrary to our nature; let us not be too much discouraged, because that then when he striketh us, he still loveth us, and the bowels of his compassion do yearn

upon us, more than in a mother towards her child, when she seeth what harm is like to come unto it: and he then seeketh thereby to do us good.

And this is that, which the Prophet Jeremiah speaketh of in the person of the Lord, showing how he standeth affected towards them when he doth most of all afflict them. Where first of all he bringeth in the Church of the Jews sorrowing for the greatness of their affliction, which God had laid upon them for their sins: and in the same committing themselves wholly to God, and praying to him for his salvation; when he saith, I have heard Ephraim lamenting thus thou hast corrected me, and I was chastised as an untamed calf; convert thou me, and I shall be converted: for thou art the Lord my God; surely after I was converted, I repented: and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Then the Lord maketh this answer, that he had not cast them off, though he had so afflicted them, but did still love them, and when he did most of all afflict them, then he was moved with pity and compassion towards them, saying, Is Ephraim my dear son, or pleasant child? I surely: for since I spake unto him, I still remembered him: therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have compassion upon him, saith the Lord.

Thus we see, that all afflictions are ordained, and sent of God, and that for our good, and that he beareth the same fatherly affection towards us in them, that he did before. And therefore that the salvation of the Church, and of every member of the same is by God's decree joined with bearing the cross: in so much that we are not to look to be free from it, unless we will pervert this order established by God himself. Neither need we to fear it, when as the Lord, who hath determined to save us, hath appointed this way and means also to save us by, and to work our good: and so his decree and

purpose of saving us cannot be severed from his decree of exercising us under the cross.

And that none of us all might look to be freed from the cross, or fear, that it should hinder us in our salvation, or in any gift that might further us thereunto: the Apostle telleth us, wherefor the Lord hath thus decreed of the whole Church, to exercise them under the cross; namely, seeing that his own dearly beloved son, in whom he is well pleased, (as it was testified from heaven) seeing that he came no other way but by the cross unto his great glory, to be set at the right hand of God: he being the eldest brother in the house of God, all other by their practice and obedience to the cross, might yield unto him sovereignty, and acknowledge him to be chief, when they will not refuse to go that way to their inheritance, which Christ went before, the eldest and only natural son of God, though it seem never so grievous, even thorough many afflictions.

For even as a noble man will have all his servants to wear one livery, and all of them to have the same cognizance, that they may be known whose they are: So the Lord would have all his servants and children, to be known from the rest of the world by one and the same badge: and though there be some other marks of them, whereby they may be discerned, as the outward profession of his worship and service, and his holy Sacraments; yet there is one more special: now the badge that he put upon Christ Jesus his eldest son, was affliction and trouble in this world: according to that that was prophesied of him, he is despised, and rejected of men; he is a man full of sorrows, and hath experience of infirmities; he was oppressed and afflicted, yet did he not open his mouth; he is brought as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. The lord did break him, and make him subject unto infirmities: all which we see

verified in the Gospel in the whole course of his life, but especially in his death. Seeing this was the case of the first begotten, none of us the younger brethren must refuse it, or be weary of it.

We see by experience, that in every family great is the prerogative and privilege of the eldest brother above all the rest, he by the law of God was by his double portion preferred above all the rest: and Jacob in blessing all his children, called Reuben his eldest son, The excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power, and so did show what belonged unto him as he was the eldest, if he had not lost it, namely, that he should have been the chiefest of all his brethren. None therefore must look to go beyond the eldest, nay all cannot be like unto him: and if any of the younger might come to as great an inheritance as he, by doing the same things that he did before them, though never so hard, and by going to it the same way, that he did, though full of many difficulties and dangers; they might not with any color refuse the conditions, unless they would preposterously and without reason prefer themselves before him, and think themselves better than he.

In like manner seeing it hath pleased the Lord, as the Apostle saith, to consecrate the price of our salvation through afflictions, and he came unto glory no other way then this; we must think it good for us to go the same way, that we might be like unto him, and so by our practice show, that we acknowledge him to be the prince of our salvation, and our eldest brother. Therefore as he is the most chief and principal in the commonwealth, or in the Church, or in a private family, or in any place else, whom all the rest desire to be like unto: So when we are contented to be like unto Christ in anything, even in the cross, then shall we declare indeed that we hold him not in word only, but in true faith and hearty affection to be chief and principal above all others, and as was said before, to be the Prince of our

salvation; or as it is said in this text that we have in hand, The first begotten among many brethren.

For indeed howsoever there is great difference between the head and the rest of the members, and all of them are far inferior unto it: yet there is and must be a certain conformity between the one and the other; that is, a certain likelihood and agreement between the members of the same body and the head: So howsoever there is no comparison between Christ and us, yet we must thus far agree with him, that we must not think to be above him, and therefore we must not refuse any condition, that he hath undergone before: unless we would most disorderly prefer ourselves the members, before him our head: which thing to do, were to darken the glory of him that is the first borne, and to stain the honor of him that is truly called, The Prince of our salvation.

For what a confusion were it in the commonwealth, if the Nobles, yea the meanest of the subjects would refuse to do that, which the King and Prince had done before? Or what disorder would there be in a family, if the younger brethren should think much and disdain to be brought up that way, that the heir of the house had been before: Even so when we shall refuse to bear the cross, which our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus by the appointment of his father hath born in greater measure, then we shall or can: it is nothing else but pride and self-love to lift up ourselves above him, and to say by our deeds, that we will not in this thing be conformable unto him, as to our Prince or eldest brother.

And then consider I pray you, what an intolerable thing this were, that we being worse than dust and ashes, and worms meat, yea nothing else but a lump of sin, should desire to be spared above the only son of God, whom he hath made heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds; who is the

brightness of the glory, and the engraven form of his person, bearing up all things by his mighty power: and is made so much the more excellent then the Angels, in as much as he hath obtained a more excellent name then they: for of him he saith, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee: and of the other, Let all the Angels of God worship him, as the Apostle doth most excellently show at large in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Therefore let us not so love ourselves that the estate of Christ Jesus should seem unmeet for us: as if he being thorough all afflictions and temptations brought unto glory, we should dream of a more easy way for ourselves, and think to come to it after a more peaceable and quiet manner, we know not what.

But rather let this comfort and uphold us in all trouble and adversity, that we can never be pressed down so low with it, but that Christ Jesus our Lord and Prince hath been more deeply plunged in it before: and therefore the more that we suffer, the more like we are unto him. In so much that if it were possible for us to have the afflictions of Job doubled upon us, yea if we could go down into hell, and so suffer all the torments of a damned and desperate creature both in soul and body; having the worm of our conscience gnawing in us continually; even in them we should be most like unto Christ in his fearful agonies, and deadly sorrow that he fell into, complaining that his soul was heavy even unto the death: and in his bloody sweat, by which all the parts of this body were strained to the full: yea in the lamentable outcries that he made upon the cross, when as he finding no comfort in heaven nor in earth for a while he cried with a loud voice, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, and so gave up the ghost.

But if all this do not suffice us, and we further demand, why the Lord should appoint so hard a way for us unto salvation, and why he should ordain the gate to be so strait, and the way so narrow, whereby we should

enter into life: and so should foolishly wish, as many do, that he had appointed some easier way then this. First of all I must say, as the Apostle doth, O man, who art thou, which pleadest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it; why hast thou appointed me to do so and so? We must not prescribe anything unto the Lord in the course and manner of our salvation: no more than children must prescribe unto their parents after what manner they should come to their inheritances and portions. But seeing that the joys of the kingdom of heaven are so great, even such, as the eye hath not seen, nor the ear hath heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man; and that we are altogether so unworthy of them, we must think ourselves happy, if we come to enjoy them any way at the last, be it never so hard; yea, if we should go to heaven thorough the midst of hell.

For when we are come thither, in the presence of God is the fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore, we shall find them so far to exceed all that ever we heard, read, or thought of them: so that we shall say of them, as the Queen of Sheba said of the wisdom and honor of king Solomon, when she saw it: It was a true word, which I heard in mine own land of thy acts, and of thy wisdom: howbeit I believed not their report, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold not the one half of thy great wisdom was told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard: happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand before thee always, &c. So we shall find all things there to surpass all that ever we heard, and so shall count ourselves and other happy and thrice happy, that may stand in the presence of God forever.

At what time we shall find the happiness of that life in many degrees to surmount all the troubles and adversities that we have suffered in this life, to surmount them I say both in greatness, and in continuance without any

interruption. As the Apostle saith, who had so great experience of all kind of afflictions, that he saith of himself, We are afflicted on every side; and everywhere we bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus: for we are always delivered unto death for Jesus sake: yet he saith, he did not faint under them: for when he considered of the joys of heaven, and compared the afflictions of this world with them, he accounted the afflictions to be but short, even for a moment of time, and very light and easy, in respect of the eternal glory, and the great weight of it, that was prepared for him, and for others: when he saith, for our light affliction, which is but for a moment causeth unto us a far more excellent and eternal weight of glory: and as he delivereth it in another place more plainly and confidently in these words: I count, or all things being well considered, I gather, that the afflictions of this present time are not worthy of the glory which shall be shown unto us.

And then we shall never repent us of the hardness of the way, by which we came through manifold afflictions unto so great and eternal glory; no more than the sick patient is sorry that by enduring so many hard things under the physician's hands, he attained unto perfect health at the last. But rather as it was a great comfort unto Joseph, to see what great honor he was come unto in Egypt, so that he was made lord of all the country, though he had suffered many hard things before: according to that, that is said in the Psalm, Joseph was sold for a slave; they held his feet in the stocks, and he was laid in irons, until his appointed time came, and the counsel of the Lord had tried him. Then the King sent, and loosed him, even the ruler of the people delivered him: he made him Lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance. So it shall be a comfort unto us forever and ever, that by walking in the strait way of godliness, and enduring many grievous things in the

same, we are come to that place where we are made Kings and Queens to reign with Christ in glory world without end.

And as Jacob was not sorry, that he came to inherit his father's blessing at the last by enduring a long exile from his father's house by the space of twenty years, and a tedious kind of service under his cruel master Laban, who did often change his wages, and caused him to be pinched with the frost in the night, and to be scorched with the heat of the sun in the day. So it shall be no grief of heart at all unto us then, that by patience under many crosses here, we are come to inherit the blessing of our heavenly father in the kingdom of heaven, which was prepared for us before the foundation of the world. But as the Israelites when they were quietly possessed of the land of Canaan, that good land that flowed with milk and honey, for joy thereof never remembered their long journey travailing by the space of forty years through a vast desert and forlorn wilderness, in which sometimes they wanted water, sometimes food, sometimes were in danger of their enemies, sometimes were stung with fiery serpents, and sometimes were put in great fear of other calamities: So we when we are come to that land of promise, whereof this was out a type and figure; where is the tree of life indeed, bearing fruit continually, whose fruit are for meat, and whose leaves are for medicine: where shall be no more curse, but the throne of God, and of the lamb shall be in it, where his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads: and there shall be no night there, and they shall need no candle, neither light of the sun: for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign for evermore. Then all things that we have suffered in these days of our pilgrimage shall be clean forgotten, and remembered no more.

To conclude, as David did not repent him, that he came to the kingdom of Israel at the end of many years, in which he suffered so many hard things under the tyranny of Saul, as he did; when as sometimes he would have smit him through with his spear unto the wall, and at another time he would have slain him in his bed: and continually he hunted after his life, as one would hunt a partridge in the wilderness: So we shall not repent us, that we are come to the kingdom of heaven after many years, in which sometimes we have been pursued of one affliction, and sometimes of another: so that all our life long hath been nothing else but a continual warfare with our own corruptions, and with the temptations of the world, and of the devil. Therefore to uphold ourselves in a good course, and that in all trials we might possess our souls in patience unto the end, we must consider and seriously meditate upon the happiness of the life to come: which shall so sweeten the bitterness of all afflictions, that either we shall not feel it in comparison, or it shall seem nothing unto us: and so let us put that exhortation of the Apostle in practice, Let us not be weary of well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Where to persuade the Galatians and us to go on constantly in all good courses unto the end, he makes a promise of great reward which God will bestow upon all them that shall so do, not so much in this life, as the life to come, when every man shall receive the things that are done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil: and this he doth by a familiar and plain comparison; That as the husbandman though the seed-time be very painful and costly unto him; so that both he buys his corn at a great price, and hath many an hard journey at the plow, and meets with many a boisterous storm, yet he gives not over in the midst, but comforts himself with the hope of harvest, which in due time will come, though long

after: and is persuaded, that that will fully quite all his cost, and recompense all his labor to the full: and when he hath gathered his corn into his barn, he repents himself not one whit of his cost, or travel, but rather is glad that by neither of them he was discouraged from following of that good course, which now he seeth to be so gainful unto himself.

So we in all afflictions and in all difficulties continuing in well doing, must comfort ourselves with the hope of that reward, that God hath promised in the kingdom of heaven: according to that, that is said in the Psalm, they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; they went out weeping, and carried precious seed, but they shall return with joy, and bring their sheaves. Where the time of affliction is compared unto a seed-time in a dear year, when poor men because of the scarcity and price of corn sow it with tears: but the reward in heaven is likened unto the harvest, when the increase is so great, that they reap and carry in their corn with great joy. This is that then, which we must set before our eyes, that we might patiently undergo the hardness of affliction, it being the ready way to bring us to glory.

And this Paul applieth unto servants, whose condition of life, especially of bondservants, and under heathen and unchristian masters in those days was very hard: and willeth them to do their duties conscionably, as serving the Lord, knowing that of him, they shall receive their reward: when he saith, Servants be obedient unto them that are your masters according to the flesh, in all things, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, pleasing God: whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. Thus he would have them to go on in their callings cheerfully, though they were very base and painful, in hope of that inheritance that was prepared for them in the kingdom of heaven.

And truly if not only servants, but all other men did believe that in all things they had to deal with God, and that he would reward them if they did well, though all other should neglect them, the hope of that might comfort them in all difficulties.

And this made Moses the man of God to refuse all the riches and pleasures, that he might have enjoyed in Egypt, as being the reputed son of Pharaohs daughter, and to choose rather to join himself with the people of God though in great affliction, because he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. Which reward could not then be seen, and therefore the Apostle saith, that he did it by faith: and truly if we did believe that great reward that is laid up in heaven for them that serve God, and is offered unto us in his word, if all the pleasures of the world were laid before us on the one hand, and all the afflictions of the same on the other hand, we should be of Moses his mind; to choose rather to suffer adversity with the people of God, then to endure the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the rebuke of Christ greater riches, then all the treasures of the world, because by faith we have respect unto the recompense of that reward.

And so I may conclude with that most excellent exhortation of the Apostle in the chapter following: Wherefore let us also, seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, cast away everything that presseth down, and the sin that hangeth so fast on: let us run with patience the race, that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set at the right hand of the throne of God. Where he sets before our eyes the example of our Savior Christ, who in those grievous agonies he was in, to sweeten the bitterness of his cross, did earnestly consider of the joy and glory, which a little after he was to

enter into: that we might also in our sufferings hold our thoughts seriously unto the meditation of the joys of heaven, and for them endure them, and tread under our feet for them all the shame, reproach, and contempt of the world, that shall be cast upon us.

Where also that we might not faint under the burden, we are to consider of the circumstance of time, when we shall reap the fruit of our labors, that is, In due season, if we faint not. Which is partly in this life, for godliness hath the promises of this life, as well as of the life to come: and the Lord as he doth in this life give to his children the first fruits of his Spirit: so he doth give them the first fruits of their labors, as a taste of their happiness, which they shall enjoy more fully hereafter: and therefore Christ saith in the Gospel, that he will reward those that are his a hundred-fold in this life. But this due time is meant principally of the life to come, when they shall receive their reward fully: not only in the hour of death, when the soul entereth into happiness, as it is said of Lazarus, that when he died, the Angels carried his soul into Abraham's bosom: but especially at the day of judgment, when soul and body being joined together, they shall be in full possession of eternal glory and felicity forever.

And seeing the Lord hath of his wisdom and goodness set down the time, when we shall be comforted and receive our reward; we must in faith and patience wait upon him for it. And as the husbandman that hath sown his field, doth not look for his crop the next day, or the next week, but tarrieth till the harvest come; so must we sow the seed of obedience unto God, even under the cross, though with tears, and look for the fruit of it at the great day of harvest, when we shall reap it with joy, even with that joy that is unspeakable and most glorious: when he shall separate the sheep from the goats, and give them their reward, saying, Come ye blessed of my father,

take the inheritance of the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.

And seeing the Lord hath been patient in waiting for our amendment from day today: let us patiently expect the accomplishment of this his gracious promise from day today, and from year to year. Setting before our eyes the example of the dumb creatures, which expect with a fervent desire to be delivered from that bondage and corruption, that now they are in, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God: and this they do with stretching forth their heads, as the Apostle saith, like unto the poor prisoner, that is condemned, and puts out his head at the prison window, looking for the gracious pardon of the Prince. And if we can thus do, as we shall not be frustrate of our hope, so it shall marvelously uphold us, as an anchor fixed in heaven, and not in earth, in all the waves and tempests of this troublesome world, till we arrive happily at the haven of heaven, we shall find the joys so to exceed all the miseries that we have endured here, that we shall not be grieved one whit, that we are come to such a place of rest, by so long and tedious a journey: Which grace God grant unto us, for his son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

FINIS.