

Dear Friends of the Foundation:

The Christian life of self-denial helps to strengthen us to bear up under adversity. In many ways, the wealth and technology of our world have helped to mitigate some of the extremities of adversity. On the other hand, we may yet learn the hard way that the same forces can contribute to human misery. We may yet want to learn and to remember this from Calvin:

Various diseases repeatedly trouble us: now plague rages; now we are cruelly beset by the calamities of war; now ice and hail, consuming the year's expectation, lead to barrenness, which reduces us to poverty; wife, parents, children, neighbors, are snatched away by death; our house is burned by fire. It is on account of these occurrences that men curse their life, loathe the day of their birth, abominate heaven and the light of day, rail against God, and as they are eloquent in blasphemy, accuse him of injustice and cruelty. But in these matters the believer must also look to God's kindness and truly fatherly indulgence. Accordingly, if he sees his house reduced to solitude by the removal of his kinsfolk, he will not indeed even then cease to bless the Lord, but rather will turn his attention to this thought: nevertheless, the grace of the Lord, which dwells in my house, will not leave it desolate. Or, if his crops are blasted by frost, or destroyed by ice, or beaten down with hail, and he sees famine threatening, yet he will not despair or bear a grudge against God, but will remain firm in this trust: "Nevertheless we are in the Lord's protection, sheep brought up in his pastures." The Lord will therefore supply food to us even in extreme barrenness. If he shall be afflicted by disease, he will not even then be so unmanned by the harshness of pain as to break forth into impatience and expostulate with God; but, by considering the righteousness and gentleness of God's chastening, he will recall himself to forbearance. In short, whatever happens, because he will know it ordained of God, he will undergo it with a peaceful and grateful mind so as not obstinately to resist the command of him into whose power he once for all surrendered himself and his every possession. (III.7.10)

Moderns often react negatively to Calvin's sense of God's control over our lives, but consider the courage that such confidence can give us.

Grace and Peace,

Jim

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"Promoting the study of Reformed theology for the renewal of the church"

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