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COMFORT FOR SUFFERING SAINTS

How the sovereignty of God is a comfort to Christians, acting to remove rather than add to anxiety!

Jerome Zanchius (1516-1590)

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”—Romans 8:28-29

Without a due sense of predestination, we shall want¹ the surest and the most powerful inducement to patience, resignation, and dependence on God, under every spiritual and temporal affliction.

How sweet must the following considerations be to a distressed believer!

- There most certainly exists an almighty, all-wise and infinitely gracious God (Heb 11:6).
- He has given me in times past, and is giving me at present (if I had but eyes to see it), many signal intimations of His love to me, both in a way of providence and grace (Eph 1).
- This love of His is immutable; He never repents of it nor withdraws it (Phi 1:6).
- Whatever comes to pass in time is the result of His will from everlasting (1Co 8:6), consequently—
- My afflictions were a part of His original plan, and are all ordered in number, weight, and measure (Psa 22:24).
- The very hairs of my head are (every one) counted by Him; nor can a single hair fall to the ground but in consequence of His determination (Luk 12:7). Hence—
- My distresses are not the result of chance, accident, or a fortuitous combination of circumstances (Psa 56:8), but—
- The providential accomplishment of God’s purpose (Rom 8:28), and—
- Designed to answer some wise and gracious ends (Jam 5:10-11), nor—
- Shall my affliction continue a moment longer than God sees meet (2Co 7:6-7).
- He who brought me to it has promised to support me under it and to carry me through it (Psa 34:15-17).
- All shall, most assuredly, work together for His glory and my good, therefore—
- “The cup which my heavenly Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?” (Joh 18:11).

Yes, I will, in the strength He imparts, even rejoice in tribulation; and using the means of possible redress, which He hath or may hereafter put into my hands, I will commit myself and the event to Him, whose purpose cannot be overthrown, whose plan cannot be disconcerted, and who, whether I am resigned or not, will still go on to work all things after the counsel of His own will (Rom 5:3-6; Psa 33:11-12; Eph 1:11).

Above all, when the suffering Christian takes his election into the account, and knows that he was by an eternal and immutable act of God appointed to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ; that, of course, he hath a city prepared for him above, a building of God, a house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens; and that the heaviest sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in the saints, what adversity can possibly befall us which the assured hope of blessings like these will not infinitely overbalance? (Pro 8:35; 2Co 5:1; Rom 8:18; Rom 8:33-37.)

“A comfort so divine, May trials well endure.”

¹ want – lack.

However keenly afflictions might wound us on their first access, yet, under the impression of such animating views, we should quickly come to ourselves again, and the arrows of tribulation, would, in great measure lose their sharpness. Christians want nothing but *absolute* resignation to render them perfectly happy in every possible circumstance; and *absolute* resignation can only flow from an *absolute* belief of, and an *absolute* acquiescence in, God's *absolute* providence, founded on *absolute* predestination (1Th 1:2-4).

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