



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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Sermon 160 on Psalm 119

By Thomas Manton

Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me, yet thy commandments are my delights.—Psalm 119:143.

IN the words we have—

1. David's temptation, *trouble and anguish have taken hold of me*. 2. David's exercise under that temptation, *thy commandments are my delight*.

3. The benefit of that exercise, notwithstanding the greatness of the temptation, *yet*. It is propounded with *a non obstante*.

First, The temptation was very great, for he speaketh of trouble and anguish. The joining of synonymous words, or words of a like import and signification, increaseth the sense; and so it sheweth his affection was not ordinary; yea, both these words have their particular use and emphasis. Trouble may imply the outward trial, and the difficulties and straits he was in; anguish, inward afflictions: the one, the matter of the trial, and the other the sense of it. The other expression also is to be observed, 'Have taken hold of me; 'in the Hebrew, 'have found me;' so the Septuagint renders it, *JliyeiV kai anagkai eursan me*; and the vulgar Latin out of them, *tribulatio et angustiae invenerunt me*, 'have found me,' that is, 'come upon me,' as the expression intimateth. Troubles are said to find us, because they are sent to seek us out, and in time will light upon us. We should not run into them, but if they find us in our duty, we should not be troubled at them. Sometimes in scripture we are said to find trouble, and sometimes trouble to find us. We are said to find trouble. David said, Ps. 116:3, 'I found trouble.' And so now here in the text, trouble and anguish found him. There is no difference, or if any, the one noteth a surprise. Trouble findeth us when it cometh unlooked for; our finding it noteth our willingness to undergo it, when the will of God is so, especially for righteousness' sake.

Secondly, David's exercise under this great temptation, 'Thy commandments are my delights.' Where we have—

1. The object, 'thy commandments.' The commandment is put for the word in general, which includeth promises as well as precepts, the whole doctrine of life and salvation. However, the property of the form is not altogether to be overlooked; even in the commandments or the conscience of his duty, he took a great deal of comfort.

2. The affection, 'delight' He had said before that he did not forget God's statutes when he was small and despised, ver. 141; now he delighted in them. This was his great love to the word, that he could find sweetness in it when it brought him trouble, such sweetness as did allay all his sorrows, and overcome the bitterness of them.

3. The degree, 'delights,' in the plural number; he did greatly delight in it. *Omnis oblectatio mea*, saith Junius—thy commandments to me are instead of all manner of delights and pleasure in the world.

Thirdly, The next is the opposition of this exercise to that temptation, 'yet.' It is not in the original, but necessarily implied, and therefore well inserted by our translators, to show that the greatness of his straits and troubles did not diminish his comfort, but increase it rather. The points are these:—

1. God seeth it necessary sometimes to exercise his people with a great deal of trouble.

2. This trouble may breed great vexation and anguish of spirit, even in a gracious heart.

3. Notwithstanding this trouble and anguish, gracious hearts will manifest their graciousness by delighting in the word.

4. They that delight in the word will find more comfort in their afflictions than troubles can take from them, or such sweetness as will overcome the sense of all their sorrows. This was always David's help to delight in the word, and this brought him comfort though in deep troubles.

For the first point, that God seeth it necessary sometimes to exercise his people with a great deal of trouble. Though they are highly in favour with God, yet they have their share of troubles as well as others. This is true if you—

1. Consider the people of God in their collective body and community, which is called the church. It is the church's name: Isa. 54:11, 12, 'Oh thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest!' Names are taken *a notionibus*; things are known and distinguished by their name; it is one of the way-marks to heaven:

Acts 14:22, 'Through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God;' as the way to Canaan lay through a howling wilderness. If we were told before that we should meet with such and such marks in our journey to such a place, if we found them not, we should have cause to suspect we were out of our way. From the beginning of the world, the church hath always been bred up under troubles, and inured to the discipline of the cross: Ps. 129:1, 'Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say.' The spirit of enmity wrought betimes. The first family that ever was in the world yielded Abel the proto-martyr, and Cain the patriarch of unbelievers. While the church kept in families, the outward estate of God's people was worse than their neighbours. Abraham was a sojourner, though owned and blessed by God, when the Canaanites were possessors, and dwelt in walled towns. Jacob's family grew up by degrees into a nation, but Esau's presently multiplied into many dukes and princes. And as they grew up, they grew up in affliction. Egypt was a place of retreat for them for a while, but before they got out of it, it proved a house of bondage. Their deliverance brought them into a wilderness, where want made them murmur, but oftener wantonness. But then God sent fiery serpents, and broke them, and afflicted them with other judgments. After forty years' wandering in the wilderness, they are brought into Canaan, a land of rest; but it afforded them little rest, for they forfeited it almost as soon as they conquered it; it flowed with milk and honey, but mixed with gall and wormwood. Their story, as it is delivered in the book of God, acquaints you with several varieties and intermixtures of providence, till wrath came upon them to the utmost, till God saw fit to enlarge the pale and lines of communication by treating with other nations. Now, if the Old Testament church were thus afflicted, much more the New. God discovered his approbation and improbation then more by temporal mercies and temporal judgments. The promises run to us in another strain; and since life and immortality were brought to light in the gospel, we must not expect to be so delicately brought up as never to see an evil day. He hath told us, 2 Tim. 3:12, 'We must be conformed to our head,' Rom. 8:29; and expect to pledge Christ in his bitter cup, and our condition must inform us that our hopes were not in this world, 1 Cor. 15:19. In the gospel dispensation God would deal forth temporal blessings more sparingly, and spiritual with a fuller hand; the experience of all ages verifieth this. When religion began first to fly abroad into all lands, the pagans first persecuted it, and then the pseudo-Christians; the holiest and best people were maligned, and bound, and butchered, and racked, and stoned, but still they multiplied. It were easy to tire you with various instances in every age. Those that went home to God were those that came out of tribulations, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. vii. 14. There is always something set afoot to try God's servants, and in the latter times the roaring lion is

not grown more gentle and tame, rather more fierce and severe: Rev. 12:12, 'For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.' Dying beasts struggle most. As his kingdom beginneth to shake, so he will be most fierce and cruel for the supporting of it.

2. As to particular persons: 'The whole creation groaneth,' Rom. 8:22; and God's children bear a part in the concert; they have their share in the world's miseries, and domestical crosses are common to them with other men in the world; yea, their condition is worse than others: chaff and corn are threshed in the same floor, but the corn is grinded in the mill and baked in the oven. Jeremiah was in the dungeon when the city was besieged. The world hateth them more than others, and God loveth them more than others. The world hateth them because they are so good, and God correcteth them because they are no better. There is more care exercised about a vine than a bramble. God will not let them perish with the world. Great receipts call for great expenses first or last. God seeth it fitting, sometimes at first setting forth, as the old Germans were wont to dip their children in the Rhine to harden them, so to season them for their whole course; they must bear the yoke from their youth or first acquaintance with God, Heb. 10:32. Sometimes God lets them alone while they are young and raw, and of little experience, as we are tender of trees newly planted, as Jacob drove as the little ones were able to bear: 1 Cor. 10:13, 'He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able.' They are let alone till middle age, till they are of some standing in religion: Heb. 11:24, 'Moses when he was come to years,' *megaVgenomenoV*. Sometimes let alone till their latter time, and their season of fighting cometh not till they are ready to go out of the world, that they may die fighting, and be crowned in the field. But first or last, the cross cometh, and there is a time to exercise our faith and patience before we inherit the promises. I will not enlarge in the common-place of afflictions, and tell you how necessary the cross is to subdue sin, which God will do in an accommodate way to weaken pride, to reclaim us from our wanderings, to increase grace, to make us mindful of heavenly things; these are discussed in other verses: to make us retreat to our great privileges, to stir us up to prayer, &c. *Tribulatio tam nobis necessaria, quam ipsa vita, immo magis necessaria, multoque utilior quam totius mundi opes, et dignitates*, saith Luther—we think wealth is necessary for us, dignity and esteem is necessary for us; no, affliction is necessary for us: 1 Peter 1:6, 'If need be, you are in heaviness,' &c.

Use 1. Let us look for troubles and provide for them. We shall not always have a life of ease and peace; the times will not always be friendly to religion: 'Then had the churches rest,' Acts 9:31; halcyon days. The enmity of wicked men will not always lie asleep; we would gather rust

and grow dead, therefore look for them. If because you are Christians you promise yourselves a long lease of temporal happiness, free from troubles and afflictions, it is as if a soldier going to the wars should promise himself peace and continual truce with the enemy; or as if a mariner committing himself to the sea for a long voyage, should promise himself nothing but fair and calm weather, without waves and storms; so irrational it is for a Christian to promise himself rest here upon earth. Well, then, let us learn beforehand how to be abased and how to abound, Phil. 4:12. He that is in a journey to heaven must be provided for all weathers; though it be sunshine when he first sets forth, a storm will overtake him before he cometh to his journey's end. It is good to be fore-armed; afflictions will come, and we should prepare accordingly. We enter upon the profession of godliness upon these terms, to be willing to suffer afflictions if the Lord see fit; and therefore we should arm ourselves with a mind to endure them, whether they come or no. God never intended that Isaac should be sacrificed, yet he will have Abraham lay the knife to his throat. Sorrows foreseen leave not so sad an impression upon the spirit. *Tela promissa minus feriunt*. The evil is more familiarised before it come: Job 3:25, 'The evil that I feared is come upon me.' When our fears prophesy, we smart less; it allayeth the offence; we meet with nothing but what we thought of before: John 16:1, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.'

Use 2. If you are under afflictions, **mh xenizes Je**, 1 Peter 4:12, do not strange at it, more than at night and day, showers and sunshine; as these things fall out in the course of nature, so do troubles and afflictions in the course of God's providence; it were a wonder if otherwise. We do not wonder to see a shower of rain fall, or a cloudy day succeed a fair: 1 Peter 5:9, 'All these things are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' All the rest of God's people are fellow-soldiers in this conflict.

Use 3. When we are out of affliction, let us bless God that we are out of the affliction. The greatness of the trouble, danger, misery, straits whereinto God doth cast his own doth lay a greater obligation of thankfulness upon those that are free from those evils. If thou beest not thankful for thy health, go to the lazarethouses, look upon the afflicted state of God's people, and that may quicken you to thankfulness for being freed from them.

Use 4. Advice; do not draw sufferings upon yourselves by your own rashness and folly: James 1:2, 'Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.' We must not seek or desire trouble, but bear it when God layeth it on us. Christ hath taught us to pray, 'Lead us not into

temptation.' It is a folly for us to cast ourselves upon it; if we draw hatred upon ourselves, and run headlong into dangers without necessity, we must make ourselves amends by repentance, otherwise God will not. If a man set his house on fire, he is liable to the law; if it be fired by others, or by an ill accident, he is pitied and relieved. We are to take our own cross when made to our hands by God's providence, not make it for ourselves; not to fill our own cup, but drink it off if God put it into our hands. We must come honestly by our crosses as well as by our comforts, and must have a call for what we suffer as well as for what we do, if we would have comfort in our sufferings.

Doct. This trouble may breed much vexation and anguish of spirit even in a gracious soul. David speaketh of anguish as well as trouble.

1. Partly from nature. God's children have the feelings of nature as well as others. Christ Jesus, to show the truth of our nature, would express our affections; he had his fears and tears, Heb. 5:7, and so hath legitimated our fears and sorrows. It is an innocent affection to have a dislike of what is contrary to us, to our natural interest; to be without natural affection is among the vices. And—

2. Partly from grace. The children of God are more sensible than others, because they have a reverence for every providence, and look upon it as a good piece of religious manners to observe when God striketh, and to be humble when God is angry, Jer. 5:3; slight spirits are not so much affected. Ordinarily they see not God, nor own God in every stroke; but when the windows of heaven are opened, and the mouth of the great deep below, there must needs be a great sense.

3. Yet there is in it weakness and a mixture of corruption, which may come from an impatiency of the flesh, which would fain be at ease: Gen. 49:15, 'Rest is good.' Therefore we are filled with anguish when troubled, either from distrust, or at least from inattentiveness to the promises. As there is a negative faith in the wicked, not contradicting the truth of the word, so a negative distrust in the godly, not regarding, not minding the promise, or not regarding the grounds of comfort which it offereth to us; as Hagar saw not the well that was nigh her till God opened her eyes, Gen. 21:19; so Mark 6:52, 'They considered not the miracle of the loaves;' therefore are amazed in themselves beyond measure. 'Have ye forgotten the five loaves and two fishes?' Heb. 12:5, 'And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh to you as unto children.' Yea, sometimes there may be positive distrust, or actual refusing comfort: Ps.

77:2, 'My soul refused to be comforted.' As they may not mind comfort, so in great troubles refuse comfort in greater distempers.

4. Sorrow and trouble may revive inward trouble. Affliction in itself is a part of the law's curse, and may revive something of bondage in the hearts of God's children, which is good and useful so far as it quickeneth us to renew our reconciliation with God. Spirits entended by religion are more apprehensive of God's displeasure under afflictions: Num. 12:14, 'If her father had spit in her face, should she not be ashamed?' If it humble under the mighty hand of God, it is well; but when it filleth us with perplexities and amazement, like wild bulls in a net, or produceth uncomely sorrow, roaring like bears, or mourning as men without hope, it is naught.

Use. Let us take notice how affliction worketh. There is a double extreme, slighting the hand of God, or fainting under it, Heb. 12:5; we must beware of both. There must be a sense, but it must be kept within bounds; without a sense there can be no improvement; to despise them is to think them fortuitous. They come from God; their end is repentance, their cause is sin. Two things men cannot endure to have despised, their love and their anger. When David's love was alighted, he vowed to cut off all that pertained to Nabal; and Nebuchadnezzar, when his anger was despised, commanded the furnace to be heated seven times hotter. Nor fainting, for that excludeth God's comforts. God hath the whole guiding and ordering the affliction, and while the rod is in his hand there is no danger. He is a wise God, and cannot be overseen; a God of judgment, by whom all things are weighed, 1 Sam. 2:3; every drachm and scruple of the cross; a just God, and will punish no more than is deserved: Job 34:23, 'He will not lay upon man more than is right.' As well no more than is meet, as no more than is right. He is a good God, does only what our need and profit requireth: 'For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,' Lam. 3:33.

Doct. That it is the property of a gracious soul to delight in God's commandments.

It was David's practice, and it is the mark of a blessed man: Pa. 1:2, 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord;' and Rom. 7:22, 'I delight in the law after the inward man;' and Ps. 112:1, 'Blessed is the man that delighteth greatly in his commandments.' Delight in moral things, saith Aquinas, is the rule by which we may judge of men's goodness or badness—*Delectatio est quies voluntatis in bono*; men are good and bad as the objects of their delight are; they are good who delight in good things, and they evil who delight in evil things.

We shall consider the nature of delight—

1. In the causes.
2. In the effects of it.

First, The causes are—

1. Proportion and suitableness. Sensitive creatures delight much in such food as is agreeable to their nature. Now the commandments are suitable to the renewed heart: 'The law is in their heart,' Ps. 40:8; and Ps. 37:31, 'The law of his God is in his heart.' Divine qualities are planted there, which suit with the rule of holiness and righteousness, Eph. 4:24. And this is the sum of the law or commandments of God.

2. A second cause is possession of it and communion with it. *lOritur*, saith Aquinas, *ex praesentia connaturalis boni*. Now one may be said to possess the law or enjoy the law in regard of the knowledge of it or obedience to it: John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' The knowledge of the law., so it be not superficial and fleshly, but full and thorough and savoury, is very comfortable, and goeth toward a good note; but obedience to the law is the cause of delight therein. God's servants rejoice when they can bring on their hearts with any life and power in the way of God's testimonies: Ps. 119:14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies more than in all riches.' Thence cometh their comfort and obedience.

3. A third cause of delight is a precedent love of the object. Love is a complacency in and propension towards that which is good, absolutely considered both in the presence and absence of it. Desire noteth the absence of a good, delight the presence and fruition of it. Therefore a love of the object delighted in is essentially presupposed to delight. So that it is impossible for anything to be delighted in but it is first loved. We have experience that many things are delightful in themselves, and known to be such, which yet do not actually delight if they be hated. A man may taste of the sweetness of honey, yet if he hath an antipathy against it he may loathe it. David in this psalm presupposeth love as antecedent to delight: Ps. 119:47, 'I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.' Carnal men cannot say so; 'For every one that doeth evil hateth the light,' John 3:20. The renewed only love the commandments. Yea, it doth not only presuppose a love of simple complacency, but also a love of desire; for all things are first desired before delighted in. None can truly delight in obedience but such as desire it. Such as can say with David, ver. 40, 'Behold, I have longed after thy precepts;' and ver. 131, 'I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed after thy commandments.' Now all such are blessed, Mat. 5:5.

Secondly, Let us consider the effects.

1. The first is *dilatatio cordis*, the enlarging of the heart; it openeth and wideneth the heart towards the reception of the law, and maketh it more capacious and comprehensive thereof than otherwise it would be: Ps. 119:32, 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt have enlarged my heart.' The heart is at ease and in a commodious condition, as a body that is in a large and fit place, where it is not straitened; and this is as oil to the wheels.

2. *Delectatio causat sui sitim et desiderium*. Delight in an object causeth a thirst of itself, and more of itself. Even the angels and blessed spirits feel this effect of delight, that it never cloyeth, but they desire more of their own happiness. Much more doth it work so in us, who are in such an imperfect state of enjoyment, upon a twofold account:—

[1.] The objects of spiritual delight are perfect, but the acts whereby we enjoy and possess those objects are imperfect. God is an infinite and all-satisfying good, but the acts whereby we enjoy him here in this life, whereby we have union and communion with him, are imperfect. We know, believe, love, hope but in part, 1 Cor. 13:9. Hereupon that delight which ariseth from the imperfect fruition of God here in this life stirreth up to an eager desire after fuller fruition, and unto a further enlargement and intension of those acts whereby such fruition is attained, or wherein it consisteth; still thirsting after more when tasted, 1 Peter 2:3,4.

[2.] Spiritual delights may be said to create a desire, as desire importeth a denial or exclusion of loathing;; for the objects of spiritual delight and the acts whereby they are enjoyed can never exceed the degree and measure required in them, unless by accident, by reason of some bodily act concurrent therewith, and subservient unto the spiritual operation. The desire can never be too great; the expression of it may be burdensome. We may easily exceed the bounds of moderation in carnal things, but not in spiritual; they can never be too high and intense. Therefore fresh desires and earnest longings are still kindled and quickened in us; it never dulls the appetite, but draweth out the soul further and further, and cannot be too eager and zealous after holiness.

3. Another effect of delight is *perficit operationem*, it makes the operation to its object more perfect than otherwise it would be. As a motive or means, it exciteth to a greater care and diligence in promoting the end which we pursue. The delight in the law helpeth to perfect our meditation therein and observation thereof; by its sweetness it quickeneth, provoketh, and allureth to a greater zeal in both. Delight maketh all things easy: 1 John 5:3, 'All her ways are ways of

pleasantness,' Prov. 3:17; 'The Sabbath is a delight,' Isa. 58:13. It facilitates duties, and removes difficulties in working.

Now this delight must be sincere, otherwise they are but like the carnal Jews who did delight to know his ways, Isa. 58:2. It must not be on foreign reasons. And then it must be universal, otherwise it is but like Herod, who 'heard John gladly, and did many things,' &c., Mark 6:20. It must be deeply rooted, otherwise it is but like the seed which fell on the stony ground, 'which received the word with joy, but dureth but for a while,' Mat. 13:20.

Use 1. To show how far they are from the temper of God's children whose delight is in sin or the pleasures of the flesh. These have dreggy, muddy souls; their hearts are on sports, plays, merry-meetings. These desires are soon cloyed, leave a bitterness in the soul; till we condemn them, we are never fit for a holy life. See *Gregory de Valentia*.

Use 2. Have we this delight? The sincerity may be discerned—

1. By the extent. It is extended to all parts of the word, delight in the promises and precepts. To be partial in the law, hypocrites can well allow, Mal, 2:9.

2. It will be discerned by the effects of it. You will often consult with it: Ps. 119:24, 'Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.'

3. It will be a perpetual delight: Job 27:10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' You will own it in affliction, as in the text. Many will delight in God's word when prosperity accompanieth it, but not in trouble and anguish. You will delight in obedience, and in the way of his testimonies; not talk of it, but do it. The young man's delight in Dinah made him circumcise himself, Gen. 34:19.

Lastly, compare it with your delight in things sensible, temporal, and corporeal. If it be sincere and cordial, it will not only equal, but surmount these: ver. 72, 'The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver;' and ver. 162, 'I rejoice in thy word as one that findeth great spoil.' Spiritual good is greater than corporal, our conjunction with it is more intimate, greater and firmer. The part gratified is more noble, the soul than the body; it will make these die that the other may live.

Use 3. Let us be exhorted to do what we can for the begetting, increasing, and cherishing this delight in our hearts. If you love God, you cannot but love his word, which is so perfect a representation of him. If you love holiness, you must needs delight in the word; this is the rule of it. If you love life and happiness,

you must needs delight in the word; this is the way that leadeth us to so blessed and glorious an estate. If you love Christ, you will love the word, which offereth him to you. If you love the new nature, you will delight in the word, which is the seed of it. If you would speed in prayer: ver. 77, 'Let thy tender mercies come unto me, for thy law is my delight.' If you would be supported in affliction: ver. 92, 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction.'

Doct. In the days of our trouble and anguish God's word will be a great delight and comfort to us.

Such a comfort as will overcome the bitterness of our affliction. So saith David here. When all comforts have spent their virtue, then God's word will be a comfort to us.

Here I shall show—

1. What comfort the word holds out to us.
2. Why afflictions do not diminish it.

First, What comforts it holds forth.

1. The privileges of the afflicted: Rom. 5:1,2, 'We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience.' Such may rejoice in tribulations; miseries are unstinged, his rods are not signs of his anger. They are in the favour of God, and his heart is with them, however his hand be smart upon them. The habitude and nature of afflictions is altered in themselves; they are the punishments of sin, and so their natural tendency is to despair and bondage. God seemeth to put the old covenant in suit against unbelieving sinners; but now they are trials, preventions, medicines to believers, that proceed from love, and are designed for their good.

2. The word holdeth forth the blessedness of another world: 2 Cor. 4:17,18, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Hope is not affrighted by affliction, but worketh. Before corn be ripened it needeth all kinds of weather. The husbandman is glad of showers as well as sunshine; rainy weather is troublesome, but the season requireth it.

3. It assureth us of what is acceptable to God: Micah 6:8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?' So it yieldeth comfort through the conscience of our duty, and cheerful reflections on afflicted

innocency. Are not these God's ways which we desire to walk in, and for which we are troubled?

4. The word hath notable precepts that ease the heart: Phil. 4:6, 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God: 1 Peter 5:7, 'Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you;' Prov. 16:3, 'Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.' It biddeth us cast all our cares upon God, and commit ourselves to the guidance of his providence.

5. It giveth us many promises of God's being with us, and strengthening and delivering us, and giving us a gracious issue out of all our troubles: 1 Cor. 10:13, 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' Now it is a great ease to the soul to fly to these promises which are made to his afflicted servants.

6. It breedeth faith, which fixeth the heart: Ps. 112:7, 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' It breedeth fortitude, or cleaving to God under the greatest trials, 2 Sam. 6:22; and Ps. 44:17, 18. Now this becometh a testimony and proof of our love to God, and so bringeth comfort. It breedeth obedience, and the doing of good leaveth a pleasure behind it. After sin a sting remaineth, Rom. 2:14,15. It breedeth waiting and patience when all hope is cut off: Micah 7:7, 'Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation;' when such trouble is on us as no end appeareth of it. Most men's comfort holdeth out but whilst there is hope of turning the stream of things. They are not satisfied in their duty nor comforted with promises, but borne up' with hopes of success.

Secondly, Why afflictions do rather increase than diminish this?

1. They drive us to these comforts. Man liveth by sense more than by faith when he bath anything about him, but his sorrows drive him to God. Indeed, men that wholly forget God in prosperity will not find his word a delight in adversity: Ps. 30:6-8, 'In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved: Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled: I cried unto thee, O Lord,' &c.

2. They prepare us for them; the sweetness of the word is best perceived under the bitterness of the cross. God and his word are never so sweet to the saints as in adversity: Ps. 94:19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul;' and 2 Cor. 1:5, 'As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.'

Use. Let no calamity drive you from the commandments, for there you will find more delight than trouble can take from you, 1 John 3:1,2. Shall the reproach of men have more power to make us sad than the honour of being God's children hath power to make us joyful? Let us be ashamed that we can delight no more: James 1:2, 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;' Mat. 5:12, 'Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven;' for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you;' and 1 Thes. 1:6, 'Ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost'

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