

Rejoice in Tribulation

My brethren, it is glorious to be a martyr; and the public worship of God is worth all the blood that hath been shed in the world to support it; but have we all the courage necessary to martyrdom? Let us be thankful that we are not led into this temptation. This reminds me of another consideration, which ought to engage us to be content with our condition: let us consider our *afflictions*.

Discontent is not always the child of affliction, for some people are determined at all adventures to be unhappy, and to disturb the quiet of all about them. Sometimes imaginations of distant ills which may never come, and at other times trifling accidents of no signification at all, agitate the bosoms of unhappy mortals, who think it worthwhile to raise a tempest to kill a fly. No *place*, however *pleasant*, no *inheritance*, however beautiful, can make such people happy: but the fault does not lie in the *lot*, but in the owner of it.

To people under affliction, I would give four words of advice; do you consider the fitness of them. First, observe the *false principle* on which you have founded your discontent. You have laid it down as a principle, that you ought to be free from all trouble in this present life. This is a bold step. It seems, Almighty God does not think so, for who among all his millions of creatures is not subject like you to pain, sickness, sorrow, and death? Beside, this is an unjust principle. You have laid it down as a principle, that you ought to be perfectly happy here.

But who are you? Have you never tasted the forbidden fruit? Does it become you, a sinner, who have given yourself so many stabs, to complain of smart? If it be true, as we are taught, that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die,” and if you be that soul, all places short of the place of execution ought to make you cry with the Psalmist, Considering what I deserve, “the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places:” this is not “the valley of the shadow of death,” this is not the bottomless pit, my affliction is not the angel with the great chain in his hand. If I be not obstinate, my house may be a house of prayer, and my old pillow a gate of heaven.

Moreover, this principle is selfish. The holy men, who are proposed to you for examples, rejoiced in tribulation, because the patience, content, and prudence, which they exercised under their afflictions, instructed and edified others. They considered themselves as parts of a whole, and submitted to sufferings not necessary to themselves for the sake of their brethren. Thus the death of Christ is the life of the religion of his afflicted followers.

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