

## WORDS OF THE WISE.

## COMFORT IN TRIBULATION.

(From Christopher Sutton's "Disce Vivere," A.D. 1626.)

The world and the tempter both boast of giving pleasures unto carnal men, but come to the performance, and these pleasures are very torments; Christ promiseth tribulation in the world, but come to the inward man, and there we find a world of joy. The root of the tree is bitter, but the fruit is pleasant; Christ promiseth rest; you shall have rest, but it is rest unto your souls; not worldly rest. His burden then it is by love, and we are made strong by grace: a burden, this is wont to unburden sinners. He that sets us in this journey knows what is fittest for passengers, and therefore we may endure with comfort these outward adversities when they come: we must not cast away the nut, for the bitterness of the rind. Happy leprosy was it that made Naaman worship the God of Israel in his heart. The Prophet David saith, it is good for him to have been in trouble: if thou wert not troubled, perhaps thou wouldst not devoutly have called upon God, thou wouldst not have worshipped God, thou wouldst not have known God. The sharp storms of the winter they make the trees bare, for a time they stand as dead, yet there remains still life in the root. In like manner, afflictions of the world make the members of Christ seem desolate, and the stormy winds of persecution scatter abroad the leaves of worldly prosperity, yet there is life in the root, there is faith and joy in the heart. It is otherwise with the wicked, and the joy of worldings; they think felicity to consist in abundance of riches, in pleasures, in glory, and such like; all this is but outward and momentary, like a little sunshine in winter, for one fair day it hath oftentimes ten foul, and such a number of troubles as almost the former pleasures are dashed and vanish to nothing. When men see storms in winter they do not much wonder at it, and why? winter is a time of storms; so in this life we should not think much to have tribulations at a time of tribulation.

The godly have indeed often outward adversities, but such joys within, as if all adversities were nothing, and this principally cometh to pass by Christ His means; for whatsoever He touched, He did sanctify it, and therefore hunger, thirst, persecution, they are not now so grievous, but work all for the good of the faithful. The waters of Marah, which were so bitter that none could drink them, Moses but casting in the wood that God appointed him, they became sweet; the crosses of the world were grievous until Christ His cross was put in amongst them, now their taste is altered. A strange sight was it in times of persecution, to see a few lambs to overcome a multitude of wolves by no other weapons than patience and faith, "and to rejoice," as Tertullian saith, "in the midst of torments." Wonderful is to hear how St. Paul, endued with grace from Christ, doth even challenge and provoke tribulation and anguish and hunger; yea, life and death, as if he would speak like a man of courage to all the adversities of the world: "Shall you all separate me from the love of Christ?" No, you shall not; thereby teaching us to be so constant, that nothing should separate us from the love of Christ.