

mankind with cold philosophical indifference. No man carried a heart that was quicker to feel for the woes and miseries of humanity. Moreover, his sympathetic nature was enlarged in its capacity by personal suffering. He had passed through a most varied combination of trying ordeals. And yet with his tender heart and wide experience what does he say? He exhorts to "rejoice in tribulation." A most unreasonable and unfeeling exhortation, one might think, and utterly impossible of obedience! But the Apostle gives a strong reason for his exceptional counsel. He holds up for inspection a jewelled crown of graces which flow from the discipline of sorrow, and render the possessor happy in the sight of men and worthy of divine approval. "Knowing," he adds, "that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us." Is it good, then, to be afflicted? The world answers, No. A similar reply may be embodied in our own self-formed judgments. But if we go to the oracles of God and consult His revelation, we make the glad discovery that there is no such thing as disaster under His blessed government; that "all things work together for good" to them that love Him. You remember those wonderful words of the Apostle James—"My brethrer, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (here temptations mean trials and afflictions) knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work that *ye may be perfect, entire, wanting nothing.*" There is God's purpose in sending affliction, not that life may be rendered dull and unhappy and melancholy, but that ye may be "perfect, entire, wanting nothing." And oh! I would say to the sorrowing one here today, let this sweet divine thought steal like a whispered voice into your heart to calm and bless all unrest and all loneliness. With this recognition of God's hand in your trial, and of God's gracious loving purpose in sending that trial, surely the darkness itself might feel more safe than light. With beautiful truthfulness has it been remarked that "the greatest of afflictions is never to be afflicted." "The path of sorrow, and that path alone, leads to the land where sorrow is unknown." The towering mountain has its foundation laid in the depths. The greatest beauties of Christian life are the rewards of training under the masters—tears, pains, sorrows. It is a true saying of Spurgeon's that "God gets his best soldiers from the highlands of affliction." Melancthon realized this when, in his appreciation of prayer, he actually feared to lose anxieties lest he should