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SORROW IS BETTER THAN LAUGHTER.

BY

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“Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity. Ecc. vii. 3-6.

THE ripe experience of Solomon, whom we still believe to be the Preacher in this book, was obtained among circumstances as favorable for a complete judgment, as any man ever had, and resulted in a melancholy determination. At each stage of progress he seems to pause, and looking back to say—“this also is vanity.” It is a conclusion to which many have come, and there are moments in life when we are all disposed to sit down in despondency, as if the world had proved a cheat, and as if no words could better express the sum of our observations than those of the wisest of kings—“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” In such a result there is not necessarily any religion. A Gen-

tile, an infidel, or a savage, is competent to feel such grief, and to utter such disappointment. Emptiness of earthly pleasure may be used by sovereign grace as a preparation for the fulness of heavenly good; but in a majority of cases, the conviction tends either to epicurean indulgence, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" or to blank, atheistic despair, in which the misguided wretch commits self-murder by strong drink, the pistol, or the cord. Hence it becomes a question, second to none in the philosophy of life, how to regulate pleasure and pain, joy and grief, so as to avoid the extremes of carnal folly on one hand, and of horrible despondence on the other. Under this general head it is important to see whether real good may not be extracted even from disappointment, loss, and pain; and whether there is not some middle ground of safety and profit between the lawless exhilaration of the gay world, and the sullen self-torment of misanthropy. And we find nothing but revelation which furnishes any true help in this problem, or teaches us how to use our sorrows as a means of ultimate joy. It was worthy of Solomon to leave on record the solution of this enigma; indeed the spirit of wisdom which he had sought in youth, returned to him in age, when he had run his unparalleled round of pleasure, and, if tradition errs not, made these maxims the solace of his graver declining years, and through him a treasury of wisdom for succeeding ages. Difficult as some parts of the book of Ecclesiastes are, there is nothing clearer than its grand termination (xii. 13):—"Let us hear

the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man"—the *summum bonum*—the end of creation and existence.

There is, perhaps, no man of middle life, not brutalized by sensual delights, or insane with cupidity, who does not sometimes feel himself in the darkness expressed in the latter verses of the preceding chapter, which open the way for our text. Everything that he has touched has turned into disgusting nothingness. Many things have been tried, and he has almost swept the entire curve of human pursuits and promises, as to their kinds; but by none of them has he found his inward condition bettered. In his circuit through the vast edifice of this world, from flight to flight and gallery to gallery, he has locked up a thousand doors, and sealed them with the inscription—*There is nothing here worth entering for*. He has seen friends fall dead on the very threshold of their hopes, and has exclaimed with the great British politician, when a rival was stricken down at the very hustings, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!" Or, if a scholar, he has muttered to himself Pindar's saying, "Man is a shadow!"* He has outlived such mutations, as to rob him of all security about the family or the property he may leave, being in doubt what change in government or laws the next turn of the popular wheel may bring up when he shall be in his vault; but no words can better convey the meaning of his heart, in such dismal twilight hours, than those of

* Σκιά ἄνθρωπος.

the preacher (vi. 11.) :—" Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in this life; all the number of the days of the life of his vanity, which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun."*

The Stoics, those famous philosophers of old time, the Pharisees of Greece and Rome, undertook to turn nature out of doors, and as trouble was manifestly unavoidable, to persuade themselves and others that pain was no evil. Could they have held men at this point, it had been something gained, but the lesson of the Porch was ignominiously recanted in the first moment of keen anguish. The wiser teaching of the Hebrews had no such absurdity. It admitted that pain was pain, and that evil was evil. But it did not rush to the opposite extreme, like Epicurus, and assert that pleasure is the chief good, and that we must make the most of carnal joys, employing virtue only to enhance and secure the exquisite satisfactions of this life. From first to last God's inspired system takes man as he is, appeals to the common uncontradicted experience of all souls, in all ages, admits the ills of life, shows their origin, and, above all, indicates the way to make them useful, and the certain means of escaping them for ever.

Our inspired monitor closes the eye on neither side. He looks at pleasure, he looks at pain, and with a wise discernment of each. Both doors are open to him: he hears the noise of revelry, and

* Margin.

the lamentations of woe; and the invaluable record which he makes is, that *Man derives more good from sorrow, wisely considered, than from the excesses of pleasure*—a proposition which we shall find it profitable to examine. It is variously expressed. Sorrow is set over against laughter; the house of mourning over against the house of mirth; the rebuke of the wise over against the music of fools; the day of death over against the day of birth: all tending, however, to this, that trouble, pain, and grief, have their bright side, and that giddy indulgence and merriment carry a sting. In this comparison of pain and pleasure, the result is so opposed to the opinion and feelings of all the world, as to need some show of good reasons, which we are now about to attempt. With God's blessing it may be a relief to some wounded spirit.

1. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because a great part of worldly merriment is no better than folly.* Here we take no extreme or ascetic ground. It would be morose, and sour, and unchristian, to scowl at the gambols of infancy, or to hush the laugh of youth, on fit occasions. Even here, however, the wise guardian will sometimes lay his gentle but repressive hand on the buoyant spirit, and teach juvenile exuberance that it may go the length of self-injury, and end in trouble. Cheerfulness is no where forbidden, even in adult life; and we perhaps offend God oftener by our frowns than by our smiles. He who believes that his soul is in a safe state, and who receives his daily mercies with thankfulness may well rejoice. The very care of

health demands the relaxation and stimulus of reasonable mirth. Solomon himself has called it a medicine. But you all do know that there is a merriment which admits no rule, confines itself by no limit, shocks every maxim even of sober reason, absorbs the whole powers, wastes the time, and debilitates the intellect, even if it do not lead to supreme love of pleasure, profligacy, and general intemperance and voluptuousness. A wise heathen, or a sedate North American Indian, would form the same judgment of our city amusements, in which thousands are expended, and in which the resonance of midnight music, the questionable heats of flushed performers, and the unhealthy lassitude ensuing on extreme mirth and laborious display, remind reading men of a hundred biting observations of ancient Gentile satirists on the assemblies of their day. But the world will do anything; will wear any dress or undress; will make any outlay; will teach its children any posture-making or grimace; will run any risk of destroying souls, which may be prescribed by those who lead the mode. And this they call pleasure; and this is aped by church-professors, who would rather die than be left behind in the race of expensive and luxurious fashion. The prattle, the "foolish jesting, which is not convenient," the song and outcry, inflamed by wine and rivalry, and the "chambering and wantonness" which, lower down in the scale, come of these, and show their tendency, are (I say not in the eye of the Christian or of Christ,

but in the eye of common reason) too trifling for an immortal mind.

2. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because much of worldly merriment tends to no intellectual or moral good.* And must I prove to you that intellectual and moral good are the great end? Must I tell you that you are not all body, all brute?—that you have something within which is not animal or sensual?—that you are made to know an Incarnate God, and to be like him? I will not so insult my audience; I will not so degrade my office as to press the proof. Wordly pleasures, and the expressions of these, do nothing for the immaterial part. When you have put the best face on them, they leave you where they found you. But ah! this is far too favorable a construction. The oft-repeated gaieties, and sports, and dissipations, which are included under the terms of the wise man, and which are for substance the same in Jerusalem and Princeton, leave no one the same. The utmost that can be pretended is that they amuse and recreate. We admit, we applaud recreation and amusement, but within the bounds of reason, within the limits of religion, by means which are above doubt, and in ways which offend not the church or the world. In their very notion, they are exceptions, and should be sparing.

But there are a thousand recreative processes connected with healthful exercise, with knowledge, with the study of beautiful nature, with the practice and contemplation of art, and with the fellowship of friends, which unbend the tense nerve and re-

fresh the wasted spirits, while at the same time they instruct the mind and soften or tranquillize the heart. Not so with the unbridled joys which find vent in redoubled peals of mirth and obstreperous carousal, or in the lighter play of chattered nonsense and never-ending giggle. Make such intercourse the business of life (and with some, if you include preparations and councils for the party, and subsequent words and doings, it is the business of whole seasons), and you degrade the understanding of these persons to such a degree, that you err if you expect ever to find them equal to a discussion of anything more tasking, to what they call their mind, than the last spicy news, or the last provocative novel, or the last libertine dance. But, even among the intellects thus mollified by mirth and pleasure, there is scarcely one so far gone as to plead that these gaieties benefit the spiritual part; that they make conscience more calm, death more easy, or eternal life more sure. The "house of feasting," the "house of mirth," whether open by day or night, offers no advantage to the soul, and the SOUL IS THE MAN.

3. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because worldly mirth is short.* In the Eastern countries, where fuel is very scarce, every combustible shrub, brush, and bramble is seized upon for culinary fires. Of these the blaze is bright, hot, and soon extinct. Such is worldly mirth. "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool." It is noisy—more noisy than if there were anything in it. But it soon ceases. Physical limits are put

to gay pleasures. Mirth was meant to be not the food but the condiment. The loudest laughter cannot laugh forever. Lungs and diaphragm forbid and rebel. St. Vitus himself, in popish story, saw an end to his penal dance. There is a time of life when such pleasures become as difficult as they are ungraceful; and there is not in society a more ridiculous object, even in its own circle, than a tottering, antiquated, bedizened devotee of fashion. Grief comes in and shortens the amusement. Losses and reverses shorten it. And, if there were nothing else, pleasure must be short, because it cannot be extended to Judgment and Eternity. I apprehend there is as little loud laughter in heaven as in hell. In our wiser hours we think of permanent joy under far different and more tranquil types and emblems.

4. *Worldly mirth is unsatisfying.* This is what is chiefly meant by the word VANITY. "This also is Vanity." Solomon tried these things, and inscribed on them, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," *i. e.*, emptiness and disappointment. It is a very common experience of thousands—always drinking, always athirst—who never breathe it to their neighbors, and who yet bring up their children to let down buckets into the same empty wells. The world's pleasures are not what they imagined. Even money, which they thought omnipotent, (thus making it *God*, and thus proving covetousness to be what sacred Scripture calls it, *idolatry*); divine *money* will not buy solid peace. The man wonders why the toys and rattles which pleased

him once, please him now no more. They are vanity, and all is vanity; and every day that he lives longer will make it more formidably vanity. Now, pray observe, the case is directly the reverse with regard to sound intellectual and spiritual enjoyments; for which the capacity is perpetually increasing with its indulgence. But he who has laughed loudest and longest, comes at length, though from habit still wearing the guise and uttering the ejaculations of joy, to know, with a grinding consciousness, that "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness."—Prov. xiv. 13.

"The heart of fools" (ver. 4) "is, nevertheless, in the house of mirth;" but thus far accompanying Solomon on this path which he knew so well, we have found nothing which should place it among the resorts of true wisdom. It is not the house to live in, or to die in. One might stop there on a journey, but will not seek it as an abode. Perhaps, after all, you have undervalued and mistaken that other house, of which the wise man speaks. There is no brilliant illumination on its front; no sounds of reveling come from its windows; its avenues are shaded by the willow, the cypress, and the yew. From the broad road few go aside to seek this sequestered mansion; indeed all who resort hither seem first to enter against their will. Yet many who emerge from this covert bear marks of being sadder and wiser men. Under this roof they have been brought to a pause; have learnt a lesson; have risen to an elevation; have found a friend;

and have acquired an inheritance. So that they are less fearful when summoned to enter again; less ready to chase the butterfly on their former highroad; and more prepared to give as their experience: "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning." We say then,

5. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because sorrow breeds reflection.* The man who sorrows, must muse. Even the customs of society further this. Inconsiderate, headlong people are sometimes so changed in a single day by affliction, as to be a wonder to others and to themselves. Now this is a great point, because much of irreligion arises from want of thought. That frivolous, laughing creature scarcely knew that she had a soul, until hurried into this bower of tears, and set down beside some urn of sorrowful memories, and made to hear, in every murmuring leaf and breeze, the admonition, "Consider your ways." Worldly pleasure is so much the reverse, that its very province is to kill thought. There can be no contemplation amidst the riot of self-indulgence; but the house of mourning is a meditative abode. Its doors are many. Its inmates are of every tribe, age, and character. Each mourns apart: "the heart knoweth its own bitterness." But each has been brought to consideration. The sorrowing man has at least found out this—that he is vulnerable. There is no piety in this; but commonly there can be no piety without it. He who falls wounded, is prompt to examine the arrow; and sometimes sees it labelled with his *sin*. Before they were afflicted, a large proportion of

God's people went astray ; and, if they live long enough, they can all declare, that the solemn pauses of their bereavement, illness, poverty, shame, and fear, have been better to them than the dainties of the house of feasting. •

6. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because sorrow brings lessons of wisdom.* Sufferers not only think but learn. Many sermons could not record all the lessons of affliction. It is indeed a melting of the whole surface, fitting it for the impression of every religious truth. Considered as the fruit of chastisement, and as coming from an offended but loving Master and Judge, its chief teaching is undoubtedly that of reproof. It tells us wherein we have offended. It takes us away from the flattering crowd, and from seducing charmers, and keenly reaches, with its probe, the hidden iniquity. This is less pleasing than worldly joy, but it is more profitable. Our best advisers are those who are never found among the frolicsome and luxurious, but who take us by the hand in the darkened chamber. Ver. 5, "It is better to bear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools." The Bible is the chief book in the house of mourning—read by some there who have never read it elsewhere, and revealing to its most assiduous students new truths, shining forth in affliction like stars which have been hidden in daylight. But, above all, the house of mourning is the chosen resort of the great Teacher, who visited Martha and Mary, and who never discloses his face amidst the glare of convivial torches, or wastes his pensive tones among the

clamours of fashionable pleasure. Many ages before God was incarnate, Messiah speaks of himself in prophecy, as the instructor of the sorrowing: Isa. l. 4, "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned (the power of instruction), that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." It is a sufficient indemnity for all losses, if in the house of mourning we meet with *Him*, who does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. In days of pleasure we seldom think of *death*. Who would venture on the word in any crowd of persons engaged for hours in the solemn business of amusing themselves? But it is the subject of a great lesson, which is apt to be brought vividly before us in the hour of bereavement or in the sick-chamber; and numbering of our days is indispensable in order that we apply our hearts unto wisdom. Hence our context: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for that (to wit, *death*, v. 1) is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart." These are but samples of the wisdom to which we are introduced by sorrow.

7. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because sorrow amends the heart and life.* Not by any efficiency of good; of such efficiency, pain, whether of body or mind, knows nothing; but by becoming the vehicle of divine influences. I have not yet read or heard of a single soul renewed by the garrulous assembly, or in the jovial hall. But how multitudinous would be the procession, if we could see at once all who have issued new creatures from the

house of mourning! Even *there*—some there are—so blasted by depraved passion, and so rocky in selfishness, as to brave every softening influence of truth, though poured over them by the very hand of a chastising God. But yet the ways of providence are such, that troubled spirits, bathed in tears, are repeatedly made to cry with a joy which swallows up all foregoing griefs, “Before we were afflicted we went astray, but *now* have we kept thy law!”

Laughter is not—cannot be—but sorrow daily is a means of grace—a channel for heavenly love and divine truth to convey itself into hearts emptied of earthly good, till the full soul, amazed at its own happiness, despises its former delusions, and glories even in tribulation; yielding to wave after wave of the gracious current, and naming these, Patience, Experience, Hope, and Love of God, shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Shrink not then from the chastening of the Lord, my brother, my sister, despise not, faint not. Mistake not the gentle hand which drops no disquietude or pang, even of a moment, but by the consent and at the bidding of One that standeth by, sustaining the throbbing, swooning patient in his own arms, and yielding himself to the touch of our infirmities, the rather, as He was once tried in all points, like as we are. “By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.”

It is the common testimony of Christians, that they seldom learn very fast in Christ’s school, except when they are under the rod. On a sudden,

the believer comes to consider how much he has been prospered, and how different his case is from what he remembers. "Then," says he, "I was perpetually turning to the most sorrowful passages of Job, David, and Jeremiah. Now I am in peace. My table is laden—my cup overflows. Cold and nakedness are only figures of poetry. If not in wealth, I am exempt from embarrassment. My senses and my health are preserved. It is long since I was in mourning for a near friend." Thus Job said: "I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch." The prosperous believer owns all this, and looks around him, at first with surprise and complacency, but then with disquietude. For he sees likewise that in some degree he has forgotten God his Saviour. The Bible has become less precious. Prayer is less frequent, importunate, and indispensable. Daily taking up the cross is unknown. Sympathy with the wretched is less deep. Self-importance is on the increase. Love of the world, in some of its shapes, is gaining strength. God is more absent from his thoughts—Christ is scarcely longed for, as in hours of humility and tenderness; the Holy Spirit is less cried out for, and panted after, as a *Comforter*. In short, prosperity has brought leanness into the soul.

Happy are they who take heed in time, and profit under the whisper of admonition, or the gentle threatening. If not, Christ loves his own too well to leave them without stripes. And what a wou-

derful virtue there is in the rod, when it is in Christ's hands! The very beginnings of chastisement sometimes drive the wandering child back to the bosom of infinite affection. Continued dangers, long languishings and disappointments, relapses into grief, sudden alarms, keen anguish, redoubled visitations, in stroke upon stroke, all go home to his soul, by the mighty power of sanctifying grace. In his affliction he seeks God; in his affliction he cannot live a moment without Christ. There is such an ordered connexion between sin and sorrow, that from his sorrows he goes back to his sins; and hours of pain and fear become hours of repenting. If he repined before, he can repine no longer. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our way, and turn again to the Lord!" He prays; if his trial is great, he prays without ceasing. Though he never felt smaller in his own eyes, God is nevertheless, by these very means, exalting him and instructing him, and deepening the work of grace in his heart. That prime part of his spiritual education is making rapid advances, namely, the subduing of his will to the will of God. He is becoming more indifferent to wordly good or evil; more willing that God should rule and dispose; more fixed on the great spiritual and eternal ends of life; more ready to prefer holiness (though by painful means) to joy and ease; and more resolved to make his all consist in knowing, serving, and enjoying the Lord his Redeemer. If, my brethren, a visit to the House of Sorrow makes the face of

Jesus more familiar or more beloved, then shrink not from putting your hand in His, and following Him even into deeper shadows than any you have yet known; for, above all beings, it is He who knows the most of affliction.

8. *Sorrow is better than laughter, because sorrow likens us to Him whom we love.* You know His name. He is the *Man of Sorrows*—the companion or brother of grief.—(Is. liii.) His great work, even our salvation, was not more by power or holiness than by sorrows. He took our flesh, that He might bear our sorrows. And I have sometimes been humbled to think, that we resemble Christ in nothing so nearly as in suffering. Not in holiness; alas, how distant the imitation! Not in wisdom, or devotion, or self-sacrificing love. But sometimes we are allowed to fill up (Coloss. i. 24) “that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh”—to drain some dregs of his ocean-cup—to have a faint, suggestive semblance of his pains—in a lesser sense, to be made conformable unto His death. We abjure all Popish notions of penance, self-punishment, sharing mediatorial agonies, adding to infinite merits. We abhor them as constructive blasphemy; but we cling to the belief, that in the progress of the mystical union, wherein “the head of every man is Christ,” there is even here a conformity between the Head and the members, and that this conformity is partly effected in the House of Mourning. And then mark the consequences: “As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” “For even

hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye also may be glad with excess of joy." If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. If continued, or repeated, or unusual trials be your lot, till it become the very habit of your mind to look for every cloud to bring a storm, think it not strange; be not tossed away from your anchorage; let faith and hope hold fast; give God the glory which belongs to His paternal wisdom, and Jesus the reliance which befits His dying compassion; and know of a surety, that every redoubling wave of grief is definitely adjusted in time and measure, to carry you to that certain elevation of joy which could not be reached without it. Deeply feel that there is a guidance of unerring wisdom in these particular pains, which makes them the exact remedies for your evils, and the powerful instruments, through grace, of bringing you nearer to the Lord; and while you tremble, learn to say, "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?"

9. *Sorrow is better than laughter* (last of all), *because sorrow ends in joy.* There is a sorrow of the world which worketh death; there are earthly pangs which are but the beginning of sorrows; there are losses which go on increasing for ever, and chastisements which prepare for judgment. Nevertheless, there are those things in grief which open towards heaven, and those things in the

House of Mourning which the wise man will lay to his heart! Where God gives faith, He gives affliction, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; and these tribulations are parts of the chain which binds the soul to its coming glory. The fiery trial through a furnace is for the purging away of the dross, that there may come forth from the crucible a golden vessel for the Master's use. Nothing can add to our holiness without adding to our eventual joy. *How* this operates we do not always see; perhaps seldom. But the process is not the less certain. The very resistance of a virtuous mind to adversity—the bracing of the frame—the breasting of the torrent—the patience, the resignation, the hope amidst the billows, the love that kisses the chastening hand, the persistent obedience that works on against wind and tide—as well in storm as in tranquillity—the high resolve and courage that mount more boldly out of the surge of grief, the silent endurance of the timid and the frail, when out of weakness they are made strong—these, and such as these, increase the capacity for future holiness and heavenly bliss. Of those ransomed souls, who open the bosom to the largest delights of Paradise, it shall be said, “These are they that have come out of great tribulation.” Such are not the fruits of laughter and mirth; nor such the rewards of the unregenerate and the thoughtless. They knew not that their heaven was all in this life, till the short-lived bubble had exploded. Happy had it been for them, if their occasional sorrows had led them to reflection; but they were unwise: “The

heart of fools is in the house of mirth." It is a serious reason why we should set a watch against immoderate joy, and the pleasures and pomps of this life; and why even youth should repress its maddening thirst for perpetual gaiety and voluptuous self-pleasing.

We need not court sorrow, nor rush upon it unbidden; it will come uninvited. But when it comes, we should turn the seeming enemy into a friend; we should prepare for it—it is inevitable; we should profit by it—it is edifying. Sad, beyond the common lot, is the case of that man who receives his troubles in hardness of heart, with indifference, with sullenness, or with contempt; who, "being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck;" who sins amidst the murmurs of Divine rebuke, and bares his heart to the bolt of God's anger. No one can come out of a great affliction without being signally better, or greatly worse. It were as well to laugh with the idle, as to sit in the seat of the scornful, in the midst of deserved warnings. If anything in life shall swell the dire account of the sinner, it will be his neglected trials and sufferings, every one of which should have been to him a voice from heaven. Trouble after trouble may come on a man, and leave him less and less impressive, but not less guilty. For a while God may even leave him to himself, cease to chastise, and suffer his latter days to be serene in apathy and self-pleasing; but wisdom hears a voice from the throne, saying, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt yet more and more! Ephraim

is joined to his idols: LET HIM ALONE!" He may be rich, he may be envied, he may say, Soul, take thine ease, to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. He may gain the whole world, but he has lost his own soul!

Give me, O God, the sorrows of Thy children, with Thy love, Thy Son, and Thy Heaven, rather than the false peace and the hollow prosperity of them whom thou forsakest!

But here is a drop of sweetness, from Christ's own hand, let fall into the cup of anguish. Take it, and rejoice! Has that cup been bitter? *Afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Resign yourself to whatever God may appoint, "knowing that through much tribulation you must enter into the kingdom of God." For the first breath of heaven will obliterate every painful remembrance of the longest lifetime of distress.