

LET NOT
YOUR HEARTS
BE TROUBLED



WRITTEN BY
RICHARD SIBBES

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by Richard Sibbes

Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.—
JOHN 14:1.

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THE AUTHOR'S PRAYER BEFORE HIS SERMON

GRACIOUS and holy Father! which hast sanctified this day for thy own service and worship, and for the furthering of us in the way of salvation; and hast made a most gracious promise, that when 'two or three be gathered together in thy name, thou wilt be there in the midst of them: '* vouchsafe, then, we beseech thee, the performance of this thy promise unto us, now gathered together in thy name, to pray unto thee, to hear and speak thy holy and blessed word, and so sanctify our hearts by thy Holy Spirit at this time, that we may perform these holy services as shall be most to thy glory and our own comfort. Unworthy we are in ourselves to appear in thy most holy presence, both by reason of the sins of our nature, and the sins of our lives, even since that time that we have had some knowledge of thy blessed truth; which holy truth we have not entertained nor professed as we should have done, but oftentimes against the light that thou hast kindled in our hearts by thy Word and Spirit, we have committed many sins; and, amongst the rest, we confess our sins against thy holy ordinance; our not preparing our hearts unto it, nor

profiting by it as we should and might have done; giving thy Majesty hereby just cause to curse thy own holy ordinance unto us. But thou art a gracious and merciful Father unto us in Jesus Christ, in the abundance of thy love and mercy. In him we come unto thee, beseeching thee, for his sake, not to give us up to these inward and spiritual judgments; but vouchsafe us a true insight into our own estates, without deceiving of our own souls, and from thence, true humiliation. And then we beseech thee to speak peace unto us in thy Christ, and say to our souls by thy Holy Spirit, that thou art our salvation. And for clearer evidence that we are in thy favour, let us find the blessed work of thy Holy Spirit opening our understandings, clearing our judgments, kindling our affections, discovering our corruptions, framing us every way to be such as thou mayest take pleasure and delight in. And because thou hast ordained thy holy word 'to be a light unto our feet, and a guide and direction to all our ways and paths,'[†] and to be a powerful means to bring us more and more out of the thralldom of sin and Satan, to the blessed liberty of thy children, we beseech thee, therefore, to bless thy word to these and all other good ends and purposes for which thou hast ordained it. And grant, we beseech thee, that now at this time out of it we may learn thy holy will; and then labour to frame our lives thereafter, as may be most to thy glory and our own comfort, and that for Jesus Christ his sake, thine only Son, and our blessed Saviour. Amen.

THE FIRST SERMON

Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.—JOHN 14:1.

HOLY men, as they be 'trees of righteousness,' Isa. 61:3, and desire to be fruitful at all times, so most especially towards their end; having but a short time to live in the world, they be willing to leave the world with a good savour. So it was with Jacob. So with Moses, as appears in his excellent Song made before his death. You may see it in King Solomon and David before their deaths. But especially in our Saviour. The nearer to heaven, the more heavenly-minded. When grace and glory are ready to join, the one to be swallowed up of the other, then grace is most glorious.

All the passages of Christ are comfortable; but none more comfortable than those sermons of his, that were delivered a little before his death. Of all words that come from loving men to those they love, such are most remarkable as be spoken when they be ready to die; because then men are most serious, they being about the most serious business. Then they be wisest, and best able to judge; for the consideration of their end makes, them wise. And therefore, saith God, 'O that my people were wise to consider their latter end!' Deut. 32:29. And, 'teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart to wisdom,' saith Moses, Ps. 90:12. And indeed there is no wisdom to that; for it teacheth men to pass a right judgment upon all things in the world. They be no longer drunk with the prosperity of the world; they be no longer swayed with opinion, but they pass an estimation of things as they are.

Besides, love at that time is especially set on work. Therefore our blessed Saviour being now to offer himself a sacrifice on the cross, he sweetly delivereth these words before his departure, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.' Let us hear them therefore, as the dying words of our Saviour to his disciples, and in his disciples, to us all, as in the 17th of St John. 'I pray not for them only, but for all such as shall believe in me, through their word,' ver. 20. For his comforts concern us all, as his prayers did.

This chapter is sweetly mixed of comforts, counsels, and gracious promises; but especially it affords matter of comfort. Mark who it is that gives this comfort,—our blessed Saviour. And at what time,—when he was to sacrifice himself.

What admirable love, and care, and pity is in this merciful high Priest of ours, that should so think of comforting his disciples, as to forget himself, and his own approaching death! It is the nature of love so to do; and we should imitate our blessed Saviour in it. You see how he laboureth to strengthen them, especially towards his end. He knew they would then need it most, and. therefore he endeavoureth by all means to strengthen them, both by counsel, as here; by the passover, and by a newly instituted sacrament, 1 Cor. 11:23.

But what need we wonder at this in our blessed Saviour, who so regarded us, as he left heaven; took our nature; became man; put himself under the

law; became sin?

The words contain a dissuasion from over-much trouble, and then a direction to believe in God, and Christ. Comforts must be founded on strong reasons. For we are reasonable and understanding creatures; and God works on us answerably to our principles. He stays our spirits by reasons stronger than the grievance. For what is comfort but that which establisheth and upholds the soul against that evil which is feared or felt, from a greater strength of reason which overmastereth the evil? If the grievance be but even with the comfort, then the consolation works not. But Christ's comforts are of an higher nature than any trouble can be. For he not only dissuades from trouble, but also persuades to confidence, 'Be of good comfort, I have overcome the world,' John 16:33.

The occasion of this comforting them, and of removing their discouragements, was this. In the former chapter, he had told them, that he should leave them, and that they should leave him; the best of them all, even Peter, should take offence at him, and deny him, and that all the rest should leave him. From whence they might gather, that the approaching trouble should be great, that should cause Peter to deny him, and them all to forsake him. And thence must needs arise great scandals. Our Saviour saw by the power of his Godhead into their hearts, and like enough, in their looks he saw a spirit of discouragement seizing on them, for his departure, and Peter's fall, their forsaking of him, and the persecutions that would follow. And therefore Christ discerning this dejection of their spirits, he raiseth them by this, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.' The heavenly Physician of our souls applieth then the remedy, when it is the fittest season.

There was some good in their trouble; something naturally, and something spiritually good. There was ground of natural trouble at the departure of such a friend, at the hearing of such persecutions. For we are flesh, not steel; and in that sense, Christ was troubled himself, to shew the truth of his manhood. Nay, trouble is the seasoning of all heavenly comforts, so as there were no comforts, if there were no trouble; and therefore this natural trouble was not disallowed by Christ. There was likewise something spiritually good, in this trouble. They loved their Master, who they saw was going away, and they knew it was a shameful

thing for them to forsake him. There was love in them towards him all this while. Christ could discern gold in ore, some good in a great deal of ill; and therefore loved them again, and manifested it by comforting them, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.' They were right in this principle, that all comfort depends on the presence of Christ. And so the main ground of the sorrow was good. For as all heavenly light, and heat, and influence comes from the sun (it being all gathered into that body); so all heavenly comforts are gathered into Christ, and therefore must come to us from Christ's presence, bodily or spiritually. Their error was in tying all comfort to a bodily, a corporal presence; as if it were necessary for the sun to come down and abide upon the earth, to bestow its heat and influence. And therefore he tells them, that though he was to go away, yet he would send another comforter, the Holy Ghost.

And then they were overcome by an opinion that it would go worse with them when Christ was gone. Therefore Christ telleth them that it should be better for them; and indeed it was better. Christ did not take away his blessed presence for their disadvantage, but for their good. God never takes anything from his children, but he maketh it up in a better kind. If Christ takes away his bodily presence, he leaveth his spiritual presence, and more abundantly.

So that, though they were led with sensible things, and what they saw not they could hardly believe, yet Christ looks to what is good in them, and accepts it. He saw what was naught in them, with a purpose to purge it; what was naturally weak in them, to strengthen it; and therefore he counsels them, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

The thing that I will first observe out of the words is, that the best Christians are subject to be troubled, to be pensive, and dejected more than should be.

Indeed our Saviour Christ himself was troubled, but his trouble was like the shaking of clear water in a crystal glass. There was no mud in the bottom. But our trouble is of another kind, and apt to be inordinate.

We may carry this truth through the whole Scripture, and shew how Hannah was in bitterness of spirit, which exceeded so, that Eli, a good

man, mistakes her, supposing that she was overcome with drink, 1 Sam. 1:13.

Hezekiah, a good king, was in such bitterness that, like a crane or swallow, he did chatter, Isa. 38:14. And David complained that his spirit was overwhelmed within him, Ps. 77:3; and Jonah cries out that he was 'in the belly of hell,' Jonah 2:2.

And God will have it so, partly for conformity to our Head, and partly that we may be known to ourselves; that we may discern where our weakness lieth, and so be better instructed to seek to him in whom our strength lieth.

He suffers us, likewise, to be troubled for the preventing of spiritual sins, pride and security, and the like.

And partly in regard of others, that we may be pitiful. Christ was man for this end, that he might be a merciful High Priest; and we have much more need to know and feel the infirmities that are in ourselves, that we may be merciful to others; that we may not be harsh and censorious upon the troubles of others; from want of which consideration proceeded Eli's rashness in passing that censure upon Hannah.

But how shall we know that our hearts are more troubled than they should be? For I lay this for a ground: That we may sin in being over much troubled at things for which it is a sin not to be troubled. If they had not been at all affected with the absence of Christ, it had been a sin, and no less than stupidity; yet it was their sin to be over much troubled. In a word, therefore, for answer, a trouble is sinful when it hinders us in duty or from duty; when it hinders us in duties to God or to others; or from duty, that is, when the soul is disturbed by it, and, like an instrument out of tune, made fit for nothing, or like a limb out of joint, that moves not only uncomelily, but painfully, and becomes unfit for action. When we find this in our trouble, we may know it is not as it should be.

There be some affections especially, that are causes of over much trouble; fear of evils to come, sorrow for evils that at present seize on us. Now,

when these do hinder us from duty, or trouble us in duty, they be exorbitant and irregular.

Naturally, affections should be helps to duty, they being the winds that carry the soul on, and the spiritual wings of the soul. So that a man without affections is like the dead sea, that moves not at all. But then they must be regulated and ordered; they must be raised up and laid down at the command of a spiritual understanding. When they be raised up of themselves, by shallow and false conceits and opinions, they be irregular. When they be raised up by a right judgment of things, and laid down again when they ought to be, then they are right and orderly.

Now, besides the hurt that is in such affections themselves, Satan loves to fish in these troubled waters. The affections are never stirred and raised up irregularly and exorbitantly but Satan joins with them. And therefore we have need to keep our affections of grief and fear within their due bounds. Satan is a curious observer of any excess in our passions; and in just correction, to speak the mildest of it, God lets loose Satan to join with that excess. And therefore the apostle saith wisely, 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil,' Eph. 4:26, because as soon as ever we give way to any excess of affection, Satan fishes in these waters, and joins with that excess. He being a spirit of darkness, loves to dwell in the soul when it is in darkness. And therefore, when it is clouded by passion, as all passions beyond their due measure are as clouds that darken the soul, Satan, that works in darkness, then seizes on the soul presently.

That was Saul's case. He was envious at David, being of a proud and haughty spirit, that could not endure competition; and Satan took his time to work on him. And therefore it is said he was troubled with an evil spirit, 1 Sam. 16:23.

But trouble of spirit is too large an argument. I will not now stand upon it; only I will shew that we should not yield to excess of trouble any way. And the reasons are:—

First. We wrong our own selves when we give way to grief and sorrow, that is immoderate and inordinate. The soul is, as it were, put out of joint

by it. We make actions difficult unto us. The wheels of the soul are thereby taken off. Joy and comfort are, as it were, oil to the soul. And therefore Nehemiah saith, 'the joy of the Lord is your strength,' chap. 8:10. When, therefore, we give way to fear and grief, and such passions, it weakeneth the soul in action. And then again they are, as it were, a cloud betwixt God's love and us; and so the soul is hindered of much comfort and enlargement. Joy enlargeth the soul, but grief straiteneth it. Comfort raiseth up the soul, grief and sorrow weigh down the soul. A Christian should be of a straight, upright, and enlarged spirit. When, therefore, the spirit is straitened, when it is pressed down and dejected, a Christian is not in his right mind, in his due and proper frame.

Second. Besides, if we regard God himself, we should take heed that the soul be not thus distempered; for by over-much sorrow and grief, what a great deal of dishonour do we to God, in proceeding from a mistake of his goodness and providence! And with over-much fear and sorrow, there is always joined murmuring and discontent, and a spirit unsubdued to God, and his Spirit. There is a wronging, as of his care in providence, so of his graciousness in his promises. There is a grieving of his good Spirit; a questioning of his government, as if he did not dispose of things as he should; when we will have it one way, and God will have it another way. There is likewise a great deal of pride in dejections and discontent. The most discontented spirit in the world is the devil, and none prouder. It argues a great deal of pride and sullenness to be affectedly sad, and dejected; as if such worthy and excellent persons as we should be so afflicted: or there were greater cause for us to be dejected than raised up. Whereas if we balance our grounds of comfort, being Christians, as we should do, they would appear incomparably above the grounds of our discouragements. So it is a wrong to God, and his truth, and his gracious sweet government, to yield to a dejected sullen disposition.

It is likewise a wrong to others. For it maketh us unfit for any office of love to them, when we plod and pore so much upon our discontentments, and drink up our spirits, and eat up our hearts. It disables the soul, taking away not only the strength, but also the willingness of the soul; besides the scandal that it brings on religion, and the best ways; as if there were not enough in religion to comfort the soul.

But you will say, religion breeds a great deal of trouble and pensiveness. It is indeed the speech of the shallow people of the world, 'religion makes men sad.'

And it is true, that as our Saviour Christ here had made his disciples sad, by telling them that he would leave them; and that a great scandal would be taken at his cross, and shameful suffering; but yet withal, bids them not be troubled, and gives them grounds of comfort; so religion will make men sad; for it discovers truths, and sad truths. Aye, but the same religion will cheer them up again, yea, it casts them down, that it may raise them up. The sun in the morning raiseth clouds; but when it hath strength it scatters them. God intending solid and substantial comfort, doth first beget troubles, and discovers true grounds of trouble; he lets us see that all is not well. But still as religion brings any trouble, so it brings with it great remedies against these troubles; and that God that raiseth a soul to see just matter of grief, will by his Spirit shew its due and right portion, in comfort. Thus, to be sorrowful and sad, in some measure is from religion; but that which will prevent the excess and over-measure of it, is from religion likewise.

So that it is a scandal to religion to be overmuch dejected.

Third. Besides, though we should be troubled for sin, yet to be overmuch troubled for sin is a dishonour to Christ, and to the love of God in Christ; for it is as if we had not in him a sufficient remedy for that great malady. As, be it grief for the troubles of the church; as not to be troubled at the affliction of Joseph, is branded for a sin; so to be too much cast down, as if Christ had cast off the government from his shoulders, or had not the name of the church on his breast in heaven (as the high priest had the names of the twelve tribes in his breastplate); to be so cast down as to be taken off from prayer, and from the use of all good means to help the church, this is sinful. So also when grief for sin makes us forget the mercies of God in Christ; to forget the healing virtue of him our brazen serpent; to neglect to search our grounds of comforts, and to yield to Satan, to temptation. Overmuch sadness, even though it be for sin, or for the church, it is hurtful and scandalous.

Joshua was much cast down when he saw it went not well with Israel; but

'Get thee up, Joshua,' saith God, 'what dost thou lying here?' Up and do thy duty; consider what is amiss! There is an Achan in the camp. And so when things go not well, let not your thoughts be conversant about the matters of trouble, so much as about your duty. So we see it is incident to God's people to be overmuch troubled, and we see also the reasons why it should not be so, because it is injurious to God, to ourselves, and others every way.

And after all this, there is much reason in this, that Christ hath forbidden it, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

Obj. But Christ could as well have cured it, being God, as easily as forbidden it.

Ans. It is true, but he cures it by forbidding it. With the words, there went forth a spirit of comfort into their hearts; an influence of grace accompanied his commands, for the word and Spirit go together. Christ deals with men by men. The Spirit of comfort is a spirit of truth; and therefore God comforts by truths. He gives us sanctified understandings and affections; and then works on them by sanctified truths.

And sometimes Christ cures it by real comforts; for comforts are either rational, which are fetched from grounds, which faith ministers; or real, from the presence of anything which comforts; as the sight of friends, or the accommodating of us in anything wherein we see the love of God conveyed. How many real comforts doth God bestow, when he fitteth us with conveniences in our way to heaven, so that we may read the love of God in them! God doth not only comfort us by his gracious promise, by his word and sacraments, administering heavenly comforts by them; but also by the conveying of himself and his love, by outward comforts that we enjoy in the world. Howsoever carnal men abuse them (making all things to work for the worst); yet that love, that intends heaven, sweetens all things in the passage to heaven, to his children; because they see the love of God in the least comfort.

Again, observe from this here, 'let not your hearts be troubled,' what is the seat of comfort, the heart. The seat of comfort is the seat of grief. There must be an application of comfort suitable to the grief, and the

heart must be comforted.

And therefore in Isa. 40:1, 2, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, speak to the heart.' As the grief sinks and soaks to the root of the heart; so do Christ's comforts, like true cordials indeed, that go as deep as the grievance. If the grief goes to the heart, the comfort must go as deep. Now God, the Father of spirits, and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, knows and searches our spirits. They know all the corners of the heart. They can banish fear and sorrow out of every cranny; and bring light, heat, and influence into every part of the soul. And therefore Christ saith, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

Now for the ways whereby we must labour to comfort our hearts (amongst many that I might speak of), I will name a few.

First of all, there must be a due search into the heart, of the grounds of our trouble; for oftentimes Christians are troubled, they cannot tell wherefore; as children that will complain they know not why. I speak not of hypocrites, that will complain of that which is not a true grief to them; like some birds that make greatest noise, when they be furthest from their nests. But of some poor Christians that are troubled, but distinctly know not the ground of it. But search the heart ingenuously and truly to the bottom of it, and see if there be not some Achan in the camp; some sin in the heart (for sin is like wind; when it gets into the veins, it will have vent, and a troublesome one; and so will sin, if it get into the soul). It is that indeed which causeth all trouble. And therefore search your hearts thoroughly; what sin lieth there unrepented of, and for which you have not been humbled.

2. And when you have found out your sin, give it vent by confession of it to God, and in some cases to others.

3. And when we have done so, consider what promises, and comforts, in that word of God are fitted to that condition. For we can be in no condition but there are comforts for it, and promises fitted to yield comforts for every malady. And it will be the wisdom of a Christian to accommodate the remedy to the sore of his heart. And therefore we ought to be skilful and well seen in the word of God, that we may store up

comforts beforehand. Our Saviour Christ tells them beforehand of the scandal of the cross, and of Peter's denial, that they might lay up strength and spiritual armour against the day of trial. Those comforts do not, for the most part, hold out in the day of adversity, which were not procured in the day of prosperity. Non durant in adversis quæ non in pace quæsitæ. It is not wisdom to be to learn religion when we should use it. And, therefore, let us be spiritual good husbands* for our souls, by storing up comforts out of the word of God; and then we shall have no more to do, than to remember the comforts that we did beforehand know.

And there be some promises of more general use, that are catholica, fitted for all sorts of grievances. And of these we must make use when we cannot think of particular ones, as the promises that concern forgiveness of sin. Think of God's mercy in pardoning sin with admiration; because sin will be presented us in such terrible colours, that if God be not presented in as gracious colours, we shall sink. And, therefore, set out Christ in his mercies, and all-sufficiency, when sin is aggravated to be in its heinousness, and out of measure, sinfulness; as the prophet Micah doth, 'Who is a God like our God, that pardoneth iniquity, transgression and sin?' 7:18. Likewise, how many promises and comforts are there in that one promise, 'He will give his Spirit to them that ask him,' Luke 11:13. And here our Saviour promiseth to send the Comforter. All graces and all comforts are included in the Spirit of grace and comfort. His Spirit is a Spirit of all grace; and, therefore, our Saviour thought that he promised enough when he said he would send them the Comforter. And so what a world of comfort is in that promise! 'All things shall work together for the best, to them that love God,' Rom. 8:28. Yea, those things that are worst shall work together. Though they be hostile, and opposite one to another, yet they join issue in this, they be all for the good of God's people; as in a clock the wheels go several ways, but all join to make the clock strike. And so in the carriage and ordering of things, one passage crosses another, but in the issue we shall be able to say, 'all things work together for the best;' I found God turning all things for my good; and I could not have been without such a cross, such an affliction. And so for present assistance in your callings or straits, remember that promise made to Joshua, which is repeated in Hebrews 13, 'I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,' verse 5: a promise which is five times renewed in Scripture.

And how much comfort is in that, that he will vouchsafe by his Spirit a gracious presence in all conditions whatsoever! And likewise that of David, Ps. 23:4, 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no ill, for thou art with me.' It was a terrible supposition made, that 'though he should walk in the valley of the shadow of death, yet he would fear no evil.' These promises well digested, will arm the soul with confidence, that it shall be able to put any case of trouble; as in the 27th Psalm, 1–3, David puts cases, 'The Lord is my strength, the Lord is the light of my countenance, of whom shall I be afraid? Though thousands shall rise against me, yet in this I will be confident.' If our hearts be established by the word of God, settled in the truth of such promises by the Spirit of God, we may set God and his truth against all troubles that can arise from Satan, and hell, and the instruments of Satan, or our own hearts. And, therefore, it is a great wrong to God, and his truth, if we know not our portion of comfort, and use it as occasion serves. More particulars I omit, leaving them to your own industry; the Scripture being full of them.

4. When we have these promises, let us labour to understand them thoroughly; to understand the grounds of our comfort in them, and to believe the truth of them, which are as true as God, who is truth itself. And then to love them, and digest them in our affections, and so make them our own, and then to walk in the strength and comfort of them.

5. Labour likewise to have them fresh in memory. It is a great defect of Christians, [that] they forget their consolation, as it is in the Hebrews, 12:5. Though we know many things, yet we have the benefit of our comfort from no more than we remember.

6. But, above all, if we will keep our hearts from trouble, let us labour to keep unspotted consciences. Innocency and diligence are marvellous preservers of comfort. And, therefore, if the conscience be spotted and unclean, wash it in the blood of Christ, which is first purging, and then purifying. It first purgeth the soul, being set awork to search our sins, and confess them; which maketh us see our need of Christ, who died to satisfy divine justice. Then, God sprinkles our heart with his blood, which was shed for all penitent sinners; by which, when the heart is purged, the conscience will be soon satisfied also, by Christ's blood. And when it is

purged and pacified, then keep it clean; for a foul soul is always a troubled soul; and though it may be quiet, yet it is sure to break out afterwards.

7. And because there can be no more comfort than there is care of duty, therefore, together with innocency, let us be careful of all duties in all our several relations. Let us consider in what relations we stand, and what duties we owe, and be careful to satisfy them all. Neglect of duty is a debt, and debts are troublesome. When the soul reflects upon the omission of a necessary duty; I owe such a duty to such a person; I should have done such a thing, in such a relation, but I have omitted it, it is a disquietment, and that upon good grounds; and if you have been negligent, there must be an actual renewing of the covenant, and a setting upon the duty, with fresh endeavours to make amends for former negligences; or else the soul shall have no comfort, nor will God suffer it to admit of comfort. And, therefore, 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling,' Philip. 2:12. The reason that men do still tremble, and are troubled with this doubt and that fear, is, because their salvation is not wrought out; something is left undone, and their consciences tell them so.

8. But above all, that we may receive comfort, let us labour for a spirit of faith. Therefore here it is said, 'You believe in God, believe also in me.' Christ brings them to faith for comfort. And he sets down a double object of faith,—God, that is, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and Christ, considered as Mediator; and Christ brings them to himself, 'Believe also in me,' John 14:1, because he would fence them against the future scandal of his suffering. As if he should say, You will hereafter, when you see me so handled, and upon the cross, doubt and call in question whether I am God and the Messiah of the world or no. But if you believe in God, 'believe in me.' For howsoever, in love to you and mankind, I took man's nature on me, and am abased, yet, in my greatest abasement, remember this, that I am God. And surely there is nothing can stay the soul more, especially when it is deeply humbled, than to consider God in the second person incarnate, and abased and crucified, and made a curse and sin for us; to see the great God of heaven and earth, whose excellencies we cannot comprehend, to take our nature, and in our nature to suffer for us those things which he did endure. This will establish the soul indeed. Can

the soul think that this was done for any small or to little purpose? Or can there be any grief or sin that should hinder comfort, or persuasion of the possibility of pardon, when the great God became man on purpose to die for sin? We may set this against all discouragements whatsoever. And therefore, 'believe in God, believe also in me.' Howsoever you see me abased, yet you may have comfort in my abasement, for it is for you. And therefore, saith Paul, 'I rejoyce to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' 1 Cor. 2:2. That which proud and atheistical heathens took scandal at, that he rejoiceth in, 'God forbid that I should glory in anything but in the cross of Christ,' Gal. 6:14. Peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, reconciliation, and title to happiness, is all founded upon Christ crucified.

And then, again, you see he joins both together, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me,' to shew the distinction of persons in the Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. All our faith is resolved at length into one God, but yet withal into three persons in that divine nature, because, as there is God the Father offended, so there must be a God to satisfy that God, and there must be a God to reveal and apply that satisfaction. The soul is so full of doubtings, that nothing can set it down but that which is above the soul and above the devil. And therefore, for our salvation, and to give us comfort, there is a necessity of three persons in the Godhead. The Father is offended, God in the second person must satisfy offended justice, and God in the third person must reveal and apply that satisfaction for comfort. And therefore he names them distinctly, 'Ye believe in God,' &c. And because we cannot believe in God the Father but by believing in Christ, therefore he joins them together, 'Ye believe in God, ye believe also in me.' 'No man comes to the Father but by the Son,' John 14:6. God the Father dwells in the light that no mortal eye can approach unto; only he hath manifested himself in his Son, who is the engraven image of his person. God shines in the face of Christ, and as he comes down and makes himself known to us in his Son, so we must go up to him in his Son, as he saith afterwards, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life,' John 14:6. There is no going to the Father but by me. Nothing is more terrible than to conceive of God out of Christ, for so he is a 'consuming fire,' Heb 12:29. Therefore think of God as ours in Christ. Carry Christ our elder brother with us, and desire God to look upon us in

his Son.

Quest. Now, how doth faith in Christ ease the soul in trouble?

Ans. Many ways. I will name a few.

1. Faith in Christ banisheth troubles, and bringeth in comfort, because it is an emptying grace. It emptieth us of ourselves, and so makes us cleave to another, and thereby becomes a grace of union. It is such a grace as brings the soul and Christ together. Now, Christ being the fountain of comfort, God having treasured all comfort in him ('for the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ,' Col. 1:19, and faith causeth Christ to dwell in us), brings the soul and Christ together, and so must needs make way for comfort. For it makes us one with the fountain of comfort, and by its repeated acts derives fresh comfort.

2. Again, faith establisheth the heart. Now, to establish the soul there must be a solid basis, as in building there must be a foundation, and a planting upon that foundation. Now here is a foundation, God and Christ; and there must be a grace to found and bottom the soul thereupon, and that is faith. And so the soul is established. The chain and connection of causes herein is this. God the Father in Christ, and by the Holy Ghost, conveys comforts, through the word laid hold upon by faith. It is not the word alone, for that is but as the veins and arteries that convey the blood and spirits. So the Spirit being conveyed by the promises, helpeth the soul to lay itself upon Christ by faith, which is a grace of union, by which union with him the soul is established.

3. And then, again, faith stirreth up such graces as do comfort the soul, as hope in all good things promised. And therefore in the next verse he adds, to comfort them, 'In my Father's house are many mansions,' and faith is the grace that apprehends the joys thereof; and hope expects that which faith believes, and that hope becomes an anchor to the soul, and stayeth the soul in all the waves and troubles of the world. And what is the ground of that hope but faith? Faith stirreth up hope, and hope pitcheth on the promise, especially of life everlasting. And thus faith becomes a quieting and a stilling grace, because it raiseth the soul, by representing and making real to it better things than the world can give or take, as it

doth also at other times present heavier things than the world can threaten. Faith makes things present to the soul; and because it lays hold on divine things, greater than anything here below, therefore it overcomes the world, and all things in the world, yea, hell itself, because it lays hold on heaven and happiness, upon the power of God, and the mercy of God in Christ, and upon those rich promises. What is in the world, or in the rank of good things, but faith outbids it by setting heaven against it! and what evil is there but faith overcomes the fear of it by setting hell against it! I shall have such a good if I yield to such a lust. Aye, but what is that to heaven? saith faith. For faith being the hypostasis, the substance of things to come, makes them substantial and evident to the soul, as if they were already subsistent, being looked upon in the certainty of the word; and so it affects the soul deeply, and upholds it strongly, even as if the things themselves were present, and so it banisheth and dispels all discomforts. The 11th chapter to the Hebrews is a comment upon this truth in the example of Moses and many others. What greater object of fear might be presented to a man than the angry face and countenance of a terrible tyrant? Yet when by the eye of faith he saw him that was invisible, and then looked upon Pharaoh, what was Pharaoh to God? When Micaiah had seen God sitting on his throne, what was Ahab to him? And when the soul hath entered into the vail, and sees the glorious things of heaven and happiness, what are all things below? Faith sets the soul on a rock, above the reach of waves, upon the love of God in Christ. And therefore set the grace of faith on work, keep it on the wing, preserve it on exercise; and faith exercised will be able to comfort the most dejected soul in the world, and to raise it above all the troubles that can be imagined or befall us.*

THE SECOND SERMON

Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.—John 14:1.

THE words of dying men departing out of the world, as being the most serious and weighty, are most to be regarded. The children of God, the nearer they are to heaven, the more suitable they are to their heavenly

condition. So was our Saviour Christ; and therefore he labours to furnish his disciples, and in them us, with good counsel to establish their hearts against the troubles and scandals to come. [This will appear] if you consider the time when he spake these words. It was when he himself was to be troubled more than ever was any creature. Yet he forgets himself and his future troubles, and thinks how to raise up and comfort them. He foresaw that Peter would deny him, that the rest would leave him; he foresaw that they would be dejected when he was gone. Yet 'let not your hearts be troubled.'

Oh, what a blessed and sweet Saviour have we, that thinks more of us than of himself, that he forgets his own troubles, and sufferings, and extremities, and thinks of the supporting and upholding of his disciples!

This came from the same love that drew him from heaven to earth, which moved him to take our nature, and in that nature to die for us. And what may we not expect from that sweet and large love? Out of the same bowels of pity and compassion was it (that they should not be overmuch dejected) that he saith, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

He knew his disciples were in the state of grace already, yet he foresaw they were such as would sin; nay, that Peter would deny him. Yet the foresight of Peter's and their unkindness did not take away his love, and pity, and compassion towards them. Yet, notwithstanding, he gives them sweet counsel; nay, after they had dealt unkindly with him, and denied and forsook him indeed, he took no advantage of their weakness. He knew they had a secret love to him, that they had in them a root of affection; and he was so far from taking advantage for it that presently after he saith, 'Tell my brethren that I ascend to my God and their God,' yea, and 'tell Peter so too,' John 20:17, that hath dealt most unkindly of all with me. What a gracious and merciful Saviour have we, that foresees what ill we will do, and when we have done it, takes no advantage against us, but is careful to keep us from too much dejection, though he knew we would deal so unkindly by him! And, indeed, he did of purpose take our nature, that he might be a merciful High Priest.

Christians must distinguish betwixt dejection and grief. It had been a sin for them not to have grieved, as well as it was a sin for them to be

overmuch troubled. None are more sensible than a Christian. Sentit dum vincit. He feels troubles whiles he overcomes them.

Christ speaks to the heart, because the heart is the seat of trouble, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

Christ could speak to the ears and heart at once. His words were operative, and conveyed comfort with them. Together with his words, he let in his Holy Spirit, that comforted them. God's commands in the ministry of his word, suppose not that we have any ability to execute them, but together with his word there comes forth a power. As when Christ said, 'Lazarus, arise!' there went forth a power that caused Lazarus to arise; as in the creation he said, 'Let there be light;' for the word and the Spirit go together.

Having taken them off from trouble, he shews a way how to raise them, which is by faith, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.'

The object in believing is God, and Christ Mediator. We must have both to found our faith upon. We cannot believe in God, except we believe in Christ. For God must be satisfied by God, and by him that is God must that satisfaction be applied, the Spirit of God, by working faith in the heart, and for the raising of it up when it is dejected. All is supernatural in faith. The things we believe are above nature; the promises are above nature; the worker of it, the Holy Ghost, is above nature; and everything in faith is above nature. There must be a God in whom we believe; and a God through whom. If God had not satisfied God, the conscience would never have been satisfied; there would still have been misdoubtings. And yet if the Holy Ghost sets not down the heart, and convinceth it throughly of the all-sufficiency of that satisfaction, it would never believe neither. And, therefore, as 'ye believe in God, believe also in me,' for I am God too.

We may know that Christ is God, not only by that which Christ hath done, the miracles, which none could do but God, but also by what is done to him. And two things are done to him, which shew that he is God; that is, faith and prayer. We must believe only in God, and pray only to God. But Christ is the object of both these. Here he is set forth as the object of faith, and of prayer in that of Saint Stephen: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,'

Acts 7:59. And, therefore, he is God; for that is done unto him, which is proper and peculiar only to God.

That which I shall now touch upon is this: We must remember what a strong foundation, what bottom, and basis, our faith hath. There is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and Christ the Mediator. That our faith may be supported, we have him to believe on who supports heaven and earth, as in Heb. 1:2, and Col. 1:16, 17. He created all things as well as the Father. He is honoured of all as well as the Father. He that supports the pillars of heaven and earth is able to support the pillars of thy soul.

But how doth faith in Christ ease the soul of trouble?

In a word, as it carrieth the soul out of itself unto God in Christ, and unto Christ, uniting and making us one with him, and so sets the soul above all trouble whatsoever. For, being one with Christ, we are already with him in heaven. And again, faith is a grace that presents things to come, as present, and so establisheth the soul. It is the hypostasis of things, it gives subsistence to them in the promise, and it doth never leave to do it till the things subsist indeed. It is a grace that accompanieth the soul to heaven, looking upon things in the word of him that is truth itself, and so giving a kind of being to them, throughout all the way to heaven, till they have a being indeed. And then faith is out of office, yielding it up to sight, and the full enjoyment of all.

Quest. But did not the disciples believe already?

Ans. Yes, they did. But they had need to renew their faith, as occasions were renewed, and as troubles were to increase. 'Believe in me.' It is as he should have said: 'Now there is occasion for you to use your faith. I must be taken out of your sight. You must see me suffer. And you had need of an extraordinary measure of faith to see me in such abasement, and yet to believe that I am God.'

We must grow from faith to faith, that we may live by it continually; and we must increase with the increase of God, that as our difficulties do increase, our strength to go through them may increase also; as they prayed, 'Lord, increase our faith,' Luke 17:5.

I give some directions how we might not be troubled.

And first, we must labour to have our part and portion in Christ, else there is nothing belongs to us but trouble. There are two sorts of men in the church, some that usurp a peace and exemption from trouble, as if joy and comfort were their portion. Satan is wise enough not to trouble them, and they take an order with their consciences, that they shall not trouble them till needs must, till the hour of death, or some dismal accident. The only way for such is to be troubled, that their trouble may be a foundation of their comfort. For to such as live in their sins against conscience, apparently* so, that every man may see it, and yet are not troubled, they have no interest in comfort. Nothing but woe and misery belongs to them. Indeed, Christ came to save sinners, but it is broken-hearted sinners, penitent sinners, that are weary and heavy laden under the burden of sin. And, therefore, though they speak peace to themselves, yet we dare not speak any comfort to them from Christ. As Jehu said to Joram, 'What hast thou to do with peace, as long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel are so many?' 2 Kings 9:22. Dost thou talk of peace as long as thou art a swearer, a profane liver, a malicious person, against all that are truly good? What hast thou to do with peace?

Now, in the visible church, there is another sort that Satan laboureth to trouble. Since he cannot keep them in the state of nature, but they break from him—Christ pulling them out of Satan's kingdom by the power of his ordinances and Holy Spirit—he labours to trouble them in their peace all he can. Because they be, in the world, above the world, he envies their condition, that they should enjoy that paradise which he left, the comforts that he once had; and, therefore, he labours to disturb them in their comforts.

The estate of such is mixed here in this world. They have that in them, and without them, which will always be a cause and occasion of trouble. They have corruption in them not altogether subdued; and they have without them Satan taking advantage against them; and the world opposing them. These, although they have something in them that must be subdued, yet something also that must be cherished and strengthened. And therefore these are the persons to whom comfort properly belongs.

In heaven we shall have no need of being comforted, for there our peace shall be to have no enemies at all. Our peace here is to have comfort in the midst of discomfort, and an heart enlarged in troubles.

He speaks this to them here who were believers already; ('Ye believe in God'), who he knew should not be troubled, ('Let not your hearts be troubled'). So that to the end we may be subjects capable of comfort, we must be such as by faith are one with Christ; and so reconciled to God. All motion ends in rest, and all the rest of the soul ends in God,—the centre of the soul. And therefore before the soul can settle itself, it must be brought to God, through Christ. That must be laid as a ground.

Now there is a threefold malady that troubleth us, and there must a threefold peace, and ground of comfort against them.

First, it is a trouble to the soul (when once it is awakened), that God and it should be in ill terms; when the soul looks upon God as angry, and displeased with it.

Secondly, Again, the soul is troubled, when it looks upon itself, and sees nothing but turmoils and seditions there.

Thirdly, when it looks upon the affairs of the world, and accidents here below, it is full of confusion for the present; and it is full of fears for time to come, that things will be worse and worse. Thus the soul, whilst it is in the world, is troubled about its peace with God, and with itself, and about this evil world.

Now before the soul can yield to any quiet, all these quarrels must be taken up.

First a peace must be made betwixt God and us, by the great Peacemaker, who is also called 'our peace,' Eph. 2:14; and when we be justified and acquitted from our sins by the blood of Christ, sprinkled on our souls by faith, that blood of Christ speaks peace to the soul in the pardon of sin; 'being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' Rom. 5:1.

Then secondly, there must be another peace settled in some degree, and that is the peace of government in the soul; grace must be above corruption. They will be together in the soul whilst we are here, but sin must not have the dominion. This is such a peace, not as will admit of no conflict, but a peace wherein grace may get the better; and where grace gets the better, it will keep corruption under. And God gives his Spirit to whom he gives his Son; that as we be in good terms with God, so our natures may be like his; that we may love and delight in what he loves and delights in; and so may be as friends, enjoying acquaintance and communion together.

Aye, but thirdly, there is confusion in the world, and many accidents may fall out, that may disquiet us for time to come. Now before the soul can be at peace in that respect, it must know that, being once in Christ, reconciled to God, and having the Spirit of God, it is under a gracious government and providence, that disposeth all things to good, and maketh everything peaceable. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia.* When God is at peace, all is at peace; yea, so far at peace, that they have a blessing in them. The curse and venom is taken out of them by Christ, who took the curse on himself, and satisfied the wrath of God; and now they be not only harmless, but medicinal, and helpful, so that they be all ours, and made in some sort serviceable to further our spiritual good.

When our husband hath all things committed unto him in heaven or earth, will he suffer anything to befall his dearly beloved spouse, that shall be disadvantageous, and prejudicial to the main? No, no; he will not suffer anything to befall her, which he will not rule, and order, and overrule for the good of the church; and so there comes to be that third peace.

And, for the time to come, a Christian knows, that whom 'Christ loves, he loves to the end,' John 13:1; and 'the good work begun shall be perfected to the day of the Lord,' Philip. 1:6. He knoweth he is in heaven already in his head. 'He that believes in Christ hath everlasting life,' John 3:36, and is triumphing in glory in his head.

And, therefore, nothing can dismay a Christian that is truly in Christ. Grant the first, grant all. Stand upon good terms with Christ; be

reconciled to God, and nothing can do thee hurt.

But when we at any time come to comfort such as have comfort for their portion, it sticks here. If I were a child of God indeed, or if I did believe, it were something. These be good comforts indeed, and certain, and true, for they be the word of God; but what is this to me? I find universally, that comfort sticks there, and therefore we must labour to remove that objection.

First of all, therefore, labour to have a good judgment of main truths: that these comforts are the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and that the word is the word of God. By a general knowledge of the truth of the promises, thou shalt be better able to apply them. If thou stick in the principles, so as not to know them, nor to believe them, there is no talking of the application of faith upon them. We must make that our own in particular, which we believe first in general. And therefore Christians must first be well seen in the Scriptures, and in the promises there, that they may know what belongs to them, and apply them to themselves.

Aye, but my faith is weak.

1. I answer, The office of faith is to knit to Christ, and the weakest faith will do that, as well as the strongest: and when we are once one with Christ, then our perfection is to be found in him. It is the office of faith to bring us to Christ; and then to look to him for all perfections and for thy title to heaven, and not to faith; and true faith is faith even in the least degree of it. As we say of the elements, every drop of water is water, and every spark of fire is fire. And, therefore, the argument will not hold, if we have not much faith, we have no faith; or if we have no feeling, we have no faith. There are many common errors which we must remove, that they may not hinder us in the application of Christ, by distinguishing between strong grace and true grace; and, above all, labour to know and understand the covenant of grace; the tenor of which requireth no set measures of grace; but 'if we believe, we shall not perish, but have everlasting life,' under so gracious and merciful a covenant are we.

2. But this is not sufficient to satisfy the soul. The very cleaving to Christ is indeed a sufficient ground of comfort, but yet to obtain actual comfort,

there must be a knowledge that we do cleave to Christ, and believe. There may be adherence without evidence; and there must be an act of reflection to cause faith of evidence. It must appear to ourselves that we do believe before we can have comfort, though we may be true Christians, and go to heaven without it. Therefore, let us labour 'to make our calling and election sure,' 2 Pet. 1:10; that is, in ourselves, and in our own apprehension. Though it be never so sure in itself, and in God's breast, yet we must labour to make it sure in our own breasts; that sin may be pardoned in our own consciences; that all may be reconciled in our own hearts; that what is done in heaven may be done in our own hearts also being cleared to our own assurance. You see what advice the apostle gives 'Give all diligence.' It is not got without diligence, nor without 'all diligence, to make our calling and election sure,' that is, to make our election sure by our calling, and to that end 'to add grace to grace,' 2 Pet. 1:5. It is the growing Christian that is the assured Christian. Whilst we are yet adding to every heap, 'we shall get more abundant entrance,' 2 Pet. 1:11, and further into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, as the apostle there speaks.

3. And when we have attained any evidence of true faith, labour to keep that our evidence clear. Let it not be spotted or defiled by any sinful acts. You have many a good evidence that is so blurred with negligences, and daily errors in speeches and conversation, that when they reflect upon themselves they conclude, Can such a wretch as I, that have so loose a tongue, that have no more watchfulness over my heart, have any faith at all? And thus God doth suspend their comforts so, that though they may be in a good estate for the main, yet they shall not know it; and all because they are not careful to keep their evidence, which we should preserve clear and bright, that it might be seen and read upon all occasions. And we should so keep them bright, that our consciences may witness with us, and that the Spirit and the word may join their witness with our consciences. The word saith, 'that he that loves the brethren is translated to life,' 1 John 2:10, and he that hears the word, as the word, is Christ's sheep. Now, doth thy conscience tell thee, that though in weak measure, yet I do so? Then, here is the word, and thy conscience for thee. And doth the Spirit witness with thy conscience that it is so indeed? Then it is well. Thou keepest thy evidence to purpose.

4. And when we have done this, let us make conscience not to yield to any base doubts, and fears, and objections of Satan, and our own hearts. When we find any work of grace, deny not the work of God, lest we grieve the Spirit of God; as some melancholy Christians, that though every man may see the work of God in them, yet yield so slavishly to the misgivings of their hearts, and the temptations of Satan, that they conclude they have no faith, no love; though other Christians that can read their evidence better, see that they have these in them. What dishonour is this to God and his Spirit, when a dark humour shall prevail more than the word, the truth itself? This is a great bondage which Satan brings the soul into: that when there is evidence of faith in the fruits of it, yet men will believe a peevish humour, before the word and testimony of conscience, enlightened by the Spirit. Take heed of it as a great pride in the heart, when we yield more to a sturdy, dark, unsubdued humour, than to evidence itself.

Therefore in such cases hearken not to what fear says, or humour saith, or Satan saith, or what the world saith, but hearken what truth itself saith, and what conscience saith, when it is enlightened by the Spirit, as in good times when we are at the best. True Christians, though more remiss, shall have so much comfort as shall support them from falling into despair, yet not so much as shall strengthen them, and carry them into a vigorous life, fit for Christians.

5. When we have found any work of grace; and thereupon that our faith is true, we ought to comfort ourselves, and to maintain our comfort by all means. Every grace is but faith exercised. When our Saviour saith, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me,' he might have said also in particular, Be patient, be contented, be comforted. But he names the root of all—Faith—wherein all graces are radically; which is therefore discerned in the fruits of it. So that if any grace be found, as love to the brethren, hope of life everlasting, or the like, there is faith. For the root and branches be together, though the root is not always discerned. And therefore when we discover any true faith in the fruit of it, let us support and comfort ourselves with it.

For when a man is in Christ, and by Christ an heir of heaven, and a child of God, what in the world can befall him, that should deject overmuch,

and cast him down? What loss, what cross, what want of friends? Hath he not all in God, and in Christ, and in the promise? Do not the promises weigh down all discouragements whatsoever? Surely they do. And therefore we must strive against dejection. For besides what I spake the last day, it is a dishonour to the profession of religion, which is in itself so glorious; a dishonour to God, and to Christ, that when we have such glorious prerogatives and privileges, which the angels themselves admire, yet every petty cross and loss that we meet withal in the world should cast us down. We should take heed exceedingly of this, and should labour every day to have a more and more clear sight of the promises that belong unto us, and to know the privileges of Christianity, and renew our faith in them continually, that they may be fresh to us in all temptations, and occasions whatsoever.

I beseech you, do but consider any one grand promise; which if it be rooted in the soul, how it is able to support the soul against all troubles whatsoever. As that, 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,' Luke 12:32. Or that other, 'If God spared not his Son for us, how will he not with him give us all things else?' Rom. 8:32.

Labour to have these things fresh in memory, together with the privileges belonging to Christians. Think what it is to be a child of God, and an heir of heaven!

We must not look only to the blind and dark side of our condition. Christians have two sides, one to heaven-ward and God-ward; and that is full of glory, certain and immoveable. Another towards the world; and that is oftentimes full of abasement, full of disgrace, and dejection. That is moveable; sometimes better, sometimes worse, as God pleaseth to dispense his government in the church. Let us look to the grace, to the comforts that belong to that grace; to the promises; the best side; and not to be carried away with the darkness of the other.

It is a terrible sight to look upon sin, and misery, and hell, and judgment to come; but what are these to a Christian that is in Christ, that seeth them all subdued, and overcome to him? The afflictions of the world, and the crosses of the world, what are they to a soul, that is already in heaven

by faith, and seeth them all overcome in his head Christ? 'Be of good comfort, I have overcome the world,' John 16:33. And therefore we must not be so malignant, as to look all upon one part of a Christian, and that the worsor part, which is the object of sense. For shame, live not by sense! But if we be Christians, let us live by faith, look to the best part; look upwards and forwards to that which is eternal.

6. And withal labour to keep the graces of the Spirit in continual exercise upon all occasions. For grace exercised, brings certain comfort. It may be with a Christian in his feelings as with the worst man living; but he may thank his own negligence, his own dulness; his not stirring up of the graces of God in him. For therefore it is that he hangs the wing upon every petty cross, on every occasion. Labour to have an heart ready to exercise grace suitable to that occasion. For then grace will reflect sweetly, where there is sincerity and grace in exercise. Sincerity alone will not comfort a man, unless it grow up to fruitfulness; and fruitfulness which springs from the exercise of grace, hath a sweet reflection upon the soul. 'Remember, Lord, how I walked before thee, in truth, and with a perfect heart,' saith Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20:3. He stood then most in need of comfort; and this comforted him; this his reflection upon his former sincerity. So when a man can appeal unto God, as Peter did, 'Lord, thou knowest I love thee,' John 21:17. So much sincerity, so much boldness with God. And therefore let us keep grace in exercise, that we may be fruitful in our lives and conversations, and then we shall be always comfortable.

And to add a little, there is no grace in a Christian but, if it be exercised, there is a suitable comfort upon it even here in this world. There is a *proemium ante proemium*, a reward before a reward. Nay, the heathen men, Socrates and the best of them, so far as they exercised the natural goodness that was in them, their consciences reflected peace; so far as they were good, and did good, they had peace, much more peace than bad men had. God gave even them some rewards upon discharge of their duties. He will not be beholden to any man that exerciseth any degree of goodness that is in him. Much more therefore shall a child of God enjoy it, when he exerciseth his graces in any temptation. When he overcomes any unclean, earthly, vainglorious, vindictive, or any other base lust, he

shall find peace of conscience suitable. And the more he grows in strength and resolution for the time to come, the more he groweth in inward peace. Righteousness and peace go together; not only the righteousness of Christ and our reconciliation before God, but also the righteousness of an holy life and peace in our own consciences.

The righteousness of Christ entitles to heaven; and the righteousness of an holy life sheweth my title unto comfort. As faith in Christ's righteousness brings peace, so sanctification also. Christ is first 'King of righteousness,' and then 'King of peace,' Heb. 7:1. And therefore where there is no righteousness, there is no peace. But, on the contrary, as heat followeth the fire, and as the beams have an emanation from the sun, so doth comfort arise from grace, especially from grace exercised.

Therefore they that would have inward peace, let them labour to be gracious; and that not only in the inward frame of the heart, but in the exercise of grace upon all occasions. 'For they that walk according to this rule,' that is, of the new creature, 'peace be to them, and the whole Israel of God,' Gal. 6:16. An exact and careful life will bring constant peace.

Therefore let us labour first for interest in Christ's righteousness, and then for the righteousness of an holy life; for a conscience to justify us, that we have no purpose to live in any sin; and a not accusing conscience will be a justifying conscience. What a blessed condition shall we be in, to be in Christ, and to know that we are so! O the heaven on earth of such a man as is in that condition! For which way soever he looks, he finds matter of comfort. If he looks backward, to the government of the Spirit that hath ruled him in the former part of his life, he may say with St Paul, 'I have fought a good fight, I have run the race that God hath set before me,' 2 Tim. 4:7. And what a sweet reflection is this! He is not afraid to look back to his life past as other men. If he looks forward, he seeth a place prepared for him in heaven, and there he sees himself already in Christ. Henceforth 'there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge shall give me at that day,' ver. 8; and all that love his appearing, saith he, there. When there comes ill tidings of the church abroad and at home, it doth not much dismay him. His heart is fixed; he believeth in God and in Christ, and that keeps him from being like a reed shaken with every wind. For reproaches and disgraces that he

meets withal in the world, he wears them as his crown, if they be for religion and goodness' sake. For his witness is in heaven, and in his own conscience. And God in heaven, and his conscience within, do acquit him; and if he suffer for his deserts, yet in all afflictions God dealeth with him as a correcting Father. He knoweth he hath deserved them, but he looks on them as coming from a Father in covenant with him. And what can come from a father but what is sweet? He sees it moderated and sweetened, and in the issue tending to make him more holy. The sting is taken out, and a blessing is upon it, to make him better. And therefore what can make a Christian uncomfortable, when he hath the Spirit of Christ, and faith, the root of grace?

These comforts being warmed with meditation, will stick close to the heart. Comforts that are digested are they that work. Let them therefore not only enter into the brain and fleet* there, but let them sink into the heart, by often consideration of God's love in Christ, and the privileges of Christians here and in heaven, where our Head is, and where we shall be ere long. Warm the heart with these, and see if any petty thing can cast thee down!

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