

THOUGHTS FROM THE FATHERS.

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A WILFULL pride, exalting and preferring our own will to the will of God, was one of the main sins in that complication of sins in the fall of our first parents. They preferred their own will to the good will of God, and rested not content with His will concerning their primitive condition. This old corruption leaveneth also our affections. We grieve more for the want of comfort in the creature than for the want of the light of God's countenance. We fear more the anger of a mortal creature than the wrath of God, which burneth to the lowest hell.

In the renewed man there is a newness of moderation in his affections. His heavenly Father puts so many vertues into his soul, to be tutors and guardians to his unruly and childish affections. He sets patience to moderate our sorrow, faith to moderate our fears, and the fear of God in our hearts to moderate our desires, and delight in things worldly. The renewed man useth the world so, that he abuseth it not to pride, luxury, or spiritual idolatry of covetousness, to draw the heart away from God to mammon. Such was the moderation of Paul in all conditions of life. I know how to abound, and I know how to be in want. A renewed man, in his abundance, is humble, and in his wants is thankful to God.

Unrenewed men may have some sense of sinne, and sorrow for it, as it is a misery to themselves; yet none of them have any sense of it, or sorrow for it, as it is a dishonour to God; but the renewed man is more affected with the dishonour done to his heavenly Father by his offence than with the misery of any affliction, though never so grievous to himself.

Godly sorrow is sincere and universall for all known sins, and in a holy jealousy for sins unknown. The heart of flesh mourneth for the sins of others amongst whom they live. The more sins, the greater dishonour to God, and the greater is the sorrow in the heart of flesh. Sorrow for a man's own sins, without any sorrow for the sins of others, proceeds rather from self-love and fear of punishment than from love to God and zeal to His honour.

A child of God, though he hath a heart of flesh, will not alwaies have tears to pour forth for his sinnes, yet he hath alwaies the fountain of godly sorrow in his heart, a rooted desire to mourne for sinne; yea, sometime when there is most sorrow in the heart, there will be fewest tears, as in a time of great fear, though the vein be cut it bleeds not; full vessels, for want of vent, drop not. At such a time the Lord hears the voice of sighs and groans, as well as that of weeping at other times.

Oh how happy is that humble spirit where God dwelleth! In the riches of His bounty He provides for the house where he dwelleth; in the might of His power He protects; by His wisdom and deep counsell He governs; and by the light of His countenance He comforts and cherisheth it under the heavy burdens of outward calamities.

As men subject to swooning discern from experience the beginnings of it, so when thou at any time perceivest benumbness creeping upon thy spirit, run to thy heavenly Physician by prayer. Peter, when he began to sink, cried out for help. Neglect of prayer at the beginning encreaseth the temptation. Jonah riseth not to prayer in the beginning of the storm, and the winde waxed louder and louder. Prayer is the stirring up of the heart, and keeps it from freezing and congealing into a heart of stone.

The strength of a believer, both for doing and suffering, is from the Lord Jesus. Without sap from the root the branch cannot bring forth fruit, so without influence of strength from Christ, we cannot bring forth the fruits of holinesse and righteousness. Our fruits and works of righteousness are wrought by us through the Spirit and strength of Christ, and are accepted of God through the merits of Christ. And as the strength of a believer for doing is from Christ, so also for suffering, and for bearing every burden God in His good providence lays on him.

Think not that thy God, who hath been thy guide through the wilderness, will leave thee, O believer, when thou comest to Jordan, and to the border. Thou art both unthankful and un-

believing to entertain such unkind thoughts of thy kinde God, upon whom thou hast been cast from the womb. Make better use of tried love than to distrust, in the end of the day, Him who hath been with thee since the morning of thy life.

The children of God, in their outward condition, are subject to many changes; at one time they are in prosperity, at another in adversity; at one time cried down and abased in the world, at another cried up and highly honoured. Job, a man fearing God and eschewing evil, was the richest man in the East to day, but on the morrow the poorest and most distressed of all men in the whole earth in his time;—in great honour and reputation at one time, but at another surpris'd and neglected; yea, derided by the baser sort of the people.

Faith keeps the heart in a solid and equal temper. In a time of worldly prosperity faith looks to things eternal, reserved in heaven for us. This makes us have humble thoughts of those flying shadows of worldly pleasure, in comparison of that substance of glory that endures for ever. Faith also, in adversity, quiets and settles our spirits, when we believe that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Fear and faith are to the soul as ballast and sails are to the ships; the one keeps it from being over-carried in the top of the wave, and the other from being swallowed up in the gulph between the waves; so the fear of God keeps the heart of a believer from being overturned by strong temptations in the top of his prosperity; and assurance of faith, like a mainsail, carries the heart through the deeps of affliction, and keeps it from being overwhelmed.

God, in mercy and wisdom, prepares His own children, by the hammerings of the law, to be built by faith in Jesus Christ, upon the rock of salvation. These legal works are as the needle, to make way for the thread of comfort; as the hewing is before building, and as the earthquake was before the still voice came to Elijah.

All outward ordinances are but dead instruments in relation to the life of grace, until the Spirit of God breathe with them on a soul, and so make them lively and powerful. The word is the immortal seed of the new life, but it is the Spirit who prepares the ground of the heart for receiving the seed; who makes the heart to mix hearing with believing.

As in that temple of Jerusalem, made with hands, there was no coming to the most holy place but through the holy place, so there is no coming to the holy of holies, which is above, but to those who are here in an union with Christ, and in a communion with the Universall Church in the fundamentals of faith, and in the labour of love. Without Christ men are strangers to the covenant of promise; for in Christ only we have right and claim to the promises of mercy, grace, and glory.

As the portion which Jacob got out of the hand of the Amorite by his sword and his bow was a free gift bestowed on Joseph, so our justification, that cost our Lord very dear, is a free gift to us; yea, God's free love and pardoning mercy appeared more in justifying us, by the righteousness and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, than if He had manifested His absolute power in forgiving sinne without satisfaction.

In all thy difficulties thou must go with confidence to God, thy Father in Christ. What father is so careless and unnatural as to refuse counsell and instruction to his own child? Think not that thy heavenly Father, who commands earthly parents to instruct their children, will not instruct His children, and give them counsell in times of great difficulty. Many times He puts thoughts in our hearts, and words in our mouths at such a time, when a man would be made an offender for a word.

There must be an union and closing with Christ by faith before there can be any communication from him of the graces of the Spirit. There must be an ingrafting into the root before there can be a communication of sap from the root to the branches—the grace of faith enlargeth the heart to receive Christ, and after it hath received Him it retains Him. I found Him whom my soul loveth—I held Him, and would not let Him go. The grace of love entertains Him with the embracements of the will and affections; faith, like Martha, goeth out for Him, and brings Him along with the promise to the soul. Love, like Mary, sits down at His feet, to attend what is His will, and execute His commands. Faith is the only grace whereby a soul properly receives Christ; for to receive Him, and to believe in His name, are equipollents.

* Taken from "Refreshing Streams, flowing from the Fulness of Christ." By WILLIAM COLVILL, sometime Preacher at Edinburgh. London. 1655.)