

MAN'S COMFORT.

In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.—

PSALM XCIV. 19.

HEAVEN is a place of infinite glory and joy; yet there is little joy or glory in the way thither. The passage rather lies through much tribulation; so troublesome a gallery leads to so happy a bedchamber. There is not a soul in the cluster of mankind exempted from sorrow, much less shall those grapes escape pressing, which God hath reserved for his own cup. 'All that will live godly in Christ, shall suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. iii. 12. Not all that live, but all that live godly; not all that live godly in respect of outward form, but that live godly in Christ. Paul, his attorney, pleads their afflictions with an *oportet*; and lest some should look for a dispensation, he backs it with an *omnis*. The saints that have overcome the hill, be singing above; we that are climbing up, must be groaning all the way. The anthems in the upper choir, the church triumphant, are all hymns of joy; the militant part must be content with sad tunes in this valley of tears. Not that the blessedness of immortality is no more perfect, but that it needs a foil of perplexity to set it off. Not that the joy of heaven is no more sweet, but that it needs the sourness of the world to give it a taste. Not that the peace and plenty of Canaan required the wants, and molestations of this wilderness to commend it; but so it pleaseth the Almighty King, who of his own free grace doth give the preferment, to interpose the conditions; that the sorrows and the ingloriousness of this world should be the thoroughfare to the glories and joys of his kingdom. For it pleased him to consecrate the prince and captain of our salvation through sufferings; and what privilege can the common soldiers and subjects expect? '*Deus filium habuit unum sine peccato, nullum sine flagello.*' We that hold our inheritance *in capite* have no other title to it than Christ had before us, by suffering.

When we consider David and his troubles, we say, '*Ecce dolores viri,*' Behold the sorrows of a man; but when we consider the Son of David and his passion, we say '*Ecce vir dolorum,*' Behold the man of sorrows. Indeed, if the one balance were full of sorrows, and the other quite empty of comforts, there were an unequal poise. They that do not find some joy in their sorrows, some comfort in their dejections, in this world, are in a fearful danger of missing both in the next. But as it is said in case of bodily sickness, if the patient and the disease join, then in vain is the physician; if

the disease and the physician conspire, then woe be to the patient ; but if the patient and the physician accord, then vanisheth the disease. So we may observe in spiritual distempers : if the soul and sorrow desperately combine, then the Spirit departs, the physician is grieved ; if God and sorrow join in anger, or in anguish, the former justly, the other sharply, then woe to the soul, for that cannot be comforted ; but if the soul by faith, and God by grace, unite themselves, then away flies sorrow, for that is expelled. Here David's soul joins itself with the spirit of consolation, and sorrow loseth the day, and the end is comfort. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.

Here is a twofold army, one marching against another, *seditio et sedatio* ; an insurrection and a debellation ; a tumult and its appeasement ; a band of thoughts assaulting, and a host of comforts repelling, resisting, protecting. There is a multitude of those thoughts, and no less is the number of these comforts. These troublous thoughts have got into the citadel of the heart, '*apud me*,' within me ; and these consolatory forces have entered as far, even into the soul ; '*they delight my soul*.' Those thoughts fight under the colours of flesh and blood, but these comforts under the banner of God ; they are *my* thoughts, but *thy* comforts ; the cogitations of man, but the consolations of Jesus Christ.

1. Look upon the adversary power, 'in the multitude of my thoughts within me.' O that there were some external grievances, a foreign war, no domestic, intestine, civil broils, not turbulent thoughts. Or if they be thoughts, rebellious, heart-breaking cogitations, yet that there were but some few of them, that they might be sooner suppressed ; not so numerous, not a *multitude* of thoughts. Or if they must be thoughts, and a multitude, yet that they had chosen some other place to rise in ; not my heart, the fort, the court, the bedchamber of my spirit ; that they had not presumed unto so bold approaches, as to mutinise '*apud me*,' within my heart, nearer and closer to me than my own bowels. But now to be *thoughts*, of so tumultuous a nature, *multitudes* of so mighty a number ; *within me*, of so fearful a danger, without vent, composition, or quiet, here is a full anxiety.

2. View the defensive forces, and in the midst of this conspiracy make room for preservation : '*Thy comforts delight my soul*.' They are *comforts* ; against litigious and unquiet thoughts ; a work of peace ; comforts. They are not scant and niggardly, but against a multitude of thoughts many *comforts* and every one able to quell a whole rout of distractions. They are *thy* comforts ; not proceeding from men or angels, but immediately from the Spirit of consolation, against *my* sorrows, *thy* comforts. They do not only pitch their tents about me, or, like a subsidiary guard, environ me, but they take up their residence in the heart of my heart, '*In my soul*.' These refresh more than the other can offend ; against the thought in my heart thy comforts delight my soul.

Thus if we be not entered into *Aceldama*, a field of blood, yet are we got to Meribah, a field of strife ; or the mountains of *Bether*, a field of division, not unlike that of Rebekah's womb, where Jacob strove with Esau for the victory. We have seen both the armies ; now let us marshal them into their proper ranks, setting both the squadrons in their due stations and postures, and then observe the success or event of the battle. And because the malignant host is first entered into the ground of my text, consider with me : 1. The rebels, or mutineers, *thoughts*. 2. The number of them, no less than a *multitude*. 3. The captain whose colours they bear ; a

disquieted mind; *my* thoughts. 4. The field where the battle is fought; in the heart; *apud me*, within me.

In the other army we find. 1. *Quanta*, how puissant they are; *comforts*. 2. *Quota*, how many they are, indefinitely set down; abundant comfort. 3. *Cujus*, whose they are; the Lord's, he is their general; *thy* comfort. 4. *Quid operantur*, what they do; they delight the soul. In the nature of them, being comforts, there is tranquillity; in the number of them, being many comforts, there is sufficiency; in the owner of them, being *thy* comforts, there is omnipotency; and in the effect of them, delighting the soul, there is security. There is no *fear* in them, for they come for peace, they are comforts. There is no *weakness* in them, for they come in troops, there are many comforts. There is no *disorder* in them, for the God of wisdom is their captain, and leads their forces, they are *thy* comforts. There is no *trouble* in them, for they evangelise joy, '*they delight the soul.*'

1. The rebels are thoughts. Man is an abridgment of the world, and is not exceeded by it but in quantity; his pieces be not *pauciora*, *sed minora*. If all the veins of our bodies were extended to rivers, our sinews to mines, our muscles to mountains, our bones to quarries of stone, our eyes to the figures of the sun and moon, and all other parts to the proportions of such things as correspond to them in this world: man might stride over the sea, as the Hebrews feigned of Adam; the air would be too little for him to move in, and the whole firmament but enough for this star; yea, indeed, this little world would be the great one, and that great one appear but the little one. There is nothing in this world for which we may not find some answerable part in man; but there is something in man for which we can find no answerable part in the world; I need not say '*part*,' for the whole world is not able to give any representation. Man hath a soul, made after the image of God; of this the world can yield no resemblance. The world produceth innumerable creatures; man yet in more abundance. Our creatures are our thoughts, creatures that are born giants, that can reach from east to west, from north to south, from earth to heaven. These can survey the whole earth, bestride the ocean, comprehend the vast air, and span the very firmament.

How capable, how active, is the soul of man! It is even comprehensive of universality, and hath '*virtutem ad infinita*;' nature hath set no limits to the thoughts of the soul. It can pass by her nimble wings from earth to heaven in a moment; it can be all things, comprehend all things, know that which is, and conceive of that which never was, and never shall be. The heart is but a little house, and hath but three chambers, yet there is room enough for a world of guests. God, the Creator of all, made this soul in a cottage of clay, and this soul is a kind of creator too; for though it dwell in a close prison, it can produce creatures, even *thoughts*; and any one of these creatures can move with the heavens, move faster than the heavens, overtake the sun and overgo the sun; contemplate that which the sun never saw, even the dreadful abyss of hell, and a glimpse of the glory of heaven. So various and innumerable are the thoughts of man, that he had need of an astrolabe, to mark in what height and elevation they are, and so either to advance them or to stoop them, as they deserve.

There be three sorts of actions proceeding from the soul: some internal and immaterial, as the pure acts of our wits and wills; some external and material, as the mere acts of our sense; others mixed between both, and bordering upon both the former, which St Augustine says, the Greeks call *ταβη*, the Latins *perturbationes*. As the heart inspireth one and the same strength and life into

all the parts of the body, for the better discharge of their diverse functions, though all the parts do not receive it in the same degree. The stomach, by the virtue it receiveth, is made able to digest; the liver, to concoct the nutriment into blood; the spleen, like a sponge, by sucking up the melancholy spirits, to purge the vital parts;—so the soul breeds all these creatures, gives life to all these thoughts, yet according to their several acts and offices, they have several names. If they be sensitive, we call them passions; if sensual, lusts; if fantastical, imaginations; if reasonable, arguments; if reflective, conscience; as they are evil, the suggestions of Satan; as good, the motions of the Holy Ghost. As the world produceth vipers, and serpents, and venomous creatures, worms and caterpillars that would devour their parent, so the soul breeds noxious and mutinous thoughts, that are like an earthquake in her bowels; and while they maintain civil broils and factions one against another, she feels the smart of all.

Some thoughts be the darts of Satan; and these *non nocent, si non placent*. We cannot keep thieves from looking in at our windows, but we need not give them entertainment with open doors. As the hermit said, he could not keep the birds from flying over his head; but he could keep them from building their nests in his hair. 'Wash thy heart from iniquity, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?' Jer. iv. 14. They may be passengers, but they must not be sojourners. God hath made a statute against such inmates; it is an unblest hospitality that gives them lodging; and he is no friend to the king that harbours these seminaries. Other thoughts be the motions of God's Spirit; and these must not only be guests, but familiar friends; salutation here is not enough, but glad entertainment, welcome and indulgence. Let no man like himself the better for some good thoughts; the praise and benefit of these is not in the receipt, but in the retention. Easy occasions will frighten away good thoughts from a carnal heart; like children who, if a bird do but fly in their way, cast their eye from their book. But David's thoughts here were anxious, commotive thoughts; otherwise, they stood not in such need of comforts. It is likely they were either *timoris*, fearful thoughts, or *doloris*, sorrowful thoughts; thoughts of fear for what might be or thoughts of sorrow for what already was.

The thoughts of fear are troublesome enough; as the ill affections of the spleen do mingle themselves with every infirmity of the body, no less doth fear insinuate itself into every passion of the mind. David might find this complication in his mind. I will please Saul with my harp; but then fear replies, He will strike me through with his javelin. He will give his own daughter in marriage; but fear says again, Now, if this prove a fatal dowry, if this match be my snare, I will refuge myself with Achish at Gath; yet what trust is there in infidels? I will be hidden in Keilah, or Hachilah; but fear suggests, How if the Ziphites discover me? What shall I do? whither shall I go? where shall I rest? These were thoughts that stood in great need of comfort.

The thoughts of sorrow are yet more distractive, and such were this royal prophet's; as our Vulgate reads, 'In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart.' What was the cause of those griefs? The slipping of his foot, his errors, his deviations, his sins. Other sorrows may disquiet the soul; none but these have the promise to be comforted. As in martyrdom, it is not the sword or torture, not what we suffer, but why, that makes us martyrs. So in our sorrows, it is not how deep they penetrate, or how sharply they cruciate, but wherefore, that approves their goodness. If our

sins be the *why* of our sorrows, we are blessed. 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,' Matt. v. 4. Vain are the sighs and groans that proceed only from the thought of worldly losses. A medicine that cureth the eyes, we say, was made for the eyes, and nothing else. We lose our wealth, and sorrow for it. Will sorrow recover it? We are despised and abused, and we grieve for it. Will grief right us? We bury our friends, and mourn for them. Will mourning restore them to us? We are crossed by unkindly children, and weep for it. Will weeping rectify them? We are anguished in our bodies with pains and sicknesses, and are sorry for it. Will sorrow heal us? Nay, will it not rather hurt us? All our thoughts, and cares, and griefs, and tears, can do us no good, no relief in these calamities; sorrow was not made for these things. But we sin and offend the Lord, and we are sorrowful for it. Here is the disease for which sorrow is the proper remedy; penitent sorrow shall take away sin. *Quamvis peccavit David; quod solent reges: tamen penitentiam egit, flevit, jejunavit, quod non solent reges.** Saith Saint Ambrose, who wrote him an apology, 'While the ground of our sorrow is our sin, the choicest descendant on it must be our sorrow.' Our thoughts and griefs may be many, but if they be not spent upon our sin, we shall not be comforted.

2. The number of them is a multitude. We may say of sorrows as it is said of shrewd turns, they seldom come single. Like a volley of folding waves, one tumbling on the neck of another, all threatening to overwhelm us; *unda superadvenit unda*. It is too scant a name which Leah gave her son, calling him *Gad*, 'a troop cometh,' Gen. xxx. 11; and but enough what the demoniac answered Christ, 'My name is legion, for we are many,' Mark v. 9. If they were a multitude, and not sorrows, then the more the merrier; if they were sorrows, and not a multitude, then the fewer the better cheer. But to be disquieting thoughts, and a multitude, makes up a terrible agony. 'Many are the troubles of the righteous,' Ps. xxxiv. 19; great or many, a great many, a great deal too many, but for the comfort of the deliverance. When Job's afflictions began, they came in troops and hurries; so thick, that he could scarce take breath; one messenger pressing in with his woful relation, before the other have ended his sad tale. 'While he was yet speaking,' Job. i. 16. How did that fugitive prophet amplify and aggravate his dangers? 'Thou hast cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about; all thy waves and thy billows passed over me,' Jonah ii. 3. It was no shallow river, but the sea; not near the shore, but in the midst of the sea; nor was he floating on the waves, but plunged into the deep, or bottom; the floods compassing, the billows overwhelming, to keep him down. I need not travel for exemplifications.

Let him be our instance that spake what he felt, and felt what he spake; sorrows enough to break any heart, but that which God had framed according to his own. His son Amnon ravisheth his own sister, and is murdered by his own brother. That murder is seconded by treason, and that treason with an incestuous constupration. The insurrection of his own son hath driven him from his house, from his throne, and from the ark of God. All this went near him; but that son is slain by his servant, and that went nearer him still. In what a miserable perplexity may we think the heart of this good king was all the while! Here was thought upon thought, and thought against thought. How at once to spare the son of David, and yet

* Chrysa. Hom. 2, ad pop. Antioch.

to save the father of Absalom ; fear against hope, north against south, and wind against tide. *Arma armis contraria, fluctibus undæ* ; a multitude of thoughts, able to rend the heart in pieces, but for that recollection of mercy, 'Thy comforts delight my soul.'

Not seldom fares it thus with us. Thought calls to thought, jealousy to fear, fear to sorrow, sorrow to despair ; and these furies leap upon the heart as a stage, beginning to act their tragical parts. Man hath more wheels moving in him than a clock ; only the difference is, that the wheels of a clock move all one way, whereas his faculties, like the epicycles, have a rapt motion. His sensitive appetite gives him one motion, his fantasy another, his reason a third, and his imperious, impetuous will crosseth them all, driving the chariot of his affections with the fury of Jehu. He desires and thinks, and chooseth, argues, consents, and dislikes, and makes more business than time itself. There are not so many hours in one year, as there may be thoughts in an hour.* The philosopher that had shamed himself by weakly disputing with Adrian the emperor, thus excused himself to his friend, 'Would you have me contend with him that commands thirty legions ?' Alas ! what can quiet that soul which is distracted with such legions and multitudes of thoughts, and throngs of sorrows ?

8. The captain of this troublesome soul is himself ; *my* thoughts. From what suggestion soever our thoughts come, we call them our own ; as who-soever begot the babe, the mother calls it her own child. Indeed, the praise and propriety of good motives we ascribe only to God, without whom we cannot so much as think a good thought ; as the channel may gather filth of itself, but it cannot have a drop of pure water but from the fountain. Bad suggestions, though they proceed from Satan, we call them our own, because they are bred in the womb of our natural corruption ; stubble is blown by the wind into the fire, and, being inflamed, it becomes fire. The devil tempted David to sin, yet he calls it his sin ; not Satan's, but his own, 'I will be sorry for my sin.' However Epictetus could say, When evil happens to a man, one of the vulgar will blame others, but a young philosopher would blame himself ; but one that dived into the depths of nature would blame neither the one nor the other ; yet a Christian hath learned to blame himself, as knowing that all his sorrows proceed from himself.

My thoughts : thus easy is it with God to make a man become his own punisher. Under whose regiment are all these troubles ? Under *myself* ; *my* thoughts. As God threatens Tyre, that ancient and glorious city, that 'her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn,' Isa. xxiii. 7, so our own feet shall carry us, our own creatures torment us ; like diamonds, we are cut with our own dust. When David had numbered the people, his own heart smote him ; God finds the rod within us wherewith to scourge us. As some vapour engendered in the caverns of the earth struggles for vent, and being barred of free passage, causeth an earthquake in the foundations that bred it ; or as some fiery exhalation, wrapped up in the bowels of a thick cloud, breaks through that watery resistance and delivers itself to the world with a dreadful noise ; so the griefs and perturbations begotten by our own lusts become terrors within us, and rend our very hearts till they get vent by confession and repentance ; thus do we muster up forces against our own peace. We pray, Lord, deliver us from our enemies, and in that number do we wrap up our unthought of selves, for we are our own enemies.

* *Plura machinatur cor meum uno momento, quam omnes homines perficere possunt uno anno.—Hugo. l. 8, de anima.*

'Turn thy hand upon mine enemies,' for thou canst do it with the turning of a hand. 'Deliver me from the evil man,' Ps. lxxxi. 14. Who is that, saith St Augustine? he is not far to seek; *libera me ab homine malo*; that is, a *meipso*, deliver me from the evil man, that is, from myself. I am the aptest to beget destruction upon my own soul; no enemy could hurt us if we were our own friends.

But we must not extend it so far upon this holy king; they were thoughts indeed, and thoughts of sorrow, but of godly sorrow, and he calls them his own, to shew his near acquaintance with them, *my sorrows*. He was not a stranger to his own soul, his heart was not dead flesh. Satan had given him a fall, and he felt not that; sin had given him divers falls, and he felt not them neither: at last God undertakes him, wrestles with him, and gives him a fall too: he felt that, yea, that made him feel all the rest. Now is he sensible of every pang and stitch, the least thorn makes him smart, and he cries out of the multitude of his sorrows. There be some that can drown their griefs in wine and music, as they did in Hinnom; the cry of the infants with the noise of the instruments, as if they would forget that they are the owners of their own thoughts, because they trouble them. Many deal with their souls as some old women do with looking-glasses: they turn the wrong side toward them, that they may not see the furrows of their own faces. They are loath to think of a reckoning, lest they should despair of making even the arrearages. Men have the courage to dare to sin, but they dare not look on their souls, as they are polluted with sin. I have heard of a melancholy man that would not believe he had a head, till his physician made him a hat of lead and put it on, which weight enforced him to cry, 'Oh, my head.' So men lost in sensual pleasures, scarce remember that they have a soul within them, until miseries, like talents of lead, or quarries of stone, with their heavy pressure, squeeze out a confession.

No things be so near as a man and his soul. '*Tota domus duo sunt*,' the whole household is but two; yea, why should they be called two? We may say in a right sense, '*Mens cujusque, is est quisque*,' every man's soul is himself. If there be any division, sin made it; a just punishment, '*ut qui nollet cum Deo uniri, non possit in semetipso non dividi*.' All these quarrels and brawls may thank sin; that is the make-bate betwixt God and us, betwixt us and ourselves. But that man and his soul be grievously fallen out, that will not speak one to another; when he shall pass a whole day and not ask how his soul does. This were too much between man and wife; when he shall lie down in his bed, as the beast doth in his litter, without bidding his soul good night; when he shall have fouled and besmeared his soul with the nasty aspersions of lusts, and not sweep out the dust before he shut the door; not wash his soul with tears before his eyelids be closed down with slumber; yea, when he shall have lived and wounded his soul with blasphemies and uncharitable injuries, and then throw it down in a deluge of drink, as if it were weltering in its own gore, without calling for repentance, the chirurgeon, to dress it. What madness and self-hatred is this? When the soul may not have leave to think over her own thoughts, to reflect upon herself, to search her own bruises, to survey the multitude of her sorrows, and feel in what need she stands of comforts? That '*plenusque notus, ignotus moriatur sibi*?' But the children of God have learned to commune with their own hearts, to examine every thought, and to weigh every desire in the balance of the sanctuary. Whether they find themselves pensive or joyful, they will search the cause; as Rebekah said when she felt the children struggle in her womb, 'Why am I thus?' Whether fear

or hope, joy or pain, have invaded my thoughts, let me ask my soul the reason, 'Why am I thus?' The fathers were excellent good at this; they had their confessions and soliloquies, familiar conferences with their own hearts; that when a man reads them, he would think they kept no other company but themselves. Conference with others may make us wise or learned, but conference with ourselves is the way to make us holy. Tell thy conscience of all suggestions, as the chaste wife, after some peremptory denials to her impudent tempter, professes to tell her husband of those solicitations; such and such be my thoughts, thus and thus they harrass me; what shall I do with them? Indifferency is no less than self-treachery in matters of such consequence, that come so near me as to be '*apud me*.'

4. *Within me*: for this is the field where the skirmish is fought; *within me*. It is unhappy when soldiers march over the palaces of peace and seats of justice, where the counsellors and senators used to sit. If there must be war, let it be in foreign countries, or if it will be in our own land, yet let it proceed no further than the borders; but when it is gotten into the chief city, though it be subdued, it will cost a dear victory. As Pyrrhus, when his friends congratulated his victory over the Romans, with a great loss of his own side, replied, 'Yes; but if we had such another victory, we should be undone.' There is no penitent heart that hath felt the bitterness of these combats, remembering what sighs and sorrows, what groans and tears it hath cost him to make his peace, but would be loath to be put to the charges of such another conquest. *Durius ejicitur, quam non admittitur hostis*; sin may be kept out with ease, but will not be driven out save with woful expenses.

Within me; not *before me*, as the host of the Philistines lay before Saul; not *behind me*, as the chariots of Egypt came thundering behind Israel; nor *above me*, as Fabius Maximus on the mountain above Hannibal. *Imminet nubes*, a cloud hangs over me; not *round about me*, as the Syrians compassed Dothan to take Elisha; but *within me*. 'Without were fightings, within were fears,' 2 Cor. vii. 5; and those fears within were worse than those fightings without. There are external calamities enough to shake the most fortified soul; but '*Summus dolor est ab intus*.' St Paul reckons up twelve of his inflicted sufferings, nine dangers, and eight continued passions; yet, as if these were scarce worth putting into the catalogue, he adds, 'besides the things that are without,' 2 Cor. xi. 28. He had an inward trouble: the care of the churches, seeking the lost, rebuking the proud, and comforting the dejected. Here was the pain.

Within me. There may be *bellum intestinum* a kind of unkind battle. When *victi victoresque invicem dolent*; the soul bespeaking her affections, as Jocasta did her quarrelling sons. *Bella geri placuit nullo triumphos habitura*.

According to our Saviour's prediction, a man's foes shall be they of his own household. *Intra me est, quod contra me est*; that is within me, which is against me. We say he wants an enemy, that fights with himself, and because he fights with himself, he wants no enemy, *sibi pessimus hostis*. With external assaults we may grapple, threatened mischiefs we may prevent; from persecutors too potent for us we may hide ourselves, but who shall keep us from ourselves? *Nescis temeraria, nescis quem fugias, ideoque fugis*. Whithersoever we remove, we carry our sorrows with us. Outward afflictions are a war, turbulent affections a worse war, both against us; but this latter is within us. He needs no other misery, that is troubled within himself. Ask not the anger of heaven, nor the trouble of earth, nor the

dangers of the sea, nor the malice of hell, against him whom his own thoughts have beaten down. He will say to all other miserable complainers, 'You are happy.' Outward things may go cross with us, and yet the peace of the soul remain sound; but a wounded spirit who can bear? who can cure? As man's heart is the first that lives, and the last that dies, so it is the first that Satan assaults, and the last that he gives over. Yea, were there never a devil, the heart hath an ill spirit of its own to vex it. As some boroughs of this land plead a privilege, that they can hang and draw within themselves, so man's heart is such a corporation. It can execute itself within itself, without any foreign judge or executioner. If we look no further than among the multitude of our thoughts, might we not make a shift to think ourselves to hell? If we had neither hands, nor eyes, nor feet, would not our hearts find the way thither?

Within me. The proper seat and lodging of these troublesome inmates, the thoughts of sorrow, is the heart; whithersoever they wander, there they centre. Vagabonds taken roguing out of their own precincts, are sent with a passport to the town where they were born; there they must be kept. Extravagant thoughts may rove up and down, but back again they must to the heart: the house that hatched them must harbour them, must answer for them. As all faculties of sense have their several seats; *seeing* is confined to the eyes, *hearing* to the ears, *feeling* to the flesh and sinews: so these perturbations are limited to the heart. The local seat of the sensitive apprehension is the brain; of the sensitive affection, the heart. In the former is softness and moisture, fit to receive intelligible forms; in the other are fiery spirits, fit for passionate and affectionate thoughts. 'My spirit is overwhelmed, and my heart within me is desolate,' Ps. cxliii. 4. In such a distress, let sense inform reason, reason speak to will, will to conscience, conscience to faith, faith to Christ, and Christ to his Father; and they will both send the Holy Ghost to comfort us. If there be a fire in the heart of a city, all the suburbs will come to quench it. This fire may burn within, but it will break out. It is as easy to stifle thunder in the cloud, or fire in powder, as sorrow in the heart. It will have eruption either by the voice in cries, or by the eyes in tears, or by the speaking silence of the look in a dejected heaviness. The seat of sorrow is the soul; but it will overflow the boundaries. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' None ask their eyes why they weep, or their voices why they lament, or their hands why they wring themselves. But *Anima, quare tam tristis!* 'Oh, my soul, why art thou disquieted within me?'

II. We see now the full advancement of the misery. The thoughts of sorrow, an *army* of those thoughts, the *combination* of that army, the *terror* of that combination; how miserable must that country suffer where these rebels march? Who can tell the taking of that heart which feels that combustion within itself? These be our enemies, where are our friends? The day is like to be fatally disastrous, if we have no defensive forces. Yes, 'the Lord shall fight for us, and we will hold our peace,' Exod. xiv. 4. As Moses comforted Israel, when the choice was hard, whether to trust the fury of the sea before them, or of the Egyptians behind them: 'Stand still, fear not, and see the salvation of the Lord.' Now are the white ensigns of mercy displayed against these bloody streamers: never to a handful of men almost famished in a fort, did the tidings of fresh aid to raise the siege arrive more welcome. 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,' John xi. 21. Though this multitude of oppressors overlay my heart, yet, Lord, if thou comest, my soul shall not perish. Let your patience sit

out the success of the battle ; and though I wish you not such conflicts, yet, if they do come, may you never fail of such comforts. 'Thy comforts delight my soul.'

1. *Quanta*. They are no less than *comforts*: not presumptions, nor promises, nor mere hopes ; but solid and sensible comforts. God made comfort on purpose for sorrow, as mercy would want a subject to exercise upon, but for misery. The blessed angels are not said to be comforted, because they never knew what heaviness meant ; they are conserved, they are confirmed, not properly comforted. There may be joy without any antecedent sorrow, as the angelical spirits ever were, and ever shall be, filled with unspeakable joy. But comfort is the proper physic for trouble : this happy nature was not ordained but for sorrow. There may be some that *ducunt in bonos dies suos*, that have their ways strewed with violets and roses ; these have no need of comfort. What physician ministers cordials to the strong and healthful constitution ? It is the broad thoroughfare of the world, which the devil is so studious to smoothe, that he leaves not a pebble in the way to offend them ; as if he were that tutelar angel, who hath a charge to look to them, that they dash not their foot against a stone, Ps. xci. 12. If they sigh, he sings to them ; if they sleep, he sits by them : whispering to all troubles, as the spouse to the daughters of Jerusalem, 'I charge you, O ye transgressions of his heart, waken him not till he please.' Let there be no noise of fear, no alarm of repentance, no susurrations of conscience to molest him : peace, peace, lie down in peace, with thy warm sins cleaving to thy bosom. The prophet gives you their character : 'They lie upon beds of ivory ; they eat the lambs of the flock, and the calves out of the stall ; they chant to the sound of viols, and dance to instruments, and drink wine in bowls,' Amos vi. 4. What should these men do with comforts ? Joy, and nothing else but the voice of joy, resounds in their habitations. It is poor, afflicted Joseph that needs comfort.

Consolation then is made for sorrow, and not for every sorrow neither. Some is produced by no other cause but temporal losses, pains, or injuries ; so Esau may mourn long enough without recovery of his father's blessing. Worldly sorrow bringeth death, not delight, to the soul. Many weep, as Rachel did in Ramah for her children, because they were not ; but they neither are, nor ever will be, comforted. There are tears that got sinful Esau nothing, and there be tears that got sinful Mary salvation. If the sorrow that swells our bosom with sighs, and is ready to burst our hearts, be spent upon our sins, it shall be sure of comforts. Are we full of grief within, and find no vent but by the groans and tears of repentance ? God may let us bleed for a while, till we be thoroughly humbled ; but then, like the woman, the pangs of whose travail be over, the son of joy shall be born in our wombs, even that son which the blessed Virgin bore from her womb. *Filius dilectionis, Filius dilectionis*, Jesus Christ.

2. *Quota*. There is a plurality of them ; many comforts. What should encounter with sorrow but comfort ? Comfort, therefore, it is for the nature. What should oppose a multitude, but a multitude ? Many comforts, therefore, they are for their number. Are we troubled with the wants and miseries of this life ? We have a comfort for that : 'The Lord is my portion ; he is my shepherd. I shall lack nothing.' Do we sink under the burden of our transgressions ? We have a comfort for that. Mary Magdalene heard it to quiet all her storms : 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' Are we haunted with temptations, hurried with persecutions ? We have a

comfort for that: 'I will be with thee in trouble,' saith the Lord. Let your Christian experience supply here my defects of remonstrance. I will sum up these comforts in a few words: 'The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil,' Joel ii. 18. We read of certain Fair Havens near Candia, Acts xxvii. 8; here be five fountains of comfort, like those fair havens, as welcome for harbour and road of a sea-beaten conscience, as ever was the bosom of mother for her sucking child. Drink at the first fountain: 'The Lord is gracious,' free in his favours; if your thirst be not satisfied, go to the second: 'He is merciful,' he hath bowels of commiseration; if not yet, press to the next: 'He is slow to anger,' hard to conceive it, not willing to retain it. Wish we more? He is 'of great kindness' in the number and measure of his blessings. There is yet another well of comfort behind: 'Repenting him of the evil;' full often doth he turn aside his blows, and is easily entreated to have the rod pulled out of his hands. David, to encounter with the giant, took 'five smooth stones out of the brook,' 1 Sam. xvii. 40; here is the brook, and these the five smooth stones. Let them not lie in the channel-unused, but put them in your vessels, bear them in your hearts; whensoever you are defied and assaulted by that monster Philistine Satan, one of these comforts, like David's stone, shall sink into his forehead and confound him.

How happily do these comforts meet with these sorrows! We are troubled with the sense of our sins, and of God's judgment upon them; how should his justice acquit us? Yet there is comfort, 'the Lord is gracious,' and cannot deny himself. But we are unworthy of his grace, because we have turned it into wantonness; yet there is comfort, for the Lord is 'merciful,' and sheweth most pity where most it is needed. But we have multiplied offences, and continued in our sins to our grey hairs; yet there is comfort, He is 'slow to anger,' evermore blessed for his long sufferance. But our iniquities be not of an ordinary quality, they are heinous and intolerable; yet there is comfort, for he is 'of great kindness,' and our wickedness cannot be so great as his kindness; for of that there is no comprehension. But we are out of his favour, because he hath smitten us, our bodies with sore diseases, our souls with agonies, and our families with privations; yet there is comfort, he will 'repent of the evil.' In the hour of death, when the senses are past working, the understanding asleep, the body in a cold and benumbed sweat, these comforts never leave us: 'Return unto thy rest, O my soul,' Ps. cxvi. 7.

Our comforts vie with the number of our sorrows, and win the game. The mercies of God passed over in a gross sum breed no admiration; but cast up the particulars, and then arithmetic is too dull an art to number them. As many dusts as a man's hands can hold, is but his handful of so many dusts; but tell them one by one, and they exceed all numeration. It was but a crown which King Solomon wore; but weigh the gold, tell the precious stones, value the richness of them, and what was it then? Jerusalem was but a city; but go round about it, mark the towers, tell the bulwarks, observe the magnificent buildings: so consider the infinite variety of these comforts! 'Come, and I will tell you all that God hath done for my soul,' Ps. lxxvi. 16. I never felt that sorrow for which he gave me not a sovereign comfort. Sennacherib invaded Israel with a mighty host, yet the undaunted courage of Hezekiah found more with him than could be against him; and Sennacherib found it so to his cost, when he lost almost two hundred thousand of his army in one night. The prophet's servant

rising early in the morning, sees the city besieged with a fearful host of foot, horse, and chariots; his eyes could meet with nothing but woods of pikes, walls of harness, and lustre of metals, and he runs in with this affrighting news to his master: 'Alas! what shall we do?' 2 Kings vi. 16. Quiet Elisha sits in his chamber, as secure as if all these had been the guard of Israel, sent for his safe protection. 'Fear not.' This was a hard precept; as well might he have bidden him not to see what he saw, as not to fear seeing so dreadful a spectacle. But the task is easy if the next words find belief: 'They that be with us are more than they that be with them.' If the eyes of our faith be as open as those of our sense, to see angels as well as Syrians, to perceive comforts as well as sorrows, we cannot be appalled with the most unequal number of our enemies: 'Many, O Lord, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done for us; they cannot be reckoned,' Ps. xl. 5. O God, what is man that thou art so mindful of him? Yea, O man, what is God that thou art so unmindful of him? All the works of God are excellent, and ought to be had in remembrance; alas! that we should ever forget any of his works that are of mercy and comfort, and done for the good of our souls. For he alone hath done them; that is the next point.

8. *Cujus*. Whose they are? 'Thy comforts.' Troubles may be of our own begetting; but true comforts come only from that infinite fountain, the God of consolation; for so he hath styled himself. The eagle, at her highest flight, will not lose sight of her young ones; if she perceive any danger approaching, down she comes amain to their defence. Christ is indeed ascended up on high, yet he hath a favourable eye to his servants below; no Saul can 'breathe out threatenings and slaughters' without a '*Quid me persequeris?*' '*Nec timeas hostem fortem, qui ducem habes fortiorum.*' 'Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered.' There is none that fighteth for us but only thou, O God, Ps. lxxviii. 1. '*Cujusquam est rempublicam movere, Dei solius quietare.*' Our own hearts can distract themselves, there is nothing to settle them but what the God of peace puts in. Who can reconcile a man fallen out with himself? yea, fallen from himself? None but the God of comfort, who, when the earth was void, without form, when darkness was on the face of the deep, day and night, land and water undistinguished, could reduce all this unshapen chaos of the world to form and order; when father, mother, brethren, kindred, friends, neighbours, and a man's own heart forsakes him, then God takes him up. The structure of Jericho was not more pleasant than the waters were unwholesome, and, thereby, the soil corrupt. Elisha cures them with a cruseful of salt. Our hearts are full of thoughts, but they be noxious thoughts; yet if God throw into those fountains a handful of saving grace, we shall be whole. Our sorrows would too often break our hearts, but, O God, for thy comforts: it is thou only that canst make these weak vessels hold such scalding liquors and not burst.

There is combustion of these thoughts within us, till God part the fray and pacify the tumult; as when scholars are loud in their brawls, the very sight of their master husheth them. When my heart, like the sea in a storm, is troubled, the winds raging, the waves roaring, thy comforts, like Christ's command, turns all into a calm: 'I thought on thee in the night season, and received comfort.' In the night, the region of fear; in solitariness, the full advantage of sorrow; in darkness, the opportunity of despair; upon an unsleeping bed, the field of troublous thoughts; yet I did but think of thee, and before I came to meditate, to pray, to send up

my soul to thee, in that first thought I received comfort. O how short do all worldly things come of this sufficiency! If the heart be wounded with sorrow, in vain is all the chirurgery of nature. Gold is no restoration, riches no cordial; yea, they may be a corrosive. We say to wine, Thy spirits are dull; to laughter, Thou art mad; music grates the ear, and physic loathes the palate; company is tedious, and solitude dangerous; alas! what hope can there be till the God of comfort comes? Saul's evil spirit will not leave him till he be dispossessed by David's harp. We find as much ease when we rest our hearts upon temporal things, as he that laid him down to rest upon the cold earth with a pitcher under his head; and finding the pillow too hard, he rose and stopped it with feathers, thinking that then it would be wondrous easy. So be all temporary things to the soul, even when they are filled with the choicest mirth; nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit: vanity in their entertainment, and vexation in their farewell. Yet, O Lord, *thy* comforts

4. *Delight the soul*, which is the last circumstance; the effect of all. All God's war is for peace: *pacem habet voluntas, bellum necessitas*. We should never have had such a conflict, if God had not intended us for such a conquest. Sin disquiets the heart; yet, through his grace, this disquiet breeds repentance, repentance procureth forgiveness, forgiveness restoreth peace, and peace delights the soul. The sharpness of the trouble advanceth the sweetness of the joy; as Christ's sufferings abound, so his comforts superabound. Every penitent tear that falls from the eye, springs up a flower of comfort. Look how full the vessels were of water, so full doth our Saviour render them of wine. In hell are all sorrows, without any comforts; in heaven are all comforts, without any sorrows; on earth, good and bad, sweet and sour, miseries and mercies, sorrows and comforts, are blended together. If here were nothing but sorrows, earth would be thought hell; if nothing but comforts, it would be thought heaven. But that we may know it to be, as indeed it is, neither heaven nor hell, but between both, and the way to either, we have a vicissitude of troubles and delights. That as of old they painted King Solomon, because learned men were divided in their opinions of him, some casting him to hell, others advancing him to heaven; therefore a third moderate sort painted him half in heaven and half in hell. So the Christian, in regard of his sorrows, seems half confounded, and, in respect of his comforts, half saved. But as indeed Solomon, after all his errors, found mercy; so the Christian, after all his sorrows, shall find comfort. His beginning may seem troublesome, his proceeding not delightful, but his latter end is peace. 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace,' Ps. xlvii. 37. His heart was troubled, his soul shall be delighted.

As the grievances of the soul be most dangerous in respect of their nature, so are they also abundant in their number. Therefore let our care be to seek out that great elixir, that most sovereign and universal antidote and cordial.

(1.) One soul complains: I have obloquies, reproaches, calumnies cast upon me, which render me contemptible to good societies. Morality would thus argue with the heart. Be these imputations, thus charged on me, true or false? If true, let the integrity of thy future conversation so convince thy associates, that they shall both suspect those reports, and rest assured of thy constant goodness.

But the divine grace applies a more virtual medicine to thy conscience, which shall revive either thy patience or thy repentance. The soul shall

argue with itself: If these imputations be true, here is work for repentance; I will weep in secret for my sins. If false, let them not trouble me; it is the slanderer's sin, not mine; neither am I bound to father another's bastard. But still upon this calumny the world condemns me. But thy faith and patience assure thee that thou shalt not be condemned with the world. Yea, there is yet a higher degree of honour belonging to thy patience. Have not the best of men been traduced? Was not the best of men, God and man, blasphemed? Yea, even upon the cross, he was jeered when he died, by some of them for whom he died. Thus do the comforts of God requite thee, that in all this thou art, in thy measure, conformable to the sufferings of Christ. So dost thou allay all these furious tempests with one breath of faithful ejaculation, 'Thy comforts delight my soul.'

(2.) Another complains: I am fallen from an affluent state to deep indigence. I have kept hospitality, to entertain friends; and made charity the porch of my house, to relieve the needy ones. The vessel of my means is now drawn out to the bottom, there is not sufficient provision for my own family. Inquire of thy heart, whether thy decay did not come by thy own riot, or through the vain-glorious affectation of an abundant hospitality. If this, or that, or any other habitual sin, were the first cause of it, begin with mortification there. First mourn for thy sins, then faithfully depend on thy Creator's providence, and thou shalt not fail of convenient sustenance.

But it may be this is not the complainant's case; he is not taken with a tale or wasting away of his substance, like a scarce sensible consumption of his bodily vitals. But his fall is with a precipice, from a sublime pinnacle of honour to a deep puddle of penury. Such was Job's condition; so did he fall, from being rich and happy in the adverb to being poor and miserable in the proverb. He had not only abundance of good about him, but *omnia bene*, all things went well with him. Yet how suddenly did he fall from this abundant prosperity to the depth of miserable poverty! Did he now follow the suggestions of that corrupt nature which lay in his bosom, and whispered to him on his pillow, 'Curse God and die?' No; but he apprehended the inspiration of grace, 'Bless God and live.' So his last days were better than his first. That infinite mercy did so crown his patience with triumph, that his temporal estate was doubled. Yea, but what posterity had he left to enjoy it after him? Yes, but even the number of his children was doubled too. For besides those seven sons and three daughters, which were now with his Father in heaven, he had also seven sons and three daughters with himself on earth. Piety and patience cannot be cast down so low, but that the hand of mercy can raise it up again. 'In the multitude of all my losses and crosses, O Lord, thy comforts have delighted my soul.'

(8.) But another, that hath heard all this sad story, and seen the comfortable end sent of the Lord, is not satisfied; because himself is not redressed. Like a coward in war, that looks for the victory before he gives one stroke in the battle. What merchant looks to be landed in the place of traffic before he hath passed his adventure upon the sea? Still, saith such a repiner, I am in distress, and want even necessaries. But still thou and we all must suffer much more before it can be said, 'Here is the faith and patience of the saints.' Still, O my soul, wait thou upon the Lord, thy most faithful Creator; he will, in his own good pleasure, open his hand, and fill thee with plenteousness. Be thou penitent before him, patient under him, confident in him, and thou shalt have abundant

cause to be thankful to him. Thy end shall be peace and comfort in Jesus Christ.

Yea, even now, in these dead, low waters of fugitive fortunes, my soul confesseth that I have the highest wealth. For Christ's righteousness is my riches, his merits my inexhaustible exchequer, his blood hath filled my veins with the most lively vigour. My treasure is in heaven, where no violence can take it from me. Still for ever and for ever thy comforts delight my soul.

(4.) It is another's complaint: I am shut up in a close prison, where I can neither converse with others abroad, nor let others in to communicate with me in this my confined home. The sparrow on the house-top hath more freedom than I. For that, though wanting a mate, hath an open air to fly in, and may so invite company to solace her. I have no society but my disconsolate thoughts, no friend to ask me so much as how I do.

Yet is thy soul at liberty. No barricaded walls, no iron gates or grates, no dark dungeons can imprison that. The jail is a strong prison to thy body, and thy body is but, in a metaphorical phrase, a prison to thy soul. Thy body may not walk abroad, thy soul can. Spite of all thy cruel creditors, and some unmerciful jailors, she can break prison. She hath wings that can mount her through clouds and mountains, through orbs and constellations, and, like Enoch, walk with God, in a heavenly contemplation of his infinite goodness. My ears cannot hear those heavenly choristers, singing their Creator's praise in the groves, but my soul, in speculation, can hear the anthems of the angels in heaven. I may not hear the hosannas of the church militant in our material temples below, but I may conceive that my soul hears the hallelujahs of the church triumphant above. I may not walk in the green pastures and flowery meadows on earth, but my soul may move in the glorious and melodious galleries of heaven. Thus, O Lord, though in my strictest confinement here below, thou hast given me large liberty above, still I would glorify thee for all thy mercies, for thy comforts delight my soul.

(5.) Another's complaint is: I am vexed with a multitude of troubles. Not the law of the sword, but the sword of the law hath disquieted me. Let thy soul ask thy conscience this question, Who did first break the peace? If thou hast first overwhelmed that truth which should be apparent, thou art thine own enemy. For truth, smothered in wet straw, will at length overcome the darkness of that suppression, and set on fire the sins thereof. Thou hast forsaken the truth, and art therefore forsaken of peace.

There be two chief preservers of the soul, under the almighty Creator of it, truth and peace. How invaluable are they together! Parted, how miserable! Truth is the precious stone, peace the gold wherein it is both set and preserved. Truth is the glorious light of the sun, peace a clear and serene heaven. Peace is a most beautiful body whilst it contains truth, that more pure, lovely soul. Truth brings down heaven to us, peace bears us up to heaven. Both are sisters, the daughters of one Father, God himself.

Do thou first recover truth. By continual labour seek it, with prayers and tears beg it, with the expense of much sorrow buy it, and then peace will come into the bargain. God's comforts shall again delight thy soul.

(6.) Another complains: I am cast out of doors. I have no harbour but the hedges, nor lodging but the fruitless ground. Poverty hath sent out her excommunications against me. All that have an estate are forewarned to shun my company.

Consider, when had Jacob so sweet a night's rest as when the pillow he laid his head upon was a hard stone? Then was that ladder set by him by which his soul might climb up to heaven in a vision, whereof before he had but the speculation. The angels were dancing those measures, and singing those raptures about him, which did in a manner angelify him. His body lay on the bare earth; his soul, with those spiritual wings of faith and love, was mounted above the clouds, above the orbs, even conversant in the highest heavens.

When had Elias more excellent provision than when his breakfast was brought him in the morning, and his supper in the evening, by a raven? The messenger was homely, but the diet was heavenly. It came from the table of that great King, whose hospitality feeds, not only men, but even the fowls of the air, the beasts upon earth, and the fishes of the sea. The prophet's lodging was but a field-bed, yet, even then and there, the lions were a guard about him, the tutelar angels did surround him, and the divine providence preserved him.

If we be destitute of other lodging, and be driven to the common earth, yet we have a house over our heads, 'not made with hands, but an eternal mansion in the heavens.' There is also a canopy for us, a roof arched over with the two poles, and set with innumerable glistening stars. Yea, there is an omnipotent love that protects us, a material heaven encompassing us, and a spiritual heaven within us, the peace of a good conscience, assuring us of our eternal salvation through Christ Jesus. This is a softer lodging than the cabins of merchants, or the hammocks of seafarers, yea, than the most curious beds the harbingers can procure for princes. Oh, how sweetly doth the Christian rest, when he hears that voice out of the oracle of goodness! My grace is sufficient for thee, my comforts shall delight thy soul!

(7.) But another's complaint is: I am perplexed with sickness. I am a mark against which pain shoots his arrows. I waste away with languishments, as ice is dissolved by heat in water. Rest patient. This consumption shall be consumed. Death, that universal executioner of mankind, shall be executed. Time shall cut off death, and eternity shall make an end of time. Death shall have no grave left for his monument, or trophy of his victories; and the angel hath sworn that time shall be no more. Thy sickness may outlast thy physician, but thy soul shall outlive thy sickness, and nothing shall outlive thy soul.

But the pangs of my body are so violent, that they assault me with distraction. Fear not; they may beleaguer thee with distrust, but never overcome that faith which thou puttest in the God of all consolation. He is a most faithful Creator, and will, *servare depositum*, keep that soul safe, with which the believer hath entrusted him. The breaches of the body are the soul's windows, and afford her a more clear prospect into heaven, enkindling within her an ardent desire to be with God in glory. Job's abundant sores would have bred in him a continuance of sorrows, but for that antidote of faith, and saving cordial of hope, that his eyes should see his Redeemer in blessedness.

The smiling sun flatters the traveller out of his cloak, whereas the robustious wind causeth him to wrap it the closer about him. God forbid that the Christian religion should be but a cloak, yet the outward profession of it is somewhat loosened by wanton health, and sickness wins it more inwardly to the heart. Experienced merchants tell us that, in the hottest countries, they find most relief in the hottest drinks. A wonder to us that live in the cold climates; but that the sun's adventitious heat so sucks out the radical

moisture and spirits, that it leaves the heart feeble, and destitute of its natural comforts. It is a maxim in philosophy, that one heat avocates another, the greater the less. The heat of the sun draws forth the heat of the heart, and leaves it fainting. Poor Lazarus, with his scabs and scraps, was yet in a better condition than the rich man, with his princely wardrobe and his costly viands. Continued health hath maintained wanton desires and delights upon earth, but sickness hath sent many souls up to heaven. Yea, Lord, even with sickness afflict my body, so that thy heavenly comforts do delight my soul.

(8.) It is a general complaint, Afflictions environ me; in my short pilgrimage through the sharp wilderness of this world, on the one side thorns wound me, and brambles scratch me on the other. This is not only the deserved penalty of sinful nature, 'Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;' but even a kind of fatality inseparable to militant grace, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. iii. 12. That is a rare path upon earth which hath never a rub, and a calm passage by water that escapes all molestation. But more,—

Be there not some afflictions that conduce to our preservation? We have found that the falling into one grievous sin, the worst of all dangers, hath brought us to repentance, one of the best preservatives. I have heard some seamen report by experience that, in a tempest, some raging billow hath swept a man off the decks into the main ocean, yet another wave on the other side hath tossed him up into the ship again, so that he was only drenched, but not drowned. The violent pressure of one affliction hath sunk a man to distrust in God; another, with a more furious storm, hath left him destitute of all earthly succour. He now resolves, The world hath forsaken me; I will never look for relief from it again. But my God hath not forsaken me; and he never will forsake them that trust in him through Jesus Christ. To him I fly; upon him I rely. He will not suffer me to perish. Still, O Lord, in all my extremities 'thy comforts delight my soul.'

(9.) Not offering to number man's grievances, which be innumerable, there is yet the last, and it may prove the best, complaint remaining.

I am perplexed with the woful consideration of my sin, those 'bitter things which God writes against me,' the irksome recollection of my transgressions. I can argue with philosophers, consult with politicians, hear the ingenious fancies of poets, reason in domestic concerns, enjoy the company of moral and harmless friends with delight. I can pray with confidence to be heard and satisfied; I do hope with some assurance of salvation; I lie upon a peaceful pillow. Thus far I am in a calm and serene atmosphere, and quiet be all my thoughts.

But after all this sunshine there ariseth a tempest. When I do recollect, or be represented unto my conscience, my innumerable, incomparable, intolerable sins, the remembrance of them is so frightful, the burden of them is so insupportable, that I dare not even look up unto heaven. Faith lies fainting, hope is in a swoon, fear stands by the bedside, despair lies gaping at the chamber door, and my soul is in an ecstasy. I am weary of all company but those that speak of mercy. I sit mourning all the day long; sorrow and solitude are my associates. I do shed some tears, and would weep tears of blood for my sins. I lament because my sorrows are not greater for offending my God.

Well, yet hear the Physician of souls, that speaks to thee from heaven. Weep on, bleed on; this bleeding shall not be unto death. Jesus Christ

hath a balsam, that shall not only staunch thy bleeding, but fill the veins of thy soul with comfort. His blood is an antidote for thine. One drop of that shall satisfy for more sins than ever thou hast committed.

Weep on for thy transgressions. These floods of tears shall not drown thee. Yea, rather, like the waters of that universal deluge, in that saving ark, Christ Jesus, they shall bear up thy soul towards heaven. They shall not drown thee; yea, they shall rather save thee from being drowned. This is that *secunda tabula* after shipwreck, the main plank that shall preserve thee from perishing, emergent repentance.

There be two most valiant and puissant soldiers that are the soul's champions, Faith and Repentance. They fight not only against lust and sin, those giants of the world; but also against principalities and powers, those infernal spirits of darkness. Faith hath her weapons and forces, but Repentance hath many disadvantages.

1. Other soldiers fight standing; she kneeling. They in a posture confronting their enemies; she in humiliation, though not tergiversation, from her opposites. They send forth their messages of death in thundering ordnance; all her thunder is sighs and groans, sent up to heaven for mercies. They let fly their fiery engines of destruction; she hath only her ejaculations. Her most piercing darts are broken hearts. Their shafts are winged with fire; her arrows are feathered with water, her own soft tears. They swallow up the hope of victory with insultation; she, in a humble prostration, expects pity. Yet the God of all power and mercy, whom she beleaguers in heaven, yields her the conquest. He comes from his impregnable throne by his most gracious favour; and instead of confounding her as a rebel, he useth her as a friend or daughter. He takes her up from her knees, he wipes away all her tears, he folds her in his arms, he seals her a pardon of all sins, and assures her of an everlasting kingdom in heaven. O, victorious Repentance! yea, rather, O, triumphant goodness! O, God, *teipsium vincis*, thou overcomest thyself; thus thy comforts delight our souls.

It is reported of Alexander, that when he thought, and did but think so, he had conquered all this world, he fell a weeping because there were no more worlds to conquer. But there was remaining another world, a better than ever Alexander discovered; but this was not for an Alexander, by force of arms, but for a Mary Magdalene, by force of tears, to overcome.

It is true, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence; but the way of conquest is not through the blood of bodies, but through a flood of tears, gushing out for our sins. This is such a stratagem of war, such a policy of conquest, as the great monarchs of the world never understood. Yet even this, through faith, overcomes the world.

Faith hath a plot, which she hath taught her daughter Repentance, *concedendo superare*, to overcome by yielding. It is a stratagem among wrestlers, that if a man can get himself under his antagonist, he lifts him up, the sooner to cast him down; yea, to give him the greater fall. Repentance stoops as low as she can. She lies, like Joshua, upon the bare earth; yea, wallows in dust and ashes. She holds herself not worthy to be God's footstool. Let him trample upon her and tread her under his feet, she still holds him by the feet, washeth them with her tears, wipeth them with the hairs of her head, and kisseth them, though she be spurned by them. Doth this humble prostration provoke fury? No; it rather invites mercy. *Parcere prostratis scit nobilis ira leonis*. The Lion of the tribe of Judah will spare such lambs of humiliation, and in the pastures of consolation he will

both feed and preserve them. That thunder which dissolves the precious metal, yet spares the yielding purse. When power and policy have spent their spirits, submission is found the only way of conquest. The fearful thunder of vengeance is resisted by the soft wool of repentance.

2. Yet hath this blessed grace another disadvantage. Faith, the chief of all the forces, may be sometimes benighted, through the conglomeration of the clouds condensed by our sins. Hope may be eclipsed by the interposition of the earth, our worldly imaginations, betwixt us and that great luminary of heaven, the Sun of righteousness. The sentry of a watchful conscience may be overcome with security. Sin is a subtle enemy, and his father, the devil, will shew him the opportunity. Now is the time of invasion; seize on them, and cut all their throats. What shall Repentance do, when Faith, the great lady-general, droops, and Hope, her lieutenant-general, is fainting, when the whole sentry is overcome with slumber?

Yes, there is a watchman in the tower of the soul, that doth seldom sleep, holy Fear. He wakens conscience; conscience calls up faith; faith rouseth hope; hope cries aloud to repentance; repentance troops up all the natural forces; the martial music gives the alarm; the soldiers are in battle array; the enemies fly; the mind is at peace; because God's comforts delight the soul.

3. One disadvantage more makes dangerous work for repentance. The troops of Faith are routed, one wing of Hope is cut off. Yet this conquering queen of the *viragines*, or maiden graces, always brings up the rear, and never appears till the day be almost lost. When those great commanders, Innocency and Righteousness, are foiled and beaten, and leave their queen, the soul, in danger to be taken, and slain by sin and Satan, her old adversaries, then this *virgo*, *virago*, that all this while lay in expectation of the event, this martial maid, this victorious Repentance, comes in with her reserve, sets upon the conquerors with her fresh forces, rescues the queen, our soul, puts the great general, Satan, to flight, and does impartial execution upon all his soldiers, which be our sins.

Thus one grace begets another, by a supernatural generation, till they increase in number and in measure by the divine inspiration. Faith calls up repentance; repentance brings in pardon and forgiveness; pardon leads in comfort; and thus, O my God! thy comforts delight my soul.

4. When God, by the preaching of his law, hath broken up the fallow ground of our hearts, and, by the applying of his gospel, hath sown the seed of eternal life in those furrows, he looks that we should bestow our labour in the watering of this plantation. The ground is his, for he made it; the seed is his, for he gives it; the harvest is his, and he owns it. Yet such is the bounty of his goodness, that he gives his farmers the fruits of it. The rent of that great landlord's glory being freely paid, the product is ours, even the comfort and salvation of our poor souls. All our pains is but to hook up the weeds that would hinder the growth of the corn, and dew the furrows with our tears, that it may spring up with cheerfulness. But when the reaping time comes, the whole crop is ours; and we come home singing with joy and thankfulness, 'Thy comforts have delighted my soul.' When those glorious reapers, the angels, shall bear up our souls to heaven, like sheaves in the barn, we shall sing harvest home, and glorify our infinite good Lord, and our sweet Saviour, Jesus Christ.

To conclude. Crosses are but the pursuivants to fetch in repentance, and afflictions but God's letters missive for mortification. When we are fallen into some heinous transgressions, we may better say, than in our

other trouble, this will cost hot water. For so it will, indeed; it will cost the hot waters of our tears from our eyes, or it will cost the warm blood of our hearts. Our godly sorrow for our sins is like the pool of Bethesda; when that angel from heaven, gracious repentance, hath troubled the waters, the lazarous soul does but step into them, and is cured. For all our spiritual diseases, this is the remedy, upon which we may safely write, *probatum est*.

We have made ourselves sick by sinning. God is the physician, and he prescribes; affliction is the apothecary, and he prepares; the medicine is repentance, and that infallibly cures. It is a broken heart that makes us whole. God loves a true heart, and a clean heart, and an honest heart, and a humble heart; yea, and he loves a broken heart, too. 'The broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,' Ps. liv. 17. It is true, we are bound to love him with our whole heart; but if it be broken with penitential sorrow for sin, he will heal the fracture, redintegrate the heart, and re-accept it wholly to himself. A contrite heart, broken in pieces with sorrow, and pickled up in brinish tears, is a sacrifice that God will not reject.

Whosoever hath such a heart, let him make much of it. It is a dish for the King of kings. Sin, repentance, and pardon, are like to the three vernal months of the year, March, April, and May. Sin comes in like March, blustering, stormy, and full of bold violence. Repentance succeeds like April, showering, weeping, and full of tears. Pardon follows like May, springing, singing, full of joys and flowers. If our hands have been full of *March*, with the tempests of unrighteousness, our eyes must be full of *April*, with the sorrow of repentance; and then our hearts shall be full of *May*, in the true joy of forgiveness.

Her soul. As there be no comforts like those of God, so there is nothing to which comforts are so welcome as to the soul. The pleasure which the body takes is but the body; yea, scarce the very shadow of pleasure. The soul of pleasure is the pleasure of the soul. There be many things pleasing to the body, wherein the sanctified soul takes no delight, especially in the day of trouble. In calamity, good nourishments are comfortable, good words are comfortable, good friends are comfortable, the physician is comfortable, a good spouse specially comfortable; but in respect of these comforts, which do nevertheless pass all understanding, we may say of them, as Job did to his visitant friends, 'Miserable comforters are ye all.' But blessed are the souls upon whom this Sun of comfort shineth; and happy are those showers of tears and sorrows, that shall be dried up with such beams of comfort; and 'blessed God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort,' 2 Cor. i. 3, to whom, with the Son and Holy Ghost, be all praise and glory, for ever and ever! Amen.