

A SERMON BY JEAN CLAUDE, MINISTER, ON ECCLESIASTES 7:14

TRANSLATED BY CHARLES K. TELFER¹

“In the day of good, make use of the good, and in the day of adversity take care and watch. God has made the one in connection with the other, so that man can find out nothing that will happen after him.”

Delivered during a Fast Day at The Hague, the Netherlands,
on November 21, 1681.²

My Brethren:

From whatever perspective I consider this holy solemnity that we observe today, the picture of what happened long ago at the reestablishment of the temple of Jerusalem comes to mind: two very different experiences. On the one hand there was peace and blessing, and on the other mourning and contrition, sadness and joy, affliction and consolation, weeping and triumphant singing mixed together. Indeed, if I consider the reason we have come together, it is on the one hand to give thanks to God for so many favors that his paternal hands have shed on these blessed Provinces [of the Netherlands]. Who doubts that this is not reason for great joy? But we are also gathered together no less in order to lament the sad ravages that one of the most important sections of our mystical Zion³ has suffered and continues to suffer. Who could not see that here is the victim of the most raw and profound suffering that anyone can imagine? If then I lift my eyes on the people who make up this assembly I find both: some in good circumstances and some in bad circumstances, some in prosperity and some in calamity. And what is even more remarkable, is that I find people in these situations not separated out as were the darkness and the light when they divided the camp of the

¹ *Mes remerciements à madame Louise Wright pour avoir examiné le brouillon de cette traduction et pour l'aide précieuse qu'elle m'a apportée (sans pour autant être responsable des erreurs qui se seraient glissées)—CT*

² The French text is from Jean Claude, *Sermon sur le vers. xiv. du Chapit. vii de L'Ecclesiaste* (London, 1686).

³ Trans. note: i.e., The French Church suffering in the wake of the recent revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

Israelites and that of the Egyptians, but I find them thrown together and mixed with each other through the admirable effect of our mutual love. “The love of Jesus Christ constrains us,” says Saint Paul. That is to say, that it ties us together, bonds us together and unites one with another. This is a wise saying of which you and I are today the living proof.

You happy and blessed people [of The Hague] who enjoy the surety of a secure port city, you who have compassion on the misfortune of your brothers who are still wet from their shipwreck! You are extending your arms to them and opening up your very bosom to help to dry them. We the afflicted ones have gone through shipwreck, and we now are enjoying along with our brothers the peace and tranquility that they enjoy. And for this we bless God with all our heart.

The change of situation among you is notable. There is mourning, and there is joy. But love has changed the condition and place of each. Joy has taken the place of mourning. Mourning has taken the place of joy. This is an exchange, or better put, a mixing that grace has accomplished, and has done so to such an extent that one can hardly distinguish those who are happy from the unhappy, the restful from the afflicted.⁴ With this in mind, my brothers, I thought I needed to speak with you today about both of these two conditions. I want to speak to you about prosperity and calamity, and to speak to you all together, with an eye to all of us being instructed about the use which we should make of this subject. Listen then I ask you all while I expound for you one of the most beautiful and life-giving precepts from the divine ethics of Solomon: *“In the day of good, make use of the good, and in the day of adversity, take care and watch. God has made the one in connection with the other, so that man can find out nothing that will happen after him.”*

The subject is a great one and worthy of all your attention. And since it has a direct bearing on who we are and what we are going through today, we can hope that it will produce great fruit. To do the best that I can at adding something to this topic, my discourse will have two sections: the first will contain certain observations that are necessary for understanding the text. And the second will be the application for us. The first part will furnish light for the mind, the second will provide direction for the heart. May God lead us into both of these, and use it all to his glory and our sanctification. Amen.

“In the day of good, make use of the good, and in the day of adversity, take care and watch.”

These words deal first of all with the same point that we have been emphasizing regarding the dual character of this day: joy on the one hand and affliction on the other. These words teach us that God has apportioned the life of each of his faithful ones into two periods, the one of

⁴ Trans. note: Claude is addressing both the prosperous Dutch and the afflicted French Huguenot refugees throughout this sermon. He starts by mentioning the way the Christian compassion of the Dutch toward their homeless brethren has turned the hearts of each to feel the calamity/prosperity of the other. He will address each of these groups throughout the sermon.

calm and the other of trouble. One of anguish and the other of prosperity. The days of the church are not all equal. We have some storms, but we also have certain pleasant and serene times. There is also a day of adversity. David teaches us thus in the 71st psalm: "O God," he says, "who is like unto you, who has made me see many distresses and many evil things, but you have given back my life and made me rise from the depths of the earth." But elsewhere he says, "The righteous has a great number of evils, but the Eternal One delivers him from them all."

However long our stay here below may be, it consists almost entirely of a continual revolution between evils and deliverances. These two things take each other by the hand; the end of the one is the beginning of the other. And this is one of the principal differences that distinguish heaven and hell from life on earth. In heaven there is nothing other than eternal happiness, and in hell there is nothing but eternal misery. But on earth rest is followed by trouble and trouble by rest. I assure you that this is a truth that is borne out by the experience of saints from all ages. Scripture doesn't stop drawing our attention to it for two reasons: First, because it is one of the most important lessons of religion and serves as a base and foundation for our wisdom. And the other is because it is the habit of humans only to cling to the present, only to think of the future as something far away, about which they don't need to be concerned. They are proud in prosperity and cowardly in adversity. Good puffs them up, and bad wipes them out. David himself, although accustomed to changes in his circumstances, always recognized that he had fallen into this kind of excess. He says, "When I was in my prosperity, I said, 'I will never be disturbed', but when you hid your face, I became completely despairing." It is therefore extremely necessary for us not to lose our ability to understand both of these days (the good and the bad), and it is for this reason that the Scripture speaks to us about it so often.

But why, you will say, is the name of "day" given equally to these two times that are so very different? Why doesn't one speak of the *day* of good and the *night* of adversity? The sharp opposition between them seems to require such a distinction. I respond that Solomon's expression couldn't have been wiser. Because, aside from the fact that the Scripture employs the term "day" to point out all different kinds of times indifferently (and for that reason it speaks to us of a day of death, a day of destruction, in the same way as a day of peace and a day of abundance), it is also a sure thing that the time of affliction is no less a "day" than that of temporal blessings. One is a day of ease and happiness. But the other is a day of instruction and correction, the light of the one is easy on the flesh and nature, but the light of the other is profitable to the spirit and conscience. The one lights the way for animal and earthly life, the other lights the way for the life of regeneration. It is for this reason that in the original language of the Old Testament the word for "chastise" also means "teach," as if to say that chastisement is a type of day that opens the eyes and gives intelligence. And the prophet seems to have made an allusion to Psalm 93. "Blessed," he says, "is the man that you rebuke, O Lord, that you instruct in your law." And in Psalm 119, "But it is good for me that I have been afflicted, so that I might learn your statutes." The

time of adversity is then indeed a “day,” just as the time of good. Solomon had no need to express himself any differently, and he was only trying to have us see something in particular having to do with the one as well as the other. *“In the day of good, make use of the good, and in the day of adversity, take care and watch.”*

“Make use of the good.” This is to say, to my mind, three things. The first is that we ought to enjoy the temporal blessings which it has pleased God to give us at a particular time. There are certain people who make it a principle of religion to voluntarily deprive themselves of the good things that birth or industry (or any other of the ways that human commerce) has legitimately brought them. And they take on misery and poverty as a condition where there is greater glory and more merit. But this is to be ungrateful for divine favors. This is to try to get out from under the order of Providence. This is to try to be wiser than God, and to attempt to change that which he has accomplished in his ordering of things, as if he hadn't done it well. A subject cannot refuse anything coming from the liberality of his prince without committing an offense. How much less can a creature refuse God's liberality! *“Make use of the good.”* This is to say, then, receive the good which God has sent you. Receive it. Possess it. And have joy when you have a proper reason for it.

Secondly, I don't doubt that Solomon intended to give us here a precept, if you like, even more important than the first. And that is, that however innocent it may be to possess the good things of this life, it is nevertheless important to remember that we are neither masters nor lords in an absolute sense over them, and that we can only properly speak about the “use” of these goods. God who is the Creator of all things is also the sovereign and perpetual Lord; he can never set aside his right. And when he distributes to men he always reserves for himself the power and authority to take them away and transfer them to whomever he please. This is the reason that Job, after having gone through so many losses, said, “The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken way; blessed be the name of the Lord.” He recognized that everything is at God's disposition, and that whatever way he may use it, he never does us any wrong.

In summary, to “make use of the good” means not to make an inappropriate use of anything, but to regulate the feelings that we have in accordance with the objects to which they relate. That is to say, that we always regard them as fragile and little to be prized, and to yield them up to the glory of him who has given them to us. We should never turn them aside from their intended purpose.

Solomon condemns here two opposite vices: avarice and wastefulness. Avarice makes it so that things possess us more than we possess them. Avarice captivates our heart and gives to goods all our love. They no longer allow us to use them for fear that we will be less rich through using them. Wastefulness makes us throw them away foolishly in the service of our lusts, changing their legitimate use into an offense and their enjoyment into an occasion of sin.

It is to these vices that the majority of men are subjected, for scarcely can you find anyone among a thousand who doesn't fall into one or the other of these two extremities: either being slaves of their riches or

unrighteous and foolish spenders. Saint Paul had in mind the former when he called avarice “an idolatry.” Jesus Christ focused on the other when he gave the title “iniquity” to riches. The Hebrews put them both together when they chose to use the same term which for them meant “riches,” to mean also “idol” and “iniquity,” in order to teach us in this way that men abuse their goods when they make of them either an imaginary divinity or an instrument for debauchery and corruption. Our text reels us back from both of these false paths. *“In the day of good,”* it tells us, *“make use of the good.”*

“And in the day of adversity, take care and watch.” These words that Solomon has added deserve special consideration, for if we have need of guidance in prosperity, we have no less need in affliction. First, it seems to me that here Solomon intended to correct on the one hand the weaknesses of nature and on the other the cruelty of an ancient philosophy, and to show us the proper mid-point that we should keep in order to walk in the ways of true wisdom.

In our greatest distresses nature leads us only to cry out and complain uselessly. On the other hand, a vain philosophy that has existed in every age gives us no other help than a type of insensibility that turns men into rocks and commands them to consider bad things and good things with an equal eye. It makes men inaccessible to pain or joy. True wisdom has nothing of this. It considers crying and complaining to be impulses controlled by chance, and that produce nothing. They are impulses that don't come from reason, but only from the animal aspect, and are therefore not worthy of man. Also, true wisdom considers this pretended insensibility, if it were really possible, to be a criminal condition. There is nothing more criminal than choosing to take away human feelings and to receive as equal, things that impact us so unequally, and that are so opposed.

What then would true wisdom have us do? *“And in the day of adversity, take care and watch.”* The day of adversity is not a day to give ourselves over to wrathful anger or to blaming or to senselessness. It is neither a time to give ourselves over to mourning nor a time to rest and to sleep deeply. It is a time and a day for meditation and reflection: *“Take care and watch.”*

But what does this *“take care and watch”* mean, and how must one carry it out? My brethren, in order to carry it out, one must carefully consider the nature of afflictions, by exploring the causes and reasons, by searching out remedies, and in a word to view them from all angles to get to know them, to attempt to profit by them. It is necessary to consider the nature of afflictions, because God wants that we should feel his chastisements, and that we should taste all the bitterness without letting anything escape. Those who only seek to divert pain and stifle it by means of other things, or those who take the part of toning down bad things and of explaining them away as if they were nothing find only false consolations. True wisdom doesn't deceive anyone. Rather it opens our eyes to make us recognize affliction to the highest degree and to its full extent.

It is necessary next to explore carefully the causes and reasons of the affliction, because it is principally from this that the fruit that we can expect must come, and consequently it is necessary to make it one of the first subjects of this examination. But again it is necessary to consider the end, that is to say, to have an eye for the goal that God is concerned with, when he makes us feel the severity of his rod, so that we might respond as well as possible in keeping with his intention and the ways of Providence. One must look to results and effects, because it is by this means that we can endure afflictions with more courage and consolation. And finally it is necessary to explore remedies, but it is necessary to look for the true sources of affliction, and by the means that religion (that is the only solid and sincere prudence) is able to teach us.

This then is what *"take care and watch"* means. This then is what Solomon intends with this excellent precept. Now let us examine what he adds on, *"God has made the one in connection with the other, so that man can find out nothing that will happen after him."* Before going any further, it is good to note here the solution to a very important question that in every age has held the minds of men in suspense (since they have been deprived of the light of revelation). This question has to do with where good and bad things come from, and with the first cause of the movements that took place in the universe.

Some have attributed these things to a blind and reckless Chance; others to some kind of Fate that they have established in an unavoidable linkage of higher and lower causes. Yet others attribute them to the guiding light of human prudence or to the distractions of imprudence. And still others attribute them to the fanciful and unequal movements that they have called our Free Will.

But Solomon teaches us here the vanity of all these different thoughts when he tells us that it is God that makes the two days—that of good and that of adversity. Indeed, if we see a ship without guide or pilot abandoned to the will of the wind and the waves, we cannot conceive that it would successfully reach port without a miracle, nor that it could continue a long time without being destroyed. How then, when one observes such a great variety of causes and effects, of movements and relations, of accidents and unseen changes as are seen throughout all the ages, can one help recognizing that there is a supreme and infinite Intelligence that moves and governs this entire great universe and sustains it? This is what the Scripture teaches us in a thousand places. Saint Paul says in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews that, "He sustains all things by his powerful word." And then, "We have life, movement and being in him." And David in Ps. 147, "He counts the number of the stars; he calls them all by their name. He covers the heavens with clouds. He brings the rain on the earth; he makes grass to grow on the mountains. He gives pasture to the beasts and to the raven's little ones when they cry."

Indeed, there is nothing more commonly insisted on in Scripture than that God brings about good things and bad things, prosperous things and calamitous things. The prophet says, "Exaltation does not come from the east or from the west or from the desert. It is God who

governs; he humbles one and exalts another.” Also in the 3rd chapter of Lamentations Jeremiah says, “Who can say that something has taken place without the Lord having commanded it? Do not both bad things and good things come at the summons of the Most High?” Isaiah too brings up the same theme by saying, “I am the Lord; there is none except for me. I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create adversity. It is I, the Lord, who does all these things.”

But in these things, Solomon says, “*He has made the one in connection with the other.*” First of all, these words highlight the order and the continual rotation that God has established between the two days. These words teach us that good and bad come after each other almost without interruption in such a way that they fill up equally the entire life of a believer.

It seems that God has established the same order in his church that he has in the economy of nature. In nature he has parceled out equal measures of day and night, light and darkness at such different intervals that there is no place on the earth where there is not either one or the other. But these divisions are utterly unequal. Likewise in the church he has in the same way distributed calm and tempest, good and evil, in such a way that the portions are equal over all, but the distribution is carried out in an unequal way. But the words of our text also mean something else: they teach us that God has mixed and chained together (if I may put it that way) both favors and chastisements in such a way that they are like two parallel lines between which he has us walk continually. Have you never meditated on the holy words of Psalm 81 where David presents God saying to his people, “I have answered you from the hiding place of my thunder,” or on those of Jesus Christ in Revelation 3, “I rebuke and discipline those whom I love”? You see here love and discipline, thunder and responsiveness, goodness joined with severity and severity tempered with goodness. As long as we continue here below, God will continually deal with us in this way. His blessings will always be accompanied by some bitterness, and in his anger he always will remember to have pity. The day of good and the day of adversity are always connected to each other. He has set them, like the Cherubim of the ancient ark, always facing each other. They serve each other as mutual correctives.

But why has God established things in this way? This is what Solomon is teaching us in the final words of our text. He says, “*So that man can find out nothing that will come after him.*” His meaning is that this arrangement bears the marks of a wisdom so profound, that human reason (which tends to find fault with the works of God) will be constrained to acquiesce and to adore. Indeed, is there anything more worthy of our admiration than this divine economy in which the Lord has regard for us and for himself—for our salvation and his glory?

For us—since nature is in us a composition of two things, on the one hand of corruption and of the sickness of our sin that remains, and on the other hand of a very great weakness—it is necessary that the ways of his Providence in the dispensation of temporal things should bear relation to both. If he were only to give us days of good, our weakness would

be alleviated, but our corruption would not be repressed. And if he were only to give us days of adversity, it would correct our corruption, but it would swallow up our weakness. He has therefore set these two things in connection with each other to provide for our every need. He uses the day of good to enable us to be refreshed, and he uses the day of adversity to subdue our lusts and hold back the course of our iniquities. David recognizes the usefulness and necessity of these two days. Regarding the day of adversity he confesses in Psalm 119, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray," he says. "But now I keep your Word." He declares concerning the day of good in Psalm 39, "Depart from me before I go away and am no longer." The type of covenant that God had made with his posterity was similar to this, "I will make him the firstborn and sovereign of the kings of the earth. I will keep my loving-kindness with him always, my covenant with him will be firm. I will give him an eternal posterity, and I will establish his throne as the days of the heavens. And if his sons turn aside from my law and do not walk according to my ordinances, if they violate my statutes and give no heed to my commandments, I will visit their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with strokes. But I will never take away from him my loving-kindness, and I will never turn aside from my sworn oath to him."

But I will also say that in this way God has a concern for himself and his glory. From long ago it has been said, concerning the question of the wicked, that God could not have better carried out his purpose with regard to them as he does: by letting fall over some his judgments, and letting others go off unpunished. For if he never punished in this life, one could call into doubt his providence. And if he constantly punished them, one could doubt of the day of his judgment to come and the penalties of the second life. It is necessary to say the same thing with regard to the faithful. If he never sent them days of peace and tranquility, one would doubt of his love towards them, and if he never visited on them days of adversity, one would not recognize that he takes care to correct them and to form them unto true piety. It was necessary for him then to connect the one day with the other to assure that man would recognize the sovereign wisdom of his Creator

This interpretation, as you see, is very beautiful and very worthy of the thought of Solomon. However, I can't help telling you that there are two others that are no less worthy of him nor less proper for our edification. But in order to explain them to you, it is necessary to suppose that one can properly translate the words of the original in this way, "*God has made the one in connection with the other, so that man can find out nothing that will happen after him.*" This is to say either that apart from God, man cannot conceive of a sovereign principle in the government of the universe, or that apart from God man cannot find anything to which he can give his heart, his desires, his esteem and his affection. What can one conceive of that is greater and more majestic than these two interpretations?

With regard to the first, you are not unaware how men constantly concern themselves to find the true and first source of the miseries and calamities of this life. The Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks and the

Latins agreed in establishing two principles, the one of good and the other of evil. This very idea from olden days has produced a heresy that has long troubled the repose of the Christian church. This opinion seems to be credible but is really utter foolishness. For in the idea of the divinity that nature gives us, we conceive of it as always good, liberal, and beneficent. And it is not easy to comprehend that it is from this divinity that proceed all the afflictions with which human life is crisscrossed. Therefore it seems that these afflictions must have another source, and consequently that there must be another principle apart from God. But Solomon dissipates this error when he tells us that God has set the one in connection with the other, so that man can find out nothing apart from him. This means that God has connected good and bad, prosperity and adversity in one and the same economy by making them proceed together, one alongside the other, as two aspects of the same project, or as pieces of the same workmanship and as means that tend to the same end, under the direction of one and the same intelligence. This is so that we might not acknowledge any other than one sole Dispenser of the one and the other, and that apart from him we might not search for anything else. In effect, it is not necessary to conceive of two different principles or to think up a chimera, impossible and full of absurdities. It is sufficient to conceive of a single being who possesses goodness and justice, who rewards holiness but who also punishes sin.

Considering the other interpretation of Solomon's words, one cannot think of anything more beautiful or more edifying. God has set the good and the evil in connection with each other, so that apart from him, that is, apart from God, man can find nothing to which he can give his esteem, his heart and his affections. For to what will man give these things? To adversity? It is the enemy of nature. To prosperity? Not only is it fleeting and momentary, adversity trailing along close by, but it is never pure. The sweetness is always mixed with the bitter, and our joy is always accompanied with something of unhappiness. It is therefore God alone in whom we can reasonably place our confidence, nothing but him that we should desire or where our soul can find a perfect rest. But can we not also desire temporal goods and rejoice when God gives them to us, according to the first precept of our text, "*In the day of good, make use of the good*"? We can without a doubt. But it is necessary to rejoice in God and never to separate these things from him. For when you detach the created thing from the natural relationship that it has with the Creator, you reduce it to nothing; it is no longer of any use to us. It ceases to be a good thing. In ethics the thing that constitutes the essence of something good is the impression of divinity. Take away this attribute of it, and it is a nothingness.

But it is time to enter into the second part of our discourse and to make a proper application of the teachings that our text gives us. Up to this point, my most dear brethren, I have spoken to you in common. Permit me please for a few moments to make a distinction among you, to consider you as two groups of people in different conditions.

"*In the day of good, make use of the good.*" This first precept has to do particularly with you whom divine providence has made to be born or

has long-ago established in these blessed Provinces [of the Netherlands]. You have had your day of adversity, but God has changed it to rest and to abundance. *"Make use of the good."* There is no more than a few words in this warning, but how many important things these words contain! The first application these words commend to you is to acknowledge this gentle and immortal hand of God that gives you his protection and has heaped you with his benefits. Of all the vices that dishonor men, there is none that renders them more odious in civil society than ingratitude. The ungrateful person is like the bush that scratches both the hand that plants it as well as the hand that pulls it out. But if this vice is great in human interactions, how much more must it be in religion? How great an offense is ingratitude toward God who not only supports you with more than fatherly indulgence, who not only keeps far from your territories all the storms that fall upon your neighbors, covering you with his shield of providence a thousandfold more sure and unbreachable than any you might hope to find elsewhere, but who furthermore seems to exhaust all his bounty for you! He is a God who cultivates you as his own Eden; he makes all things flourish among you: arts, sciences, disciplines, law, the military, commerce, treaties. He is a God who has filled your homes with riches and blessings and who accompanies you in all your ways. Make use then of your good, not in making it redound to your own glory, neither in the service of your lusts, but in making it redound to his glory and in his service. Make use of the good not in becoming proud to possess it, but in constantly turning your eyes toward the day of your past adversity and in understanding that it will return. For as in your affliction you trusted the goodness of God to restore prosperity, in prosperity you should fear his wrath, that he might not cause affliction to return, since he has, *"made the one in connection with the other."*

Moreover, since our good cannot go to God himself, but one of the most acceptable offerings is that which is for the benefit of his saints, you can see clearly how one of the most important uses of your goods you can make is that of charity. This is the virtue that Jesus Christ recommends to us more than any other. He considers it an indispensable sign of our communion with him. And he considers the good deeds that we practice toward his believers as having been done to himself. "I was hungry," he says. "And you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. I was a stranger and you received me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to see me. Truly I tell you, in as much as you have done this to one of the least of these my brothers, you have done it to me." Solomon had said almost the same thing in the 19th chapter of Proverbs. "He who pities the poor lends to the Lord. And he will recompense his well-doing." He does not say that he gives to the Lord, but that he lends to him. For although we only use in this the things that God has given us, he considers them however in this act as if they had come originally from us ourselves, so that he can recompense them. Permit me therefore today to recommend to you this use of your goods toward the many afflicted poor that the profession of the same religion as you has caused to be chased from their homes and their homeland, and rendered naked and despoiled of all

their temporal commodities, without support, without help, and without hope except for your charity. If you consider who they are, they are your brethren, formed from the same mystical blood of Jesus Christ and made alive by the same Spirit of grace. If you consider the nature of their affliction, the sun couldn't possibly make it more obvious or more stupendous. If you examine the reason, they suffer for righteousness and for not having preferred the authority of men over that of God. If you consider their number, it is multiplying every day and as things seem now will continue to increase. Thus all things stir you to compassion towards them.

But what need do we have to exhort you regarding this? Have you not already shown by the effects of your kindness and by a thousand testimonies that you have already given us of heart-felt compassion? Which means that we have less reason to pray for you but rather to give thanks for you. May God be your remunerator, and may he give you ten thousand times over the good that you have heartily set yourselves to do for us. Let your affection, then, be drawn out by us more and more as we nearly say to you what Ruth said to Naomi. We came here to become the same body with you. And as your God is our God, your people will from now on also be our people, your laws will be our laws, and your interests our interests. Where you live we will live; where you die we will die and we will be buried in your tombs. Love us, then, as your brothers and your countrymen, and kindly look down on our weaknesses. We were born in a climate that doesn't give to everyone the wise, discreet and restrained temperament that yours gives to you. Put up with us, for as it is proper that we should conform ourselves as much as is possible to your prudence, we also hope that you in fairness will not hold against us all of our weaknesses.

As for you, my [French] brethren, who are here as a miserable remnant, it is to you that I must principally apply these other words, "And in the day of adversity, take care and watch." They especially refer and pertain to you. I confess that one of our first duties in coming to this country has been to give thanks to God for having delivered us from a brutal and violent tempest, and for having led us successfully into this port. From this point of view then we can call this the day of our good. But despite the fact that this good is of inestimable value, it is however accompanied by so many sad memories and filled with such bitterness that one would have to be totally without feeling not to consider it as the day of the greatest adversity that could possibly have happened to us.

I will not attempt to make for you here a long list of our misfortunes, nor to spend much time on the secondary causes that have brought them upon us. Our misfortunes are known to you. And how could they not be? All Europe is aware of them. And for the secondary causes, since they are nothing other than the unclean channels and inferior sources that the malignity of the age has poisoned, it is good to cover them with a veil for fear of stirring up in us emotions that we don't want to have. We leave them to the judgment of God. Or rather we pray that God will change them, and that he will not hold against them these madnesses. Our condition is still more happy than theirs, because we have this con-

solation in the midst of our evils: that we haven't deserved it. But the joy of their success will always be troubled by the remorse for having been unjust and cruel. Let us lift up our eyes higher then. And as we consider the ways of the Providence that rules over this work of darkness and that uses everything for our mercy, let us recognize in it with humility our sins. It is very necessary to say that they have been great and enormous since they have brought on such terrible punishments. When God does us good, he does it in a manner proportioned not to us but to himself. But he acts otherwise when he disciplines us, for he does it not according to the measure of his power nor according to that of justice, but according to that of our weakness. "He visits us with the rod of men," says the Scripture. It is for this reason that Saint Paul uses this language with the Corinthians, "No temptation has overtaken you except that which is human. And God is faithful, who will not let you be tested beyond your abilities."

Then where does it come from that on this occasion it seems that he has poured out on us all the fire of his indignation, sparing neither his sanctuaries, nor his assemblies, nor shepherds, nor flocks, nor the ministers of his Word nor the profession of his truth? How can it be that he has burned up everything from one end to the other, not just in certain places but throughout the extent of this great kingdom [of France] that we have just left? Where could it have come from except from these two causes: from the greatness of our sins and from their obstinacy? We have multiplied the number of our sins and God has multiplied his plagues; sins have inundated all our flocks and God has struck them all. Our sins have not spared even the one who was most holy in religion. God has carried him off from our midst as a good of which we were the unjust possessors. We have been deaf to the voice of the Lord's exhortations, deaf to the voice of his good deeds to us, deaf to that of his warnings, senseless under his first chastisements, senseless under his second and third chastisements, senseless to the long list of notices that came to us from heaven. We have been sinners in prosperity, sinners in adversity, sinners under the discipline of his gospel, sinners under the protection of his providence, sinners under the severity of his rod. All this has exhausted his patience and made him finally pronounce this terrifying order, "Cut down the unfruitful fig tree. Why does it take up the ground?" O God, how you are to be adored in your judgments! "Yours is the justice, and ours is the confusion of face."

Meanwhile in the midst of so much wrath, we can still say what Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3, "By the loving-kindnesses of the Lord we are not consumed. For his compassions never fail, they are renewed every morning. His faithfulness is a great thing." I tell you that God has extended over us his sharp sickle and harvested and gathered us, to use scriptural terms. But he has still left behind some clusters and ears, a remnant according to the election of his grace. It is very proper that I should consider you in this light, you who for the confession of the name of Jesus Christ have had the courage to abandon that which nature considers to be most valuable: your homes, your inheritances, your businesses, your relatives, your families, your native soil, your hopes and

your connections. You have had the courage to choose the rest and freedom of your conscience, though it be accompanied by hunger and nakedness in a foreign land; and to choose them, I say, over all these advantages for which men are accustomed to sacrifice all. You have had the courage to expose yourselves to a thousand dangers, to overcome by the guidance of Providence such great and conspicuous difficulties that no one would want to accuse of cowardice those who had been overcome by them.

This witness to your virtue is appropriate. But it is not necessary to imagine that you are the only ones whom the Lord has reserved to himself. I hope that there will be more than seven thousand who have not bowed the knee before Baal. And among this very multitude some appear to have succumbed under the weight of temptation. How many are there that sigh in servitude, and we should hope that God will graciously release them? These are the bruised reeds that he will not break, the smoking flax that he will rekindle in his mercy, for there is still balm in Gilead, and consolations to be found in him. There is still kindness in the eyes of Jesus Christ to call them to repentance.

But what do we do as we wait for God to do his work in them? My brothers, for our part we do our duty which consists in humbling ourselves, amending our ways, recognizing those who are our benefactors, and for everything else, putting our trust in God who never will abandon us. I say humbling ourselves, for if we owe this action simply to the majesty of our Creator before whom we are nothing but dust and ashes, how much more we should humble ourselves before this Majesty when he rises up in the sound of his thunder and the flashes of his lightning that he has made to fall upon us in a terrifying manner? How can we who are nothingness fight against him, even as Job who said to him in chapter 13, "Will you use your force against a leaf that the wind blows? Will you persecute a dry piece of thatch?" Notice how he makes out of his own weakness a shield to cover himself from the indignation of God. David establishes the compassions of God towards his people in Psalm 78. He says, "He often relents from his wrath and does not stir up all his furor. For he knows that we are flesh, a wind that passes by and does not return." And elsewhere, "The Lord is full of compassion towards those who fear him. For he knows of what we are made, he remembers that we are but dust" (Ps. 103). Notice how advantageous it is for us that he remembers the lowness of our condition. But so that he remember it, it is necessary for us to remember it and to place it before his eyes by a deep humiliation of our hearts before the feet of his tribunal and by a lively feeling of our sins. "Lord, if you should mark iniquities, who could stand?" (Ps. 130).

Do not imagine however that this humility is sufficient to make us acceptable to God. It is necessary, I assure you, but it must not be alone. It must accompany a true amendment of life. God says in Isaiah 58, "Is this the fast that I choose, that a man afflict his soul for a day, bowing his head like a reed, and putting on sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not rather that you lose the bonds of wickedness and untie the cords of the yoke? That you let all

who are afflicted go free and that you break every yoke?" Amendment of life is the duty of all men and at all times. But it is particularly the duty of believers in the condition in which we find ourselves. Have we only come here to bring the vices of our nation (as if there were not enough vice from the local people and it were salutary to bring in that of foreigners)? Let us remember that we are in this country as refugees, and refugees for the cause of religion. And so to live up to who we are, we must be an example of virtue: wise, modest, just, charitable, pious, zealous, docile and submissive to orders, chaste and sober, each one active and diligent in his vocation, working with our hands so as to burden the least that we can, so that we can gain in the future the esteem and love of those who have received us today with such cordiality.

Let us never forget, my brothers, this sweet and tender cordiality, the effect of the communion of the saints, that has given us a sanctuary when the fury of our countrymen pursues us with every outrage, and our brothers and our most dear friends abandon us. Let us have a perfect gratitude in our hearts, and let us testify to the same with our works. This is what we will do if we are faithful to the State, ardent for its interests, jealous for its glory, quick and prompt to bear its burdens, obedient and respectful to its powers, and always subject to its laws. And, with regard to particulars, let us conduct ourselves in such a way that they will see that their good deeds were not in vain. But rather that they will receive a double harvest, the one from God and the other from us, the one of a blessing from heaven and the other of our service.

En fin, we must add to all this a holy confidence in the mercy of God who never will abandon his church. The mercy of God is here at present in the day of the church's adversity; but the day of her good will come, for "God has made the one in connection with the other." If today the church sees a great number of defections, one day she will see repentances and conversions that will make her children say, "This place is too narrow for us, make us a place where we can dwell." And from this moment on we should console ourselves with the consolation of Saint Paul, "The foundation of God remains firm, having this foundation: God knows those who are his." None of his elect will perish, and his church consists only of his elect. The mass of worldlings that in the time of persecution leave and plunge themselves into the world are not his church. They do not please God. If today we are under his anger, he will give us his peace and his love. "Go, my people. Enter into your inner rooms and close the door on yourself. Hide yourself for a very small moment until the indignation be passed." If our sins are great, the blood of Jesus Christ is a price still greater. And there will be propitiation and grace for us in virtue of his death and his intercession. If our enemies are powerful, God is still more powerful than they are. The Prophet says, "The floods have lifted up their noise. The floods have lifted up their streams, but the Lord is on high, more powerful than the noise of the great waters and than the strong waves of the sea."

If on the other hand we are weak, do you not know that it is in our weakness where our strength consists? Notice what was said to Saint Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you; I accomplish my power in your

weakness." "My power in your weakness"; this union may seem strange to you. It is however the covenant of God with us. Light is joined with shadows, life with death, and power with feebleness. If there were no shadows, there would be no light and power. In the blessed exchange, we only supply our vanity and our nothingness so that God can bring in his reality, and can say, "My grace is sufficient for you; I accomplish my power in your weakness." Provided that he continue his grace and power toward us, we will fear nothing. "The Lord is my light and my deliverance, of what shall I be afraid? The Lord is the force of my life, of whom will I be terrified?" Let us only ask that he be with us; for everything else we will hand over ourselves to the guidance of his providence. Lord, do not abandon us! Master, do not forsake us!

These are the dedicatory prayers that we offer to God for you all, my dear brethren. For now it is time for me to consider you as a unified group and as a single flock gathered under the same leadership. May God continue among you from generation to generation and from age to age the ministry of his Gospel, and may he protect you from the snares and oppression of an adulterous religion. You know how important this prayer is, you to whom God dispenses his manna so abundantly; but you know even more, you poor wandering sheep, that the proud hand of superstition has ravaged us and forcibly carried us off into the desert.

You poor souls who would consider the liberty to go in search of the word of God a great grace—even if it meant going not just to the other side of the sea and to foreign countries, but to the remotest places of America, unto another world and under another sky. May God never put you through such a hard ordeal. May God strengthen and make unshakable the foundations of your country. May he preserve the high powers, under whose legitimate authority you live. And as those powers cover you with the shadow of their wings, may God cover them likewise with the shadow of his, and may he reign over them by a perpetual influence of his Spirit and his peace and his blessing. May God keep the wise and glorious prince that his good providence has set at the head of your republic and of your armies, and has made to be as the eye and arm of this flourishing state—the eye to guide it with understanding and the arm to protect it with strength. May the God of his fathers that he worships and serves make his angel go before his steps, and may he himself be his shield and defense. May God bless all those who bless him and may he hold back and restrain the fury of his enemies. May God bless and keep the great and royal princess whom he has set next to him, whose many virtues give out such a sweet aroma in the church and in the world. May God take away the ardent desire that afflicts our hearts, to see born from this sacred union a blessed posterity. May God take it away by fulfilling it and changing it to joy and thanksgiving!

May God sanctify you all, my very dear brethren, and kindle in you more and more a zeal for his gospel, a love of his truth, and, adding along with it, an unrelenting practice of good works and a sincere intention to do your duty in all things. May God fulfill your prayers, lengthen the day of your good, and keep far away the day of adversity. May God be your defense, your shade and your right hand. May God keep the sun

from striking you by day and the moon by night. After having filled your hearts with faith, piety, charity and justice, may he similarly overflow your families with goods and prosperity, enabling you to accomplish your purposes, giving notable success to your labors and an upbringing in his fear to your dear children.

So go, return to your homes, a thousand times richer and happier than you went forth this morning. You have made your peace with God. He has extended his hand to you from on high, and has forgiven you all your sins. And you on your part have promised to serve him and to fear him to your last breath. You have committed to offend him no longer, at least as little as the weakness of nature permits. Never break such a religious commitment, and be persuaded that God will never revoke his covenant with you. But after having honored you with his favors on earth, he will give you the ultimate, highest blessing in the happiness of his paradise. To him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

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