

The background of the cover is a photograph of a stone fort or castle perched on a grassy hill. The scene is captured during a sunset or sunrise, with a warm, golden light illuminating the sky and the fort. The fort has a prominent tower with a conical roof. The foreground shows the texture of the grass and the rocky base of the hill. The overall mood is one of strength and resilience.

Monergism

*A Fort for  
the Afflicted*

REMEDIES AGAINST THE  
STORMS OF TRIBULATION

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# **A Fort for the Afflicted**

Wherein are administered many notable and excellent remedies  
against the storms of tribulation.

Written chiefly for the comfort of Christ's little flock, which is the  
small number of the Faithful, by John Knox.

John 16:33 In the world, you shall have affliction, but be of good  
comfort: I have overcome the world. Printed in London at the Three  
Cranes in the Vintry, by Thomas Dawson, 1580.

## **To the Religious Reader.**

Who are you (O Christian) that, being sick in soul and desiring to be sound, sorrowful in spirit, and craving comfort, unquiet in mind, and seeking to be at rest, wounded in conscience and desiring safety, tormented in thought, and longing for relief? Who are you (I say) that, having offended your God and therefore punished, tried with tribulation, and crying out to be refreshed, visited with affliction, and eager to be delivered? Get yourself to God's word, and there learn your lesson; hear his holy Gospel preached, and thereby receive instruction; peruse and ponder, examine and consider, meditate and exercise yourself in the good books of God's faithful servants, and they shall teach you wisdom.

## **To his beloved Mother,**

J. K. sends greetings in the Lord.

The desire that I have to hear of your continuance, which Christ Jesus in the day of this His battle which shall shortly end to the confusion of His proud enemies, neither by tongue nor by pen can I express, beloved Mother. Assuredly, it is such that it vanquishes and overcomes all remembrance and solicitude, which the flesh uses to take for feeding and defense of itself. For in every realm and nation, God will stir up someone or other to minister those things that pertain to this wretched life, and if men will cease to do their office, yet will He send His ravens, so that in every place, perhaps I may find some feathers for my body. But alas, where I shall find children to be begotten unto God by the word of life, that I cannot presently consider. And therefore, the spiritual life of such as once boldly professed Christ (God knows) is to my heart more dear than all the glory, riches, and honor on the earth. And the falling back of such men, as I hear daily turning back to that idol again, is to me more sorrowful than I trust corporal death shall ever be when it comes at God's appointment. Some will ask then, why did I flee? Assuredly, I cannot tell. But of one thing I am sure, that the fear of death was not the chiefest cause of my flight. I trust that one cause has been to let me see with my corporeal eyes that all had not a true heart unto Christ, that in the day of rest and peace, bore a fair face. But my fleeing is no matter; by God's grace, I may come to battle before all the conflict is ended. And haste the time, O Lord, at your good pleasure, that once again my tongue may praise your holy name before the congregation, even if it be in the very hour of death.

I have written a lengthy treatise concerning the plagues that will surely apprehend obstinate idolaters and those who dissemble with

them, denying Christ by obeying idolatry, which I would like you to read diligently. If it does not come to you from the South, I will ensure that it reaches you through some other means. Regarding your continual trouble given to you by God for a better purpose than we can presently discern: I have begun the exposition of the sixth Psalm for you. And as God grants me the opportunity and health of body (which is now very weak), I intend to complete it.

The Argument. It appears that David, after his offense, fell into some great and dangerous sickness in which he was sorely tormented, not so much by physical infirmities as by partaking a large portion of the cup of God's wrath. And although he was delivered from physical death at that time, it seems that long afterward, and indeed throughout his life, he had some sense and remembrance of the horrible fear he suffered during his illness. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, speaking through him, shows us what the complaints of God's elect are under such a cross, how they are tormented diversely, how they appear to have no sure hold of God but to be cast off from Him. Yet, it also reveals the signs that they are God's elect. The Holy Spirit thus teaches us to seek help from God even when He is punishing us and appears to be angry with us.

## **The Sixth Psalm.**

1 O Lord, rebuke me not in Your anger, nor chastise me in Your hot displeasure.

David, sorely troubled both in body and spirit, lamentably prays to God. To help you understand this more clearly, I will attempt to express it in more words. David speaks to God as if he were speaking to a man, in this manner:

O Lord, I understand the weight and strength of Your displeasure. I have experienced how intolerable is the heaviness of Your hand, which I, a wretched man, have provoked against myself through my horrible sins. You whip and scourge me bitterly, indeed, You so vex me that unless You withdraw Your hand and remove Your displeasure, I am left utterly confounded. I beseech You, O Lord, do not rage excessively against me, do not be overly moved, forgive and take away Your heavy displeasure that I have provoked against myself through my iniquity.

This appears to have been the meaning of David in his initial words, in which he acknowledges all the troubles he endured, both in body and spirit, as sent by God and not happening by chance. For this is a distinguishing characteristic of the children of God compared to the reprobate: the children of God know that both prosperity and adversity are gifts from God alone, as Job attests. Therefore, in prosperity, they are not usually insolent or proud, but even in times of joy and rest, they expect trouble and sorrow. And in times of adversity, they are not entirely without comfort, for God somehow shows them that the trouble will come to an end. Conversely, the reprobate, taking everything as chance or making an idol of their own wisdom, become so puffed up in prosperity that they forget God, without any concern for the troubles that may follow. And in adversity, they are so dejected that they expect nothing but misery.

Here, I must remind you, dearly beloved, how often you and I have talked about these present days, until neither of us could hold back

tears when there was no such apparent danger to human eyes. How often have I said to you that I expected trouble daily and wondered why I had escaped it for so long? What made me refuse, even to the displeasure of all, including those who loved me best, the high promotions offered by him whom God has taken from us because of our offenses? It was surely the foresight of troubles to come. How often have I told you that it wouldn't be long before I would need to seek sustenance in England? Consider my last letter to your brother-in-law and reflect on its contents.

While I had this trouble, you had the greater, sent (I doubt not) to both of us by God so that in that great rest and what we call the gospel's triumph, we should not be as careless and insolent as others were. Even though they professed Christ with their mouths, they sought nothing but the world with their hands, feet, counsel, and wisdom. Although our comfort may not be apparent at this moment, it will be known before all the plagues are poured out that there is a God who takes care of His own.

Secondly, it should be noted that the nature and disposition of the very children of God in times of trouble is to attribute to God some other feeling than there is or can be in Him towards His children. Sometimes, they complain against God as if He were doing things that He cannot do to His elect. David and Job often complained that God had forsaken them, become their enemy, ignored their prayers, and paid no heed to delivering them. Yet, it is impossible for God to abandon His chosen or disregard the humble petitions of those who call upon His support. Such complaints are the voices of the flesh, with which God is not offended to the extent of forsaking and rejecting His elect, but He pardons them among countless other infirmities and sins.



Therefore, dear mother, do not despair, even though the flesh sometimes bursts forth with heavy complaints, seemingly accusing God. You are not more perfect than David and Job were, and you cannot be as perfect as Christ Himself, who cried on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Consider how lamentable and terrible these words were from the only Son of God. And David, in Psalm 88 (which I urge you to read for better understanding), complains to God that he cried day and night, yet he was not delivered. He says, "My soul is full of trouble; I am like a man without strength. I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care. You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a horror to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape; my eye grows dim through sorrow." He ends his psalm and complaint without mentioning any received comfort. Job, in various parts of his book, makes similar complaints, at times saying that God is his enemy and has set him up as a target for destruction, and his soul longs for death.

I recount these things to you, dearly beloved, knowing the troubles you have experienced before and understanding that Satan will not cease to persuade your tender conscience that none of God's elect has been in a situation like yours. But by these examples and many other passages (which I have no opportunity to collect at the moment), it is clear that God's chosen vessels have endured similar temptations. I recall that you have often complained about the grumbling and murmuring you found within yourself, fearing that it provoked God's displeasure. Behold and consider, dear mother, how God has borne with His saints in the past. Will He not do the same with you, being most sorrowful for your imperfections? He cannot do otherwise. Just

as His wisdom has made us all of one nature and substance, earthy and earthly, and just as He has redeemed us with one price, the blood of His only Son, He mercifully forgives the offenses of all those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, of those who seek no other justice but His alone.

Regarding our discussion of these examples, it is evident that God's elect, before you, have suffered the same kind of trial that you presently endure. They have complained as you have complained, considered themselves abject as you may consider yourself, and yet they were assured of God's favor. Hope, dear mother, and anticipate the same, hope I say, even when it seems hopeless.

How horrible the pain is to endure that cross can only be expressed by those who have experienced it. It is fearful for the pain itself, but even more fearful because the godly, while so tormented, judge that God is angry with them, in fury and rage, as previously explained. Since we have found that this cross applies to God's children, it shall be profitable and necessary to investigate its causes. It is clear that not only does God work all things for the benefit of His elect, but He also does so out of love for them and with such wisdom that things could not be otherwise. Understanding this is very profitable, partly to satisfy the grumbling complaints of the flesh, which often question why God does this or that. Although the flesh on this earth can never be fully satisfied and is assaulted from time to time, so do other gross imperfections, yet the inner person that submits to God (knowing the reasons why the righteous are so troubled and tormented in body and spirit in this life) receives some comfort and finds support in God's mercy by knowing the causes of the trouble. I cannot recount all the causes here, but I will touch on two or three of the principal ones.

The first is to provoke in God's elect a hatred of sin and sincere repentance for it. If this cause were rightly considered, it would be sufficient to make all spiritual and bodily troubles tolerable to us. Since it is true that without repentance, no one can attain to God's mercy (for it is now appointed by Him, whose wisdom is infinite, I mean those who are converted to the feeling of sin), and without mercy, no one can find joy. Should we not gladly receive and embrace that which makes us understand what repentance is? Repentance includes a knowledge of sin, sorrow for it, and a hatred of it, along with hope of mercy.

It is very clear that God's own children do not always have a proper understanding of sin, that is, how abhorrent it is before God. They also often lack the sorrow for it and hatred of it. If they had these, they could neither sin nor, having that same keen sense of God's wrath against sin, take delight in anything pertaining to the flesh, more than a woman who, by the help of a man, is appointed by God to produce mankind, could ever take delight in a man if she felt the same pains and distress at all times as she does during childbirth. Therefore, for reasons known to Himself, God sometimes withholds from His own children this aforementioned sense and feeling of His wrath against sin. No doubt, He did this with David not only before his sin but also sometime after.

But to prevent the sons of God from becoming entirely insolent like the children of the world, He sends them a portion of this aforementioned cup. By drinking from it, they gain knowledge they never had before. Firstly, they feel the wrath of God working against sin, which teaches them that God's justice is such that He will not let any sin go unpunished. Consequently, they begin to mourn for their offenses and to hate them, which they could not do otherwise. For

nothing pleases the corrupt nature of man as much as sin, and things pleasing to nature cannot be naturally hated.

In this struggle, as God's children endure torments, most grievous as they mourn and, by God's Holy Spirit, begin to hate sin, they also gain higher knowledge. They realize that man cannot save himself, for how can he save himself from hell if he cannot save himself from anguish and trouble here in the flesh, while he still has strength, wit, reason, and understanding? Thus, he is compelled in his heart to acknowledge that there is another mediator between God's justice and mankind than anyone who descended from the corrupt state of Adam, indeed, than any creature that is solely a creature. Through the knowledge of this mediator, the afflicted eventually attains some sense and a lively feeling of God's great mercy to mankind. Although they may not be as sensitive to it as they are to the pain, and although torment is not quickly removed by this knowledge, the patient has some hope that all suffering will end. This is why they sigh and groan for an end to the pain, and why they do not blaspheme God but cry out for His help even in the midst of their anguish. The profit of this to the children of God and what it works in them is taught plainly in Scripture and is also understood through experience.

Verily, as profitable as it is to mourn for sin, to hate it, to know the mediator between God and man, and finally to know His loving mercy toward them, so necessary is it to drink from this aforementioned cup. What it works in them, no one knows except those who taste it.

In David, it is clear that it worked humility and self-abasement.

It took away the great trust he had in himself. It made him daily fear and earnestly pray that he would not offend in the same way again or

be left to his own devices. It made him humble, even though he was a king. It made him merciful when he could have been harsh. Indeed, it made him mourn for his wicked son, Absalom. But let us move on to the other causes.

The second cause why God allows His elect to taste this bitter cup is to lift our hearts from these fleeting vanities. We are so foolish and forgetful by nature, and we are so attached to present things, that unless we have another teacher than mere human reason, and some other spur and constant reminder than any we can choose or devise ourselves, we cannot desire or remember rightly the departure from this vain and wicked world to the kingdom that is prepared.

We are commanded to pray daily, "Thy kingdom come," a petition that asks for the cessation of sin, the end of death, the resolution of transitory troubles, the triumph over Satan, the restoration of the whole body of Christ to life, liberty, and joy, and the dissolution and destruction of the powers and kingdoms of this earth. It asks that God the Father may be all in all things after His Son, Christ Jesus, our Savior, has delivered up the kingdom forever.

We are all commanded to pray for these things, but how many of us, when all abounds with us (when neither body nor spirit is troubled), can sincerely and without dissimulation wish for these things from the heart? Truly, none of us. We may speak the words with our mouths, but our hearts cannot long for the things to come unless we are in a state where worldly things are distasteful to us. And such a state can only be found under the Cross. Not under all kinds of crosses, for many find riches greatly delightful despite their lack of them, and they desire to have them. Therefore, they are neither distasteful nor unpleasant. For things we eagerly covet are not unpleasant to us. But when things pertaining to the flesh are

sufficiently provided for us, and yet none of them can alleviate our anguish or pain, then our hearts cry out to God, and we sincerely wish for an end to our misery. Thus, our Heavenly Father, in His infinite wisdom, allows us to be tempted and tried with this cross to keep us in constant remembrance that there is no rest in this wretched world. We may desire not only an end to our troubles (which will come through death) but also an end to all the troubles of the Church of God, which will not occur until the return of the Lord Jesus.

The third cause I gather from Moses' words to the Israelites, saying, "The Lord your God will drive out these nations before you little by little; you will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, lest the wild animals multiply against you. And when you enter the land and dwell in houses you did not build, and when you eat and are satisfied, give thanks to the Lord your God and be careful not to forget Him, saying in your heart, 'The strength of my own hand has brought me these great riches.'"

In these words, two things relevant to our subject are most worthy of note. First, Moses says that the Lord will not destroy those nations all at once, but little by little, and he adds the reason, lest perhaps (he says) the wild beasts multiply and become a danger to you. Second, when they have plenty, they are to remember God's blessings and not think that their own power, wisdom, or provision was the cause of their prosperity.

By these examples, the Holy Spirit teaches them that just as they did not possess or obtain the initial right to that land by their own strength but that the Lord God freely gave it to them, likewise, they were unable to possess and enjoy it by their own power.

For even though God could have instantly destroyed all their enemies, if He had not been their perpetual protector, the wild beasts would have troubled them. And if they had asked why He would not also destroy the wild beasts, His answer is lest you forget the Lord your God and say in your heart, "My own strength has gained this tranquillity for me."

Consider, dearly beloved, that the things the Spirit of God foresaw as dangerous and damnable for them are to be feared in us. Everything that happened to them was a foreshadowing. They were physically punished in Egypt by a cruel tyrant; we were in spiritual bondage to the Devil through sin and unbelief. God gave them a land flowing with milk and honey for which they did not labor; God has given us the knowledge of Christ Jesus which we neither deserved nor hoped for. They were unable to defend the land once they possessed it; we are unable to retain ourselves in the true knowledge of Christ except by His grace alone. Some enemies were left to test them; sin is left in us to teach us to fight. If enemies had not remained, wild beasts would have multiplied among them. If the kinds of beasts we think most trouble us were not permitted to do so, even worse beasts would have dominion over us. These worse beasts include self-reliance, arrogance, forgetfulness of the state from which God has delivered us, and a light estimation of all Christ's merits. These sins devour a significant number of people.

Let no one think that if all kinds of trials were removed from us during the time we bear the earthly image of Adam, we would be more perfect in using the spiritual gifts of God, such as the remission of sins, His free grace, and Christ's justice, for which we did not labor, than that people were in using the physical gifts. Moses warns them, "Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God." He who knows the secrets of hearts does not give His commands in vain. If

the heart of man were not inclined and ready to forget God and to boast in his own strength, God would not have given this command and repeated it so diligently. He does not act or speak in vain but, knowing what is most capable of blinding and deceiving man, the wisdom of God, through His contrary commands, warns him of the same. Experience has taught us how such beasts have troubled the Church of God, not to mention the time of the Prophets, the Apostles, or the early Church.

What trouble did Pelagius cause with his heresy, affirming that by natural power and free will, man could fulfill God's law and earn remission and grace for himself? Coming closer to our own time, hasn't it been openly preached and taught in schools, and written in books, that faith alone does not justify, but that works also justify? Hasn't it been taught that good works can precede faith and provoke God to grant His graces? What about the idea of man's merits and works of supererogation, with some even claiming that certain individuals have performed more good works than were necessary for their own salvation? Did these men not say, "Our own hand and our own strength have given us these things"? These heresies, and others that have infected the entire papal system, were indeed cruel and ravenous beasts capable of devouring the souls of those they overcame. However, the merciful providence of our God, desiring our salvation, will not allow us to sink into such ingratitude and forgetfulness. Therefore, He allows us to be afflicted by our enemies, as with His Apostle Paul, so that we may mourn for sin, hate it, know the sole mediator and the dignity of His office, truly long for the coming of the Lord Jesus, neither presuming nor lightly esteeming Christ's death, and not forgetting our former state and miseries. Thus, this cup is like a medicine prepared by the wisdom of our eternal Physician, who alone knows the remedies for our corrupt nature.



Take note, dear mother, that all this comes to us for our utmost benefit. It is medicine, and therefore cannot be immediately pleasant. But just as we would eagerly drink unpleasant and bitter medicine when our bodies are ill, how much more should we receive this medicine from our Father's hands, which removes many mortal diseases from our souls, with His Holy Spirit working through it, such as pride, presumption, contempt of grace, and ingratitude? These are the deadly diseases that unbelief inflicts upon the soul. It restores in us humility, fear, invocation of God's name, remembrance of our own weakness, and the infinite benefits received through Christ. These are the clear signs that Jesus Christ lives in us, and these signs and tokens have appeared in you and others in your company since your first profession of Christ. May God grant that people's eyes are not blinded to their own destruction.

To our main point, beloved, accept this cup from the hand of our heavenly Father. Although your suffering is almost intolerable, cast yourself before the throne of God's mercy because you have no other refuge. In your trouble, say to Him, as the Psalmist David did:

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled."

Now David proceeds in his prayer, adding certain reasons why he should be heard and obtain his requests. But first, let's consider his prayers in order throughout this Psalm. In summary, David desires four things in his vehement trouble. In the first verse, he asks that God does not punish him in His hot displeasure and wrath. In the second verse, he asks for God's mercy. In the third verse, he desires healing for his sickness, and in the fourth verse, he seeks God's return and salvation for his soul. Every one of these things was so necessary to David that lacking any one of them, he deemed himself

unfortunate. He felt God's wrath and therefore desired its removal. He had sinned and therefore desired mercy. He was suffering from a severe illness and therefore cried out for physical health. He felt that God had withdrawn from him and therefore longed for the comfort of the Holy Spirit to return. David was not like most people who, as a custom, often ask for things with their mouths that their hearts do not greatly desire to obtain. Let us primarily note what is significant in these prayers, which David poured out before God with earnest intent. It is evident that David, in these prayers, sustained and felt the true sense of God's wrath. He also clearly understood that it was God alone who troubled him and inflicted this severe scourge upon him. Yet, he sought support and aid from God alone, who appeared to be angry with him. This may be easily spoken, but most people consider it a trivial matter to turn to God in their troubles.

I confess indeed that if our troubles come from man's tyranny, then the most sure and easiest way is to turn to God for defense and aid. But when God appears to be our enemy, to be angry with us, and to have abandoned us, how hard and difficult it is to call for His grace and assistance! Only those who have experienced it truly understand, and only the elect children of God can do it. The enemies that violently attack the troubled conscience in this battle are so strong that, unless the hidden seed of God makes them hope against hope, they could never expect deliverance or comfort. The flesh provides reasons and persuasions to draw us away from God. The Devil, by himself and through his messengers, boldly proclaims that we have nothing to do with God. A weak faith is often compelled to admit the truth of these accusations and reasons. In times of trouble, the flesh reasons, "Wretched man, don't you realize that God is angry with you? He is punishing you in His hot displeasure, so it's in vain for you to call upon Him." The Devil, through his suggestions or his

ministers, amplifies and emphasizes these accusations, affirming and instilling into the conscience of the severely afflicted the idea that God is punishing them for their iniquity and that crying for mercy or relief is in vain because God's justice must necessarily take vengeance on all disobedient offenders. In this situation, a weak faith is compelled to confess and acknowledge the truth of these accusations because who can deny that they deserve God's punishment? The flesh feels the torments, and our own weakness confirms that everything is true, and nothing can be denied.

This fierce battle is clearly evident in the sickness of Hezekiah and in the story of Job. Hezekiah, after lamenting with tears that his life has been taken away prematurely, that violence has been done to him, and that God has crushed all his bones like a lion, finally says, "Be Thou surety for me, O Lord." But immediately, as if correcting himself, he adds, "What shall I say? He has done it Himself." It's as if he's saying, "Why do I complain to Him? If He had any pleasure in me, He wouldn't have treated me this way. It's He Himself, whom I thought would be my surety and defender, who has wrapped me in all this wretched misery. He cannot be angry and merciful at the same time," the flesh judges, "for there is no contradiction in Him. I feel that He is angry with me, so it's in vain for me to complain or call upon Him." A similar situation can be seen in Job, who, after being accused by his friends as someone who deserved God's punishment and after his wife advised him to curse God and die, says in the midst of his intense complaints, "When I cry out to Him, I don't believe He has heard my voice." It's as if Job is saying, "My torments are so terrible, my pain and anguish so intense, that even if God has truly heard my humble petitions, I do not feel that He will grant my request." In this situation, when they perfectly understand that there is no remedy but in God alone, yet expect no support from His hand, it might appear to human judgment that they have abandoned all

hope of God's deliverance. I remind you of these things, dear mother, so that even when your pains are sometimes so terrible that you find no relief or comfort in either spirit or body, if your heart can only sob to God, do not despair. You will obtain your heart's desire. You are not lacking in faith. For at such times when the flesh, natural reason, God's law, present torment, and the Devil all cry out together that God is angry and that there is neither help nor remedy to be expected from Him, at such times, I say, to sob to God is the evidence of the hidden seed of God, which is concealed in God's elect children. And that sobbing alone is a more acceptable sacrifice to God than giving our bodies to be burned for the sake of the truth without this cross. For if God is present through the assistance of His Holy Spirit, so that there is no doubt in our conscience that we stand in God's favor, what can bodily suffering harm the soul or mind when the bitter, freezing wind cannot harm the body itself, which is warmly covered and protected from the cold? But when the Spirit of God appears to be absent, and God Himself seems to be our enemy, then to say, "Oh," and to think as Job did in his suffering, "even if He destroys or kills me, yet will I trust in Him," or to have such strong faith that you expect mercy even when your whole being feels nothing but pain from every side—this is a great battle indeed. Assuredly, that hope shall never be confounded, for it is promised by Him who cannot repent of His mercy and goodness.

Rejoice, mother, and continue the fight to the end. I am confident that you are not entirely devoid of the Spirit who taught David and Job. I need not write about the obedience I have heard you give to God in your most severe torment. Only this I desire, which is part of my daily prayer: may God, for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ, enable you to continue in all your troubles as I have left you. May you, like David, sob to Him. Even if your mouth cannot speak, let your heart groan and say, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and heal

me." I have no doubt that your severe torment will not afflict you forever, but will soon come to an end for your eternal consolation and comfort. Perhaps you think that you would gladly call and pray for mercy, but the knowledge of your sins hinders you. Consider, beloved, that all medicine is intended for the patient, and so is mercy for the sinner, even the wretched and most miserable sinner. Did not David understand that he was a sinner, an adulterer, and a shedder of innocent blood? Did he not also know that he was being punished for his sins? Yes, he did, and therefore, he called for mercy. Only those who know the heaviness and multitude of their sins can do so, while most often, those who feel they have not sinned lightly regard mercy because they do not sense how necessary it is for them, as seen in many places in the New Testament between Christ and the proud Pharisees. Therefore, dear mother, if your adversary troubles you with your past or present sins, suggesting that mercy does not belong to you because of your sins, respond to him as Christ has taught: that the whole do not need a physician, but the sick do, and that Christ has come to give sight to the blind and to call sinners to repentance, of whom you acknowledge yourself to be the greatest. Do not doubt that you will obtain mercy, for it has never been denied to anyone who asks for it in faith. Thus, you shall surely achieve victory through Christ Jesus, to whom be praise forever and ever. Amen.

In the rest of David's prayers, we will now be more concise to get to the core of the matter.

After asking for mercy, David now requests a physical benefit, saying, "Heal me, Lord." It should be noted that bodily health, being a gift from God, can be requested from Him without sin, even when we understand that we are being punished for our offenses. Praying in this manner is not contrary to God's will because He has ingrained in human nature a desire for health and its preservation. Therefore,

He is not offended when we ask for physical health when we lack it, as long as we first seek God Himself and desire neither life nor health to the detriment of God's glory or to harm or destroy our brethren. Rather, we should seek that through us, God's glory may be promoted, and that our strength, health, and life may comfort and defend our brethren. With these principles in mind, it is not a sin to earnestly request bodily health from God, even when we know that our sickness is the result of God's hand punishing or correcting our past sinful life. I mention this because some are so strict that they believe we should not ask God for bodily health because the sickness has been sent by Him. However, such individuals fail to understand that sickness is a trial for the body, and God commands us to call upon Him in our times of trouble. Our submission and prayers during such extremities bring the greatest glory to God because we acknowledge that His mercy surpasses His judgment, and we boldly pray for the removal of His scourge. This petition, undoubtedly, He must grant, as He promises through His prophet Jeremiah, saying, "If I have spoken against any nation or city, saying that I will destroy it, and if it turns from iniquity and repents, I will also relent concerning the disaster I planned to bring on it." God promises to show mercy to an entire city or nation if it repents. Will He not do the same for an individual who calls for His grace during illness? He has demonstrated His willingness to do so through various examples, particularly the case of Mary, the sister of Moses and Aaron, who contracted leprosy from the Lord as a punishment for her haughty spirit. Upon her submission and Moses' prayer, she was swiftly restored to health. To continue, David further prays, "Turn again, O Lord." David, in the midst of his severe pain, perceives that God has completely departed from him. This is how the flesh (and even the entire person) usually judges when trouble persists over time. David had endured trouble for many days, had prayed, yet had not been delivered. Consequently, he concludes that God, offended by his sins,

had abandoned him. However, it is evident that God was with him, working in his heart through His Holy Spirit, stirring up repentance, expressing those sobs and groans, and igniting a desire to be restored to the comfort and consolation he had once experienced through his close relationship with God. All these inner movements were the workings of God's Holy Spirit. Yet David could discern no sense of God's presence in his troubles, and he lamented, as mentioned earlier. It is evident from this that even the elect sometimes feel completely devoid of consolation and believe themselves abandoned, as can be seen in David's experience. Importantly, David, in his distress, remembers that God had been close to him before, for he says, "Turn again, O Lord." This signifies that he had previously felt the sweetness of God's presence, but now he was left to himself without a sense of comfort or consolation.

For thus, David seems to complain: "Have you not been familiar with me, O Lord, Your unprofitable servant? Did you not call me from tending sheep to be anointed King over Your people Israel? Did You not so strengthen my resolve that I feared neither the mighty Lion nor the ravenous Bear, whose jaws I delivered my sheep from? Did You not once ignite my heart with zeal for Your holy name, so that when all Israel trembled and none dared face the monstrous Goliath, Your Spirit made me bold and valiant? Without armour or weapons, except my sling and stones, I dared to face him in single combat. Was it not Your strength that granted me victory not only then but also over all my enemies who have sought my life since? Have You not made me exceedingly glad through the multitude of Your mercies and Your gracious favour, which You have abundantly poured upon me, bringing joy to my soul and body through the radiance of Your countenance? Have You not been so powerfully present with me in times of trouble and danger that even my enemies have

acknowledged that Your power was always with me and that You took my defence upon Yourself? And now, will You forsake the dwelling place You have chosen? Shall it be left desolate forever? Can Your mercies come to an end? Will Your fatherly compassion never shine upon me again? Will You leave me forever to be tormented after You have so abundantly comforted me in the past? O Lord, I am certain that Your mercies will not treat me thus, so turn again, O Lord, and fill me with joy through Your presence, for it seems that You have left me devoid of consolation and comfort for a long time. Take note, dear beloved, of David's state when he had no comfort other than the remembrance of God's past kindnesses to him. Therefore, do not be surprised or despair if you find yourself in the same situation as David did. I am confident that your heart must acknowledge that you have received similar blessings from God, just as David did. He has called you from a more base occupation than tending sheep to an even greater dignity concerning the everlasting inheritance, namely, from serving the Devil and sin, He has anointed us as priests and kings through the blood of His only Son, Jesus. He has given you the courage and boldness to fight against more cruel, cunning, dangerous enemies who are closer to you than the Lion, Bear, or Goliath were to David. I refer to the Devil and his assaults, your own flesh, and your innermost desires, the multitudes of those who were and still are enemies of Christ's religion, and even some of your natural friends who appear to profess Christ alongside you. In this aspect, the battle is more intense. I need not recount the courage I have witnessed in you during all these conflicts. I write this to the praise of God, as I have marveled at the steadfast courage I have seen in you when my own heart was faint. I am certain that flesh and blood could never have convinced you to despise and disregard those things that the world values most. You have tasted and experienced God's goodness and mercy to such an extent that you are not only able to reason and speak, but also, through the Spirit of God working



in you, to provide comfort and consolation to those in distress. Therefore, my dearest mother, do not think that God will abandon His own dwelling forever. No, it is impossible for the Devil to occupy God's inheritance, and God will not forsake His holy temple to the point of desecration. God occasionally withholds His presence from His chosen ones, as can be seen here in David's case. He also allows His elect to taste bitterness and sorrow for reasons mentioned earlier. However, He will not permit them to be permanently outside His care, for this would make Him a changeable God and would give His glory to another if He allowed Himself to be overcome by His adversary. Such a thing is nearly impossible, just as it is that God would cease to be God. Finally, David prays, "Deliver my soul and save me." In this prayer, David undoubtedly desired to be rescued from imminent physical death at that time and for his soul to be saved from the present plagues and severe torments he endured. Some may question whether he was overly attached to this present life and whether he loved the comfort of the flesh more than a spiritual person should. However, as mentioned earlier, God has naturally instilled in humans a love for life, tranquillity, and rest, and even the most spiritual individuals sometimes desire them because they are seals and testimonies of the covenant between God and His chosen. Although trouble often befalls the friends of God, it does not mean they are entirely bound to it. Therefore, when they seek life or rest on earth, it is not for the sake of worldly pleasures (for they often acknowledge that it is better to be absent from the body amid such pleasures). Their primary reason for desiring life or rest is to maintain God's glory and to demonstrate to others that God cares for His elect. Now, let us examine the foundations of David's prayers and upon what they are based. The first foundation is his intense suffering and its prolonged duration. The second is God's goodness. The third is God's glory and the insolent rage of his enemies. It should be noted and understood that trouble, its long duration, and

the haughty hearts of wicked individuals are not the primary reasons why God listens to our prayers and reveals His mercy to us. Therefore, these cannot be the solid and secure foundations of our prayers. Instead, it is God's infinite goodness that is the source of all mercy and grace, flowing to us through Christ Jesus, His Son. Trouble, prolonged suffering, and the arrogance of wicked men serve as secondary causes, working through the Holy Spirit to help us believe and trust that God, the Father of mercies, will not be perpetually angry with the sorely afflicted. He will not punish without mercy those who call upon Him for help and comfort. Likewise, God, who has always revealed Himself as an enemy of pride, will not allow the proud and obstinate despisers of His humble saints to blaspheme His leniency and gentleness for long. He will eventually pour forth His plagues upon them, as He has threatened. Thus, our troubles and the tyranny of our enemies serve as foundations upon which our prayers can stand, as seen here. David describes his distress and its prolonged duration in these words:

"I am wasting away due to sickness; all my bones are troubled, and my soul is in dreadful fear. But, Lord, how long will You treat me like this? I am weary from sobbing, and I water my bed with my tears."

Let us imagine that David thus speaks: "O Lord, can You, who have cared for me since my mother's womb, forget me now, the workmanship of Your own hands? Can You, who have shown Yourself so merciful to me in all my tribulations, now, in the end, withdraw Your mercies from me? Do You have no pity, O Lord? Do You not see that I am wasted and consumed by this grievous torment? In this affliction, not only my tender flesh but also my very bones (the strongest part of my body) are so vexed that there is neither beauty nor strength left in me. If my anguish afflicted only

my body, the pain would be almost intolerable. However, O Lord, my soul is so horribly tormented that even though it is immortal, it quakes and trembles as if death itself were devouring it. I endure the most grievous torments in both body and soul, of such long duration that it appears to me that You have forgotten to be merciful. O Lord, how long will You treat me in this manner? Have You forgotten Your loving mercies? Or have You lost Your fatherly compassion? I no longer have the strength to cry out, and I am so weary from sobs and groans that my breath fails me. The tears from my eyes have wet my bed night after night, bearing witness to my genuine sorrow. But now my eyes have grown dim, and my entire strength is depleted."

In all these lamentable complaints, David speaks to God as if addressing a person who is unaware of another's suffering. From this, we can understand how the wisest and most spiritual individuals perceive God in times of trouble. David genuinely believed that God did not care for him, and therefore, he accused God of forgetfulness, as if God were not looking upon him with His customary mercy. This is clearly evident from these words. Yet David's troubles are the initial grounds and reasons why he presents his prayers and claims to be heard. It's not that troubles alone, as previously noted, are sufficient for God's deliverance, but by recounting his distress, David gains secret access to God's mercy, which naturally belongs to all who call upon Him for support, help, and aid in times of trouble. This is the same foundation that Job uses when he says, "Is it advantageous for You to oppress me violently? Will You despise the work of Your own hands? You have formed and made me completely; will You now consume me? Please remember that You have moulded me as clay, and You shall return me to dust. You have covered me with skin and flesh; You have knit me together with sinews and bones. You have adorned me with life and grace, and Your providence has preserved my spirit." From this, we can see the

basis upon which these two individuals stood during their most grievous pains. Their troubles prompted them to complain and appeal to God's great mercy, which, as they assert, cannot be denied to anyone who seeks it. Just as the troubles of His creatures offer no advantage to God, denying mercy when it is asked would be a denial of Himself. In this, dearly beloved, I urge you to rejoice. I can bear witness to how steadfastly you have called for grace in your anguish, and your own conscience must testify that many times you have found relief and comfort to such an extent that you have boldly triumphed over your adversaries in Christ Jesus our Saviour. Do not be afraid, even though you presently do not feel your usual consolation. This will harm you no more than the troubles of David and Job harmed them, who, at the time they uttered these words, found no more consolation than you do now in the extremity of your suffering. They did not immediately receive comfort, for David says, "O Lord, how long will You punish me so cruelly?" Yet we know with absolute certainty that they were heard and obtained their heart's desire, just as every person shall who, in times of trouble, whether spiritual or physical, looks solely to God's mercy.

The second ground and foundation upon which David's prayers are based is the infinite goodness of God. He says, "Save me, O God, for Your goodness." Having previously asked for mercy and declared his complaints, David now searches and reasons within himself in his conscience, thinking in this manner: "Why should God show mercy to someone who has sinned so grievously and is justly afflicted by God's hand for transgression and sin?" He finds no other ground that is always sure and unchanging, except for God's infinite goodness, which he perceives as the only support that neither tempests nor floods can overthrow or undermine. Oh, how perceptive is the eyes of Faith, that in such deep despair, can still see goodness in the midst of the troubling darkness. It's a goodness that is sufficient and capable

of overcoming, devouring, and swallowing up all the iniquities of God's chosen ones, so that none of them can resist or obstruct God's infinite goodness in showing mercy to His troubled children.

By this, we are taught, beloved mother, that in the extremity of our troubles, we should turn to God's goodness alone to seek comfort through Jesus Christ, and nowhere else. I fear not the blasphemous voices of those who rage against God and His eternal truth and claim that this kind of doctrine makes people negligent in performing good works. I will not contend with them in any other way than the Apostle does when he says, "Their damnation is just." My intention is to edify those whom God has called from darkness to light, whose eyes His mercy has opened so that they clearly feel the flesh rebelling against the spirit, even in the height of their perfection. In such a way that all power, justice, and virtue emanating from us is so contaminated and defiled that the very works we do must be purified by another, and therefore none of them can be infallible grounds for our prayers or a sufficient cause for us to be heard. However, the goodness of God, being infinite, cannot be defiled by our iniquity. It pierces through it and reveals itself for our consolation, just as the beams of the bright sun penetrate through misty and thick clouds, bringing down their natural warmth to comfort and revive herbs and creatures that would otherwise fall into deadly decay.

Thus, only God's goodness remains as the sure foundation for the afflicted in all storms, one that the Devil can never overthrow. The knowledge of this is so necessary for the afflicted conscience that without it, it is very difficult to withstand the adversary's attacks. He is a subtle and vigilant spirit who easily undermines all the grounds and causes within us, especially when we are in trouble. He can even persuade us that we lack things that we undoubtedly have through God's free gift and grace. For example, if we desire deliverance from

trouble and anguish of conscience as David and Job did, the Devil can quickly object, "What does their example have to do with you? They had many notable and singular virtues that you lack. If you seek forgiveness of sins as Mary Magdalene, Peter, or other sinners did, he has these arrows ready to shoot: 'They had faith, but you have none. They had true repentance, though you are but a hypocrite. They hated sin and continued in good works, but you rejoice in sin and do no good at all.'"

By these means, the accuser of us and our brethren can always find some crafty accusation to trouble the weak conscience of the afflicted as long as it relies on anything within itself. Until, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, we are raised up to contemplate our God, so that our minds are fixed solely on God's infinite goodness, claiming through it to receive mercy, as Job does in his earlier words. The sense and meaning of Job's words are this: "O Lord, You created me when I did not exist. You gave me a soul and body when I neither knew nor understood Your power. You nourished and sustained me when all I could do was weep and mourn. Your merciful providence has preserved my life to this day, even though neither I nor my works could benefit You, for You, whose dwelling is in heaven, have no need of man's help."

As for my works, they are a reflection of my heart, which is corrupted. How then can anything pure come from it? So, whatever I have received, whether it was, is, or will be within my corrupt nature, all stems from Your infinite goodness. You began to show Your mercy to me before I even knew You. Can You then abandon me in my extremity? I admit and confess that I have sinned. But is there any creature that is clean and perfect to such an extent that they can withstand Your justice without mercy? Or is there any iniquity in me now that Your wisdom did not know beforehand? And so, I appeal to

Your mercy, which springs from Your infinite goodness. Oh dear mother, when your afflicted soul can forsake and reject everything that is within man and can anchor itself (no matter how little) upon God's infinite goodness, then all the fiery darts of the Devil are extinguished, and he is repelled like a defeated spirit. It may not immediately calm the stormy tempest, but it is sufficient that this anchor is cast out, which will surely preserve your ship from running aground on the shores of despair.

I write this, beloved in the Lord, knowing your previous complaints, that you found your faith weak, that you could not repent of your past sinful life, that you felt no inclination or readiness for good works, but were rather carried away by sin and wickedness. Even if all of this were true, you would be in no worse state than the Apostle Paul when he cried out, "O wretched and unhappy man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of sin?" However, I am certain that much of your trouble arises from the malice and envy of the Devil, who seeks to persuade your heart that you take pleasure in things that are most displeasing to you. How often have you lamented the weakness of your faith? How often have you grieved over the imperfection of your flesh? The tears from your eyes have borne witness before God that you take no delight in the things falsely attributed to you by your adversary. For who continually mourns over things that are pleasing to their heart, if those things are always present with them? Or who desires things that please them to be taken away? You have mourned over your weakness and have desired the removal of your imperfection, and you have detested all forms of idolatry. How then can you think that you take pleasure in them? Do not despair, even if all remembrance of God's goodness or worthiness is removed from your mind. You have David, Job, Daniel, and all the other saints of God on an equal footing with you. You have heard about David and Job, and Isaiah, in his

lamentations for the plagues of the people of Israel, openly confesses that all have sinned, that their righteousness is nothing but filthiness, that none seeks God, and that none calls upon His name. Similarly, Daniel in his prayer acknowledges that all have done wickedly, all have turned away from God, and none has submitted themselves to God or made supplication to Him, even though He had punished their previous disobedience. Therefore, he states that they do not plead their own righteousness in their prayers. Consider, dear mother, that there is no mention of any righteousness within themselves, nor do they boast of any works or virtues they had performed previously, for they understood that God was the source of all goodness, and so to Him alone belongs the praise. But as for their sins, they regarded them as the weaknesses of their own flesh and, therefore, boldly called for mercy. God's infinite goodness is no less available to you than it was to them, in accordance with the abundance of His generous graces that He pours out upon all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

The third and final foundation of David's prayers was to show and proclaim the glory and praise of God's name in his life, as he declares in these words:

"For there is no remembrance of You in death; who will praise You in the pit?"

As David might say: O Lord, how shall I pray and declare Your goodness when I am dead and gone down into the grave? It is not Your usual way to have Your miracles and wondrous works proclaimed to people by those who are buried and have descended into the pit. The dead do not mention You on the earth. Therefore, O Lord, spare Your servant so that, for a time, I may show and bear witness to Your wondrous works to humankind.



These deeply devout feelings in David generated in him a profound horror and fear of death, beyond what is natural and common to all humans. This was because he fully understood that through death, he would be prevented from further advancing the glory of God. He complains vehemently about this in Psalm 88, where he apparently attributes a lack of sense, remembrance, feeling, and understanding to the dead. He alleges that God works no miracles through the dead, that God's goodness cannot be proclaimed in the grave, that faith is lost through perdition, and that God's marvellous works are not known in darkness. This language is not meant to imply that David believed the dead were entirely devoid of sense and feeling, nor that those who have died in Christ are left without consolation and life. Indeed, Christ Himself testifies to the contrary. David expresses this sentiment with such intensity because, after death, the departed are no longer appointed to minister in the ordinary affairs of the Church of God. None of those who have passed away are designated to be preachers of God's glory to humankind. Instead, after death, they cease to have any further opportunity to promote God's holy name here among the living on earth, and, in that respect, they become unprofitable to the congregation, with nothing they can do, either in body or soul, after death. This is why David earnestly desired to live in Israel, for the purpose of further manifesting God's glory.

Here, we must note a short but necessary lesson, which is that the primary things we should seek in this transient life are not those which the blind world contends for and strives over. Rather, we should seek God, His loving kindness towards humankind, His precious promises, and the true promotion of religion among our fellow brethren who are ignorant. For if we do not, we might be regarded as beasts rather than humans, as lifeless logs instead of living creatures, or even as non-entities with neither existence nor life. The heavens declare the glory of God, the whole earth, along

with everything in it, praises His holy name, the seas, rivers, and springs, along with the wonders they contain, ceaselessly reveal the wisdom, power, and providence of their Creator. What, then, shall be said of humans, who neither seek nor acknowledge God's glory? Indeed, what shall be said of those who not only hinder God's glory but also declare themselves enemies of those who would promote it? With a heavy heart, I must speak my conscience, they are not merely dead but also share the nature of him through whose malice and envy death entered the world – that is, the Devil. However, I will set aside this topic for now because their accusation does not directly relate to our current subject. Now, I must bring this to a close, somewhat against my will, due to some pressing troubles, both of body and spirit. I will omit the fourth part of this Psalm for now since it does not pertain significantly to the spiritual cross but is more like a prophecy spoken against all those who rejoice in the afflictions of God's chosen ones. These people shall indeed be confounded and brought to shame when the Lord hears the cries of the sorely afflicted.

Now, dearly beloved in our Saviour Christ Jesus, considering that the spiritual cross is peculiar to the children of God, given to us as a most effective remedy to remove diseases and instil in our souls notable virtues such as humility, mercy, self-contempt, and constant awareness of our own weakness and imperfection, and since you have received clear signs that this same remedy has worked in you a part of all the promises, receive it gratefully from your Father's hand, no matter what trouble it brings with it. Although the flesh may grumble, let the spirit rejoice, steadfastly looking for deliverance. You will assuredly obtain it according to the goodwill and promise of Him who cannot deceive, to whom be glory forever and ever before His congregation. Amen.

Now, since it is uncertain, beloved mother, if we will ever meet again in this earthly life — a thought which I hope you will not take in any unpleasant way, for if God grants you continued life and me continued health, I will attempt to speak with you face to face within a shorter time than has passed since we last saw each other. Be assured, beloved mother, that neither the fear of death nor the fury of the Devil shall prevent me. Therefore, please do not interpret my words as if I were not inclined to visit you again. I assure you that only God's hand can keep me away.

However, because our lives pass like smoke before the wind, my conscience compels me to write to you as though I were bidding you my final farewell on earth. The essence of my message is this: I exhort and admonish you, as you will have to answer to Christ Jesus, to continue in the doctrine that you and others have professed before the world. Before God, before Christ Jesus His Son, and before His holy angels, I neither feel ashamed to confess nor do I doubt to affirm that the doctrine you and others have heard, not only from my lips but also faithfully taught by the mouths of many others, some of whom have been exiled, some cruelly imprisoned, and the rest silenced, is the only word of life. All doctrines contrary to it are diabolical and erroneous, which will certainly bring death and eternal condemnation to all those who agree with and accept them. Therefore, Mother, do not be swayed by any persuasion but adhere to Christ in the day of His battle. I also admonish you to avoid that abomination, which you have often heard me assert to be damnable idolatry. I solemnly swear before God that I did not and do not speak, whether then or now, for the pleasure or hatred of any living creature on earth, regardless of who they may be. My conscience is fully convinced by the infallible and clear Word of God, from which, thanks to my most merciful Father, I have not swerved in the least up to this day. I do not consider myself more blessed than others

because of my blessed and most happy association with the truth of Christ's Gospel, to which it has pleased God to call me, the most wretched of others. Nor do I regret that God has made me an open and manifest enemy of Popery, superstition, and all that filthy idolatry, which has been recently erected to the great displeasure of God. I would not recant, as they term it, one sentence of my previous doctrine, for all the glory, riches, and peace that exist on earth. In conclusion, I would not bow my knee before that most abominable idol, no matter the torments that earthly tyrants can devise, with God assisting me, as His Holy Spirit presently moves me to write sincerely. While I may have appeared weak and feeble at the outset of this battle, I pray to be restored to the fray. Thanks be to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I am not left entirely without comfort, and my hope is to obtain such mercy that, if a sudden end is not brought to all my miseries through final death, which would be no small advantage to me, then, through Him who has never despised the cries of the sorely afflicted, I shall be so emboldened to fight that both England and Scotland shall know I am ready to endure more than human nature can bear. This is for the sake of professing the doctrine and heavenly religion of which it has pleased His merciful providence to make me, among others, a humble soldier and witness bearer to mankind. Therefore, mother, let no fear enter your heart, as if I were escaping the furious rage of those ravenous wolves that have been recently set loose due to our ingratitude, and do not believe that I regret any of my former fervency. No, mother, for the opportunity to preach a few more sermons in England, I would be content to endure more than my nature could bear even now. By the grace of the almighty and most merciful God, who alone is the God of comfort and consolation through Jesus Christ, this will be known one day. In the meantime, consider this my final good night and last testament on this earth. In the love of Christ Jesus, I exhort and admonish you to steadfastly hold onto the truth, which

shall ultimately triumph and prevail despite Satan and his malice. Avoid idolatry, for those who maintain and obey it will not escape the swift vengeance of God, which shall be poured upon them according to the ripeness of their iniquity. When they cry for peace and tranquillity, which never remains for long with the ungodly, sudden destruction shall come upon them without warning. May the God of peace and consolation, who, by His infinite and invincible power, has raised from the dead the true and great Bishop of our souls and has exalted our flesh above principalities and powers, regardless of their preeminence in heaven or on earth, assist you with His Holy Spirit in such constancy and strength that Satan and his assaults shall be confounded, both now and forever, in you and in the congregation, through Christ Jesus our Lord. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all praise and honour eternally. Amen.

Yours with a sorrowful heart. J. K.

Watch and pray.

The Argument of the Epistle.

A comforting Epistle sent to the afflicted Church of Christ, exhorting them to bear His cross with patience, looking every hour for His coming again, to the great comfort and consolation of His chosen, with a prophecy of the destruction of the wicked. Attached to it is most wholesome advice on how to conduct ourselves in the midst of this wicked generation, concerning the daily study of God's most holy and sacred Word. Written by the man of God, J. K.

## **Ezekiel 9.**

Pass through the city, and put a sign on the foreheads of those who mourn for the abominations that are committed.

When I reflect upon the state of Christ's true Church (beloved in the Lord) immediately after His death and passion, and consider the changes and great upheavals in the commonwealth of Judea before its ultimate destruction, I cannot help but fear that similar plagues will befall the realm of England for similar offenses. In my fear, which God knows I lament and mourn, I also find cause for rejoicing, knowing that God's most merciful providence is just as watchful over His weak and feeble servants in the realm of England today as it was over His oppressed flock in Judea.

The state of Christ's Church between His death and resurrection, from His resurrection to the sending of the Holy Ghost upon His disciples, and from that time to the final destruction of Jerusalem, is clearly witnessed in Scripture. It was a time of great affliction without worldly comfort and consolation, marked by severe persecution that wreaked havoc upon the Church of God. The mutations and troubles in Judea and Jerusalem before their destruction, as recorded in histories, especially by Josephus and Egesippus, are well-documented. They witnessed the rule of cruel, tyrannous, and ungodly rulers who oppressed the people and stripped them of their freedoms. This oppression led to sedition and, subsequently, brutal tyranny, including the burning alive of many people in the name of justice. The city and countryside were filled with widespread murder to the point where fathers feared their sons and brothers feared each other. This unrest continued until God's severe judgment was unleashed upon those who obstinately rejected and persecuted Christ Jesus and His doctrine.

Turning back to the treatment and preservation of Christ's Church at that time, it is evident that it faced severe persecution, yet it continued to grow and multiply. It was forced to flee from city to city, from realm to realm, and from one nation to another. Nevertheless, it was miraculously preserved, and a significant number of those banished and exiled from Jerusalem by the wicked priests remained alive until God's judgment was executed upon that exceedingly wicked generation. The remembrance of this, beloved in the Lord, brings such comfort and consolation to my heart that neither my tongue nor my pen can fully express it. My hope and expectation are firmly rooted in the belief that just as Christ Jesus appeared to His disciples when they were overwhelmed by anguish and despair, and as He increased their number under the most severe persecution, so shall He do for His afflicted flock in the realm of England today.

First, I say this is my hope: that a just vengeance shall be taken upon those bloodthirsty tyrants by whom Christ Jesus, in His members, is now crucified amongst you. Afterward, His truth shall become so evident to the comfort of those who now mourn that they shall hear and recognize the voice of their own Pastor. Our merciful God shall do this to let us know and understand in practice that His promises are infallible. He will not treat us according to the weakness of our corrupt nature, which is always ready to turn from God, to distrust His promises, and to forget the benefits and comfort we have received from His hand when trouble and extreme danger are upon us.

Therefore, beloved in the Lord, even though you may find your hearts sometimes assailed by sorrow, grumbling, or a kind of despair, do not fall into utter despair, nor be excessively troubled, as if Christ Jesus would never visit you again. No, dear brethren, not so. Such imperfections also afflicted Christ's own Apostles for a long

time, but they did not prevent His return to them. Likewise, our weakness and imperfections shall not hinder or obscure the radiance of His countenance and the comfort of His word shining upon us once more, provided that we do not persist in obstinacy, impenitence, and treacherous hearts like Judas. I do not doubt that all the members of Christ's body are sometimes permitted to fall, even the most fervent professors who, from being strong adherents of the truth, may become fearful deniers of the most obvious truth. However, they are not permitted to continue in blasphemy, unbelief, and despair until the end, as is evident from the example of Christ's Apostles.

To better understand our current time and circumstances within the realm of England and how they resemble the situation of Christ's disciples immediately after His death, let us consider what happened to them before and after His death. Before Christ's passion, He had instructed them about many things related to the kingdom of God, which they did not fully understand at the time and did not properly appreciate. He also repeatedly warned them that He, their Master, would suffer a cruel death, that they would be ashamed, slandered, and offended in Him, that they would flee from Him, and that they would face persecution and trouble. Alongside these sorrowful tidings, He promised to rise on the third day, to rise for them again for their comfort and consolation, and to deliver them mightily from all troubles and adversities.

However, what impact did all these warnings have on Christ's disciples before His death or during the extreme anguish shortly thereafter? Did they anticipate and fear the trouble before it arrived? Did they expect any comfort when the predicted trouble came? It is evident that such thoughts did not enter their hearts. Before Christ's death, their primary concern was worldly honour, which they



sometimes discussed and argued about, even when Christ was earnestly preaching about His impending crucifixion. After His death, they were so overwhelmed by anguish, care, sorrow, and despair that neither the testimony of the women, who claimed to have seen Christ, nor the empty tomb, nor the angels who appeared to announce His resurrection, nor even the actual presence and words of Christ Jesus Himself could completely dispel their doubts. Their minds wavered, and they could not be fully convinced that their Lord and Master had indeed risen, fulfilling His previous promises.

In this regard, I see the true professors of Christ's holy Gospel in the realm of England today. These days of our current distress and tribulation were foretold and proclaimed long before they arrived. The frailty and weakness of our human nature were also evident to us. However, who among us would have believed that these days of trouble were so close at hand? Or that such a brief tempest would overthrow such a great multitude? I believe no one within the entire realm. For all appeared to live in a careless security as if the unchanging decree of God, declaring that whoever desires to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, had no relevance to our time. Many had such bold confidence, or rather, a vain persuasion in their own strength that, had they continued without backsliding, they might have been considered more like angels than men.

But, beloved in the Lord, the sword of anguish and sorrow has now pierced the tender heart of Christ's mother (that is, His very church), revealing the thoughts of many hearts. The fire has come, and just as it has burned away the stubble, hay, and wood, it has also revealed such dross and dust that the entire mass appears to be confused. Who now recalls the same voice that foretold our sorrows, which also foretold our everlasting comfort with Christ Jesus? Who delights

now in His admirable promises? Who rejoices under the cross? Instead, who does not fear, tremble, grumble, and lament as if there were no help in God, or as if He does not regard the trouble we endure? These are the imperfections that continually remain in our corrupt nature. The knowledge of this should compel us to cry out earnestly: "O Lord, increase our faith, be merciful to us, and let us not perish in the deep forever." If we do this with unfeigned hearts, then Christ Jesus shall yet appear to comfort us, and His power shall be known to the praise and glory of His own name, despite all His sworn enemies. This is the chief and primary reason for my comfort and consolation in these most dolorous days, that neither our infirmities nor daily despair can prevent Christ Jesus from returning to us.

The other cause of my comfort and consolation is that I am assured the judgment of these tyrants who now oppress us shall not escape, and vengeance shall fall upon them without delay. They have sufficiently revealed the malice of their hearts. They have violated the law and holy ordinances of the Lord our God. They have spoken against His eternal truth. They have banished His truth and established their own lies. They persecute the innocent daily and openly uphold murder. Their hearts are hardened, and their faces have become as shameless as harlots, so that there is no hope of repentance or amendment from them. Therefore, destruction shall suddenly befall them. But what kind of plagues they shall be struck with in this life and whom God shall appoint to execute His judgments on them, I leave to His good pleasure and further revelation.

However, their manifest iniquity assures me that they cannot escape the punishment they justly deserve for long. Meanwhile, beloved brethren, two things you must avoid. First, do not presume to take

revenge into your own hands, but leave vengeance to Him who alone can repay them according to their malicious intent.

Secondly, do not harbour carnal hatred towards these blind, cruel, and malicious tyrants, but learn from Christ to pray for your persecutors. Lament and bewail that the Devil has so prevailed against them that they are rushing headlong, body and soul, to perpetual perdition. Note well that I say we must not hate them with a carnal hatred, i.e. only because they trouble our bodies. There is a spiritual hatred, which David called a perfect hatred, engendered by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of God's elect against the rebellious despisers of His holy statutes. It is when we lament more that God's glory is suppressed and that Christ's flock is deprived of their wholesome food than when our bodies are persecuted. With this hatred, Jeremiah was inflamed when he prayed, "Let me see your vengeance taken upon your enemies, O Lord." With this hatred, we may hate tyrants and earnestly pray for their destruction, be they kings or queens, princes or prelates. Furthermore, you should note that prayers made with the fervency of this hatred are so acceptable before God that often the one who prays obtains the very thing that the words of their prayer mean. As David, Jeremiah, and other prophets saw with their own eyes, the hot vengeance of God poured out upon the cruel tyrants of their time. I am convinced that some who today sigh and groan under your tyrannical bishops will see the same upon the pestilent Papists within the realm of England. My assertion is not based on mere conjecture or human fantasy but on the usual cause of God's judgments against manifest despisers of His commandments, which has been consistent from the beginning.

Firstly, to rebuke and notify such sins by His messengers that are not known to be sins before the world. Secondly, to provoke them to repentance.

Thirdly, to allow the reprobate to declare their own impenitence before the world. Lastly, to pour upon them such manifest vengeance that His church may be instructed in both His power and His severe judgments against disobedience. This was the order of His judgment against Pharaoh, Saul, Jeroboam, Herod, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the entire city of Jerusalem. We have heard and seen the first three stages of the Lord's judgment executed against the Pestilent Papists within the Realm of England. We have heard their summons and citations duly executed by the messengers of God's Word. We have heard them accused and convicted before their own faces of theft and murder, blasphemy against God, idolatry, and finally, of all abominations. These crimes were laid to their charge in their own presence, and they were unable to deny them, so potent, plain, and evident was God's Word, by which their secret sores and festering wounds were exposed and revealed. We know that God, in His leniency, has granted them ample time for conversion and repentance. Yet, the little progress made in that regard is evident in these present days. Their malice is increasing, and their obstinacy has grown to such a degree that none could be greater. Are we then to think that God will abandon His cause, as if He were powerless against tyrants? Not so, dear brethren, not so. As assuredly as our God lives, some of His elect were stirred up by His Spirit to perceive the great abominations of these tyrants in our age. These messengers, despite their tyranny, were preserved by God to proclaim and notify sins that the world did not recognize as such. Just as we have observed their continued malice against God, His eternal truth, and the messengers of that truth, we will assuredly witness God's severe judgments poured out upon them in this temporal life. Some among us may bear witness to the generations that will follow, testifying to the wondrous works that the Lord has already wrought and will continue to work in our age. However, these plagues, like the Word of God that came before them, will not

work true repentance in them. In their blind rage, they will rebel against God's Majesty. For the deadly venom of their malicious father, the Devil, can never be purged from their corrupt hearts. Therefore, after witnessing these plagues, some of which we have heard and seen—for what a plague it was for the false Bishop of Durham to be called a murderer and thief to his face and to be convicted of it, a fact he could not deny, and neither he nor any of his proxies or divine doctors present with him dared to speak in his defense—

Firstly, to rebuke and make known through His messengers sins that are not recognized as sins by the world. Secondly, to encourage them to repent.

Thirdly, to allow the reprobate to reveal their own impenitence before the world. Lastly, to unleash such obvious vengeance upon them that His church may be instructed in both His power and His severe judgments against disobedience. This was the order of His judgment against Pharaoh, Saul, Jeroboam, Herod, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the entire city of Jerusalem. We have heard and witnessed the first three stages of the Lord's judgment executed against the Pestilent Papists within the Realm of England. We have heard their summons and citations duly carried out by the messengers of God's Word. We have heard them accused and convicted before their own faces of theft and murder, blasphemy against God, idolatry, and, finally, of all abominations. These crimes were charged against them in their own presence, and they were unable to deny them, so potent, clear, and evident was God's Word. It exposed and revealed their hidden sores and festering wounds. We know that God, in His leniency, has granted them ample time for conversion and repentance. Yet, it is evident in these present days how little progress has been made in that regard. Their malice is

growing, and their obstinacy has reached such a level that none could be greater. Are we then to think that God will abandon His cause, as if He were powerless against tyrants? Not so, dear brethren, not so. Just as surely as our God lives, some of His elect were stirred up by His Spirit to perceive the great abominations of these tyrants in our age. These messengers, despite the tyranny they faced, were preserved by God to proclaim and make known sins that the world did not recognize as sins. Just as we have observed their continued malice against God, His eternal truth, and the messengers of that truth, we will surely witness God's severe judgments poured out upon them in this temporal life. Some among us may bear witness to the generations that will follow, testifying to the wondrous works that the Lord has already wrought and will continue to work in our age. However, these plagues, like the Word of God that came before them, will not work true repentance in them. In their blind rage, they will rebel against God's Majesty. For the deadly venom of their malicious father, the Devil, can never be purged from their corrupt hearts. Therefore, after witnessing these plagues, some of which we have heard and seen—for what a plague it was for the false Bishop of Durham to be called a murderer and thief to his face and to be convicted of it, a fact he could not deny, and neither he nor any of his proxies or divine doctors present with him dared to speak in his defense—

After these plagues, of which some we have seen and the rest we shortly expect, awaits them the unquenchable fire prepared for their portion. Therefore, once again, dearly beloved in our Saviour Jesus Christ, hope against hope, even against all worldly appearances. Just as God is unchanging, He will assuredly raise up someone like Jehu to execute His vengeance upon those bloodthirsty tyrants and obstinate idolaters. So, patiently await the appointed time for our correction and the full ripening of their malicious intentions. Do not

be discouraged, even though the Bishops have emerged victorious. The Benjamites, natural brethren to our Bishops, defenders of wickedness and abominable adultery, twice prevailed against the Israelites, who fought at God's command. You should consider, beloved brethren, that God's counsels are profound and inscrutable. The most just person is innocent in His sight. There may be secret reasons why God sometimes permits the most wicked to prevail and triumph in the most unjust actions. However, He will not delay long in executing His wrath and justly deserved vengeance upon those who are proud murderers, obstinate idolaters, and impenitent malefactors. Therefore, they have no great reason to rejoice. Even though they have once prevailed against flesh, God will soon bring them to utter confusion and great shame forever. Let Winchester and his cruel council devise and plan until their wits fail, how the kingdom of his father, the Antichrist of Rome, may prosper. Let them drink the blood of God's saints until they are drunk, and their bellies burst. Yet they will never prevail for long in their attempts. Their counsels and determinations will be like the dream of a hungry and thirsty man who, in his sleep, dreams that he is eating or drinking. But after he wakes up, his pain continues, and his soul is unsatisfied and not eased. In the same way, these tyrants, after their profound counsels, long deliberations, and determined resolutions, will come to understand that the hope of hypocrites will be frustrated. A kingdom begun with tyranny and blood can neither be stable nor lasting. The glory, riches, and supporters of such a kingdom will be like straw in the flame of fire, entirely consumed in a flash. Their places will become heaps of stones, their congregations will be desolate, and those who depend on their support will fall into destruction and disgrace with them.

Therefore, beloved brethren in our Saviour Jesus Christ, since neither our imperfections nor our frail weaknesses can hinder Christ

Jesus from returning to us through the presence of His Word, and since the tyranny of these bloodthirsty wolves cannot devour Christ's small flock to the extent that a great number will be preserved to praise God's glory, and since these most cruel tyrants cannot escape God's vengeance for long, let us take comfort, lift up our heads, and steadfastly await the Lord's deliverance with heart and voice. Let us say to our God: "O Lord, though other lords may have power over our bodies, we will remember only You and Your holy name, to whom be praise forever and ever. Amen." May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through His omnipotent Spirit, guide and rule your hearts in His true fear to the end. Amen.

Written at Deepe, on the last day of May, 1554.

## **The comfort of the Holy Spirit for salutation.**

Not so much to instruct you as to leave with you, dearly beloved brethren, some testimony of my love, I have thought it good to communicate with you in these few lines my weak counsel on how you should behave yourselves in the midst of this wicked generation concerning the exercise of God's most sacred and holy word. Without it, neither will knowledge increase, godliness appear, nor fervency continue among you. For as the word of God is the beginning of spiritual life, without which all flesh is dead in God's presence, and the lantern to our feet, without the brightness of which all the posterity of Adam walks in darkness, and as it is the foundation of faith, without which no one understands the good will of God, so it is



also the only means and instrument that God uses to strengthen the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to bring back those who have gone astray by repentance, and, finally, to preserve and keep the very life of the soul in all assaults and temptations.

Therefore, if you desire your knowledge to be increased, your faith to be confirmed, your conscience to be comforted, or, ultimately, your soul to be preserved in life, let your exercise be frequent in the law of the Lord God. Do not despise the precepts that Moses, who, through his own experience, had learned what comfort lies hidden within the word of God, gave to the Israelites in these words: "These words which I command you this day, sow in your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your children. You shall talk of them when you sit at home in your house, and as you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." In another place, Moses commands them to remember the law of the Lord God to do it so that it may go well with them and with their children in the land that the Lord their God would give them. This means that just as frequent memory and repetition of God's precepts are the means by which the fear of God, which is the beginning of all wisdom and felicity, is kept fresh in mind, negligence and forgetfulness of God's received benefits is the first step toward turning away from God.

Now, if the law, which due to our weakness can work nothing but wrath and anger, was so effective that, when remembered and purposefully observed, it brought a physical blessing to the people, what shall we say the glorious Gospel of Christ Jesus accomplishes when treated with reverence? Saint Paul calls it the sweet odor of life to those who will receive life, borrowing his analogy from fragrant

herbs or precious ointments, which, by nature, emit a more pleasant and delightful scent when touched or moved. Even so, dear brethren, is the blessed Gospel of our Lord Jesus. For the more it is engaged with, the more comforting and powerful it is to those who hear, read, or exercise it. I am not ignorant that, just as the Israelites loathed the manna because they saw and ate the same thing every day, there are some nowadays (who consider themselves to be of a higher class) that, after reading certain portions of the scriptures once, commit themselves entirely to profane authors and secular lectures because the variety of subjects therein brings them daily pleasure. In contrast, within the simple scriptures of God, the constant repetition of the same thing is seen as monotonous and wearisome.

I confess that this temptation may enter into the hearts of God's elect for a time, but it is impossible that they continue in it indefinitely. For God's chosen ones, besides other obvious signs, have this characteristic: they are called from ignorance (I speak of those who have reached the age of understanding) to some taste and experience of God's mercy. This satisfaction is never so complete in this life that they no longer hunger and thirst to eat the bread that descended from heaven and drink the water that springs to eternal life. This can only be accomplished through faith, and faith always looks to the will of God revealed through the word. Therefore, I say it is impossible for God's chosen children to despise or reject the word of their salvation for an extended period or to loathe it completely. Sometimes, God's elect are held in such bondage and restraint that they cannot access the bread of life or the freedom to exercise themselves in God's holy word. Yet, they do not despise it; rather, they eagerly desire the sustenance of their souls. They recognize their past negligence, lament their brethren's miserable affliction, and cry out for the free spread of the Gospel in their hearts and openly where

they dare. This hunger and thirst demonstrate the vitality of their souls.

As for those individuals who have the liberty to read and engage with God's holy scriptures but begin to grow weary because they read the same material repeatedly, I ask them why they do not grow tired of eating bread every day, drinking wine, basking in the sunlight, and utilizing other creatures of God, all of which maintain their substance, course, and nature day after day? They shall answer (I trust), "Because these creatures have the strength to preserve physical life." Oh, wretched creatures, who dare to attribute more power and strength to perishable creatures in nourishing and preserving the mortal body than to the eternal word of God in nourishing the immortal soul! My purpose is not to reason with their damnable ingratitude at this time. Instead, I write to you, my dear brethren, to share my knowledge and express my conscience. Just as the use of food and drink is necessary for the preservation of physical life, and just as the heat and brightness of the sun are essential for the growth of plants and dispelling darkness, so is the continual meditation, exercise, and use of God's holy word equally necessary for eternal life and the enlightenment and illumination of the soul. Therefore, dear brethren, if you seek a life in the hereafter, it is imperative that you engage with the book of the Lord your God. Do not let a day pass without receiving some comfort from the mouth of God. Open your ears, and He will speak pleasant things to your heart. Do not close your eyes, but diligently let them behold the wealth of substance left to you within your Father's will. Let your tongues learn to praise the gracious goodness of Him whose pure mercy has called you from darkness to light and from death to life.

Moreover, do not keep this to yourselves so quietly that you admit no witnesses. No, brethren, you are ordained by God to rule your own

households according to His true teaching and His word. Within your homes, I say, in certain cases, you are bishops and rulers; your wife, children, servants, and household constitute your diocese and charge. It shall be required of you how carefully and diligently you have always instructed them in the knowledge of God, how you have labored to instill virtue and suppress vice in them. Therefore, I say, make them participants in reading, exhortation, and communal prayer, which I wish were practiced at least once a day in every household. Above all, dear brethren, strive to put into practice in your lives the commandments found in the word of God. Then be assured that you will never hear or read the word without producing fruit.

And that's enough about the exercises within your homes. Considering that Saint Paul calls the congregation the body of Christ, of which each one of us is a member, teaching us that no member is self-sufficient and can sustain and nourish itself without the help and support of another, I believe it's necessary for the gathering of brethren for the study of scriptures. The order to be observed in these gatherings is expressed by Saint Paul, so there's no need for me to use many words on that matter. I only wish to emphasize that when the assembly comes together, which I recommend should be once a week, you should begin with confessing your sins and invoking the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ to assist you in all your godly endeavors. Afterward, a portion of scripture should be read plainly and distinctly, as much as is deemed sufficient for one day or time. Once the reading is completed, if any brother has exhortation, questions, or doubts, they should not hesitate to speak or raise their points, provided it is done with moderation and for the purpose of edification, either to edify or be edified.

I have no doubt that great profit shall shortly ensue from this practice. First, by hearing, reading, and discussing the scriptures in the assembly, the entire body of God's scriptures shall become familiar. The judgments and spirits of men shall be tested, their patience and modesty shall be known, and ultimately, their gifts and eloquence shall be revealed. Multiplication of words, lengthy interpretations, and stubborn arguments are to be avoided at all times and in all places, but especially in the congregation. In the congregation, nothing should be pursued except the glory of God and the comfort or edification of brethren. If any matter within the text or arising from discussion cannot be resolved by your judgments or comprehended by your understanding, then it should be noted and put in writing before the assembly is dismissed. This way, when God provides an interpreter, your questions and doubts, having been noted and known, can be resolved more expediently. Alternatively, when you need to write to those with whom you wish to share your judgments, your letters can express your unceasing desire for God and His true religion. I, for one, will gladly spend ten hours communicating my judgment with you, explaining, as God pleases to reveal to me, any passage of scripture, rather than half an hour on any other matter.

Furthermore, I suggest that in reading the scriptures, you combine some books from the Old Testament with some from the New Testament, such as Genesis with one of the Gospels, Exodus with another, and so forth. Always finish the books you begin, as time allows. For it shall greatly comfort you to hear the harmonious and well-tuned song of the Holy Spirit speaking through our fathers from the beginning. It shall strengthen you in these dangerous and perilous days to behold the face of Christ Jesus' beloved spouse and Church, from Abel to Himself, and from Himself to this day, as one continuous entity through all ages. Be frequent in reading the

Prophets and the Epistles of Saint Paul, for the multitude of comforting matters contained therein requires practice and a good memory.

Just as your assemblies should commence with confession and invocation of God's Holy Spirit, I also recommend that they conclude with thanksgiving and communal prayers. Pray for princes, rulers, and magistrates, for the liberty and free spread of Christ's Gospel, for the comfort and deliverance of our afflicted brethren, who are persecuted, most cruelly in the realms of France and England, and for any other matters that the Spirit of the Lord Jesus may instruct you to pray for, whether for yourselves or your brethren, wherever they may be. If you exercise yourselves in this manner, dear brethren, as I trust you will, then I will praise God for your great obedience. You are not only those who have received the word of grace with gladness, but also those who carefully and diligently treasure it as a most precious treasure and jewel.

Because I cannot suspect that you will do otherwise at this time, I will refrain from issuing threats. My hope is that you will walk as the sons of light amidst this wicked generation. May you shine as stars in the nighttime sky, untarnished by any change in your nature. May you be wheat among the tares, without altering the nature you have received through God's grace, which comes through our fellowship and participation with the Lord Jesus in His body and blood. Finally, may you be counted among the prudent virgins, continually replenishing your lamps with oil as those who patiently await the glorious appearance and coming of the Lord Jesus. May His omnipotent Spirit guide and instruct, illuminate and comfort your hearts and minds in all trials, now and forever. Amen.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus rest with you.

J.K.

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